**Climate Change, the Ruined Island, and British Metamodernism**

by

Emily Arvay
Bachelor of Arts (Honours), Queen's University, 2004
Master of Arts, University of Toronto, 2007

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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**Supervisory Committee**

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Dr. Nicholas Bradley, Department Member
Department of English

Dr. Helga Thorson, Outside Member
Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies

**Abstract**

This dissertation on "Climate Change, the Ruined Island, and British Metamodernism" proceeds from the premise that a perspectival shift occurred in the early 2000s that altered the tenor of British climate fiction published in the decade that followed. The release of a third Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), less than a month after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, prompted an acute awareness of the present as a post-apocalyptic condition bracketed by catastrophe and extinction. In response, British authors experimented with double-mapping techniques designed to concretize the supranational scope of advanced climate change. An increasing number of British authors projected the historical ruination of remote island communities onto speculative topographies extrapolated from IPCC Assessments to compel contemporary readers to conceive of a climate-changed planet aslant. Given the spate of ruined-island-as-future-Earth novels published at the turn of the millennium, this dissertation intervenes in extant criticism by identifying David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004), Will Self's *The Book of Dave* (2006), and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007) as noteworthy examples of a metamodernist subgenre that makes a distant future of a "futureless" past to position the reader in a state of imagined obsolescence. This project consequently draws on metamodernist theory as a useful heuristic for articulating the traits that distinguish metamodernist cli-fi from precursory texts, with the aim to connect British post-apocalyptic fiction, climate-fiction, and literary metamodernism in productive ways. As the body chapters of this dissertation demonstrate, metamodernist cli-fi primarily uses the double-mapped island to structurally discredit the present as singular in cataclysmic consequence and, therefore, deserving of an unprecedented technological fix. Ultimately, in attempting to refute the moment of completion that would mark history's end, metamodernist cli-fi challenges the givenness of an anticipated future through which to anchor the advent of an irreversible tipping point. Given the relative dearth of literary scholarship devoted to metamodernist cli-fi, this project posits that this subgenre warrants greater critical attention because it offers potent means for short-circuiting the type of cynical optimism that insists on envisioning human survival in terms of divine, authoritarian, or techno-escapist interventions.

Keywords: David Mitchell, Will Self, Jeanette Winterson, Jared Diamond, twenty-first-century British fiction, post-apocalyptic fiction, climate fiction, ecofiction, Anthropocene fiction, ruined island, ecocriticism, environmental materialism, literary metamodernism.

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## Acknowledgments

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> "Those who cannot remember their past are condemned to repeat it."[1]
>
> "Those who do not understand their history are doomed to repeat it."[2]
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> "Imagination alone enables us to see things in their proper perspective, to be strong enough to put that which is too close at a certain distance so that we can see and understand it, [to] be generous enough to bridge abysses of remoteness until we can see and understand everything that is too far away […] Without this kind of imagination, which is actually understanding, we would never be able to take our bearings in the world."[3]

## 0.1 "Ghost of a Climate-Changed Future"[4]

In *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* (1841), Scottish journalist Charles Mackay recounts the "great panic of 1524" in which soothsayers prophesied that the Thames would flood the whole of London by February 1st of that year. This prophesy prompted some twenty thousand city dwellers to evacuate their homes for a flood that never materialized (Self, "Drowned"). Four centuries later, in the twilit hours of January 31st, 1953, a moderate spring tide swelled into the most devastating flood of Britain's recent past: a storm surge amplified by gale force winds swept southward over the North Sea and battered Britain's east coast. Towering swells overtopped the sea walls that lined the shore, submerging twelve hundred districts between Spurnhead and Kent, drowning 307 people and displacing another 32,000, while damaging 65,000 hectares of farmland, 24,000 homes, and two hundred industries at an approximate cost of £900 million (Baxter et al. 154). In response, the British Government

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[1] From George Santayana's "Reason in Common Sense" from *The Life of Reason* (1905): 172.
[2] From Will Self's *Junk Mail* (1995): 109.
[3] Hannah Arendt's *Essays in Understanding, (1930-54): Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*.
[4] LaFrance, Adrienne. "The Ghost of Climate-Change Future." *Atlantic*, 30 May 2017.

recommended the construction of the Thames Barrier. Completed in 1982, the Barrier was designed to accommodate a projected sea-level rise of 0.8 cm per year until 2030 (Baxter et al. 172). Over the next fifteen years (c. 1982-97), however, increased storm surges compelled the temporary closure of the Barrier twice yearly (Baxter et al. 172).

Within months of climate scientists calling for reductions in "greenhouse gas" emissions (1988),[5] Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher acknowledged that humans had "begun a massive experiment with the systems of their planet" (Trexler). Thatcher's remarks came on the heels of a UK Meteorological (MET) report that warned of "global scale floods" ("Can We Stop Britain Drowning?"). One year after the report's release (8 November 1989), Thatcher deemed climate change an existential threat to humanity (Carvalho and Burgess 1463). Shortly thereafter, author Bill McKibben's seminal *The End of Nature* (1989) introduced lay readers to the anticipated consequences of unchecked climate change (Heise, *Imagining* 8). By December of 1989, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to provide global policymakers with accurate climate change data. On 25 May 1990, the IPCC issued its First Assessment Report, which forecast a global sea-level rise of roughly one metre c. 2100. Two days later, *The Independent* responded with the headline "Green-House Time Bomb," while the *Sunday Times* dismissed the report as "Green Hysteria" (Carvalho and Burgess 1463). The publication of the IPCC's first assessment, coupled with the Rio Earth Summit (1992), strengthened causal links between human activities

[5] Initially dubbed the "greenhouse effect," the phenomenon was renamed "global warming" to underscore the urgency of the risk posed. More recently scientists adopted "climate change" to convey with greater accuracy varied global effects (Heise, *Sense*). Climate activists now propose the substitution of "climate emergency" to retain the urgency of "global warming" and the scientific accuracy of "climate change."

and climate change (Garrard, "Climate" 43). Over the course of the following year, forty-nine articles appeared in British newspapers devoted to the IPCC's findings; however, coverage plummeted in 1991 with the onset of Britain's economic recession (Carvalho and Burgess 1463).[6]

It would take another five years for the IPCC to make headlines again with the release of a second Assessment Report (1995) that warned unchecked $CO_2$ emissions would catalyze more frequent and extreme weather events at the expense of coastal communities. Both *The Guardian* ("Climate: A Race Against Time") and *The Independent* ("Global Warming is Here, Experts Agree") sought to mobilize public concern, whereas *The Times* retained its skeptical stance ("The Heat of the Argument") (Carvalho and Burgess 1464-5). One year after Prime Minister Tony Blair's "New Labour" signed the Kyoto Protocol (1997), the UK Climate Impacts Programme published a report that predicted rising seas would cause a 1-in-500-year event such as the 1953 flood to become a 1-in-50-year event c. 2050 (Baxter et al. 155). The report concluded by forecasting the closure of the Thames Barrier 325 times per year c. 2100 (Baxter et al. 154). In May of 2001, the IPCC issued a Third Assessment Report, which prompted a renewed and heightened sense of public urgency and the introduction of the term Anthropocene[7] into common usage. Six months after the IPCC's Third Assessment Report, respected theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking warned listeners of *BBC News* that unchecked $CO_2$ emissions would transform the Earth into the likeness of a "boiled"

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[6] Authors Will Self and Jeanette Winterson attribute the "crushing" economic disparities of 1990s Britain to the macroeconomics of Thatcher (Self, "Oscar;" Winterson, "How"). As scholar Lauren Berlant notes in *Cruel Optimism* (2011), continual "adjustment" to economic crises eroded collective belief in the possibility of "the good life" (7).

[7] A designation atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen coined in early 2000s to denote a geological epoch inaugurated by the climatological impact of human activities on the planet (23).

Venus (Walker). Within a few years, billionaire business magnates launched aerospace startups: whereas Richard Branson (2004) and Jeff Bezos (2004) aspired to shuttle tourists and satellites into suborbital space ("One Small" 126; Henricks 24), Elon Musk (2002) sought to colonize Mars as a techno-escapist "solution" to the climate crisis ("The Sky's" 79).

This dissertation situates itself in the historical juncture between the IPCC's First Assessment Report (1990) and its Fourth (2007) to argue that the confluence of climatological, financial, and geopolitical crises that coalesced in the 1990s and persisted into the early 2000s prompted an acute sense of the present as an intermediate epoch situated between crises (cyclic calamities) and catastrophe (singular cataclysm that reconfigures time through space).[8] The advent of the IPCC's Third Assessment Report (c. 2001), which announced the arrival of a climate-changed Britain, prompted the British media to note causal connections between unusual weather events and climate change with increasing frequency, often forging lateral links between the unfolding climate crisis, national security, and the escalation of the "war on terror."[9] Coeval with real-time media coverage of climate-changed "superstorms" and "freak" weather events, cultural producers disseminated anticipatory simulations of the crises to come. Shortly after *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) introduced theatregoers to the prospect of a submerged

[8] This dissertation builds on Evan Calder-Williams's efforts to differentiate crisis and catastrophe from apocalypse in *Combined and Uneven Apocalypse* (2011). Accepting Calder-Williams' definition of apocalypse as an end that "unveils" the totalizing structures that give the present its "historical shape" (5), this dissertation distinguishes catastrophe (before/after) from total human extinction.

[9] As evidenced when *The Guardian* (2003) deemed climate change "a weapon of mass destruction" (Carvalho and Burgess 1467).

Manhattan,[10] Google Maps launched a "Flood Map API" (2007) designed to simulate rising sea levels in one metre increments (of up to fourteen metres) anywhere on Earth.[11] British visual artists followed suit with speculative maps aimed at concretizing the consequences of a warmed world. British novelists, in turn, published texts that depicted the anticipated conditions of the Anthropocene, thereby prompting the coining of the term "cli-fi" (c. 2007) to describe an ecocritical subgenre of science-fiction.[12] Prominent authors in British literary circles voiced their concern over the unfolding climate crisis: Will Self denounced the disappearance of low-lying coastal topographies to rising seas ("On the Rocks"); David Mitchell cautioned against techno-predation prompted by petroleum depletion (Waters); and Jeanette Winterson lamented the irreversible desecration of the planet for profit (Else and Harris 51).

The overwhelming sense of having reached a political impasse during the mid-to-late 1990s expressed itself in literary depictions of durational crises so incremental as to evade public perception (Calder-Williams 158). As literary scholar and cultural theorist Lauren Berlant observes, the 1990s marked a period of political "dithering" prompted by the "impasse" of social adjustment to environmental crises (4). Throughout the 1990s, the British media also tended to treat climate change as an emergent condition sensed in everyday life yet of "real" significance only to some further-future (Berlant 5). In

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[10] The popularity of David Guggenheimer's *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) prompted the UK Labour Department of Education to distribute the film to British schools; however, legal pressure from climate skeptics later required that teachers reference a supplementary resource outlining the film's "Nine Inconvenient Untruths" (Garrard, "Climate" 62).

[11] Six years later (2013), *National Geographic* featured an array of speculative maps toggled to depict the total loss of polar-ice at an estimated global sea-level rise of sixty-six metres. In an appended caption to a map of Britain, London is deemed "a memory."

[12] Freelance reporter Dan Bloom coined "cli-fi" in 2007; however, the term did not gain widespread cultural traction until 2013, through subsequent reporting by *NPR* (Evancie), *The Guardian* (Rodge), *The Financial Times* (Clark), *VICE* (Merchant), and *The New Yorker* (Kormann).

general, literature produced between 1989-2001 tended to reflect public consensus that little could be done to ameliorate the mounting climate crisis. As such, British prose published between the IPCC's First Assessment Report (c. 1990) and its Third (c. 2001) routinely cast the present as a static (achronic) or sedimented (chronophagic) state devoid of differentiation. Most post-apocalyptic novels penned during this period tended to treat the prospect of historical finitude as an ontologically indefinite or empirically unverifiable event that culminates in a condition of perpetual crises (Heffernan 25) – a trend perhaps best exemplified by Jonathan Lethem's *Amnesia Moon* (1995), which features a post-apocalyptic condition characterized by mass amnesia that is, at once, symptomatic of historical catastrophe and a catastrophe unto itself. With the notable exception of the ice-aged Earths imagined in Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* (1998) and Doris Lessing's *Mara and Dann* (1999), most post-apocalyptic novels produced in the 1990s tended to hinge on indeterminate crises – a trend bolstered by the rise of cultural theories that sought to discredit the end as a singular, conclusive, redemptive, or revelatory event.[13]

While cultural output during the 1990s generally registered the infinite deferral of conclusive catastrophe through literary depictions of successive crises, this dissertation contends that a perspectival shift occurred in the early 2000s that changed the tenor of British post-apocalyptic prose published in the decade that followed. The release of the IPCC's Third Assessment Report, less than a month after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, sparked an acute sense of the present as a post-apocalyptic condition: whereas 1990s novels typically situated the present between crisis and catastrophe, the "war on terror"

[13] As evidenced, for example, in Baudrillard's *The Illusion of the End* (1992).

years understood the present to be an epoch bracketed by catastrophe and extinction.[14] This dissertation, therefore, follows from the premise that British cli-fi published between the ICPP's First Assessment Report (1990) and its Fourth (2007) tended to reflect scientific consensus that unchecked climate change posed a catastrophic threat to both human and non-human species (Trexler). Given this premise, this project contends that it was not until the IPCC's Third Assessment (2001) that the phenomenological impact of climate change began to alter the formal parameters of British prose.[15] To address the transhistorical and supranational reach of the climate crisis, British authors sought an experimental form capable of connecting events dispersed across vast geological timescales and geophysical distances. As ecocritic and literary scholar Ursula Heise notes, contemporary authors increasingly sought an ecocosmopolitan "template" sufficient to articulate the impact of a climate-changed Earth both locally *and* globally (*Sense*).

To bypass the limited timescales of conventional prose, authors experimented with structural heterochronicity to register the climate crisis' entrance into "history" and to concretize the anticipatory advent of species extinction. The early 2000s consequently witnessed a renewed sense of historical finitude as an actual and totalizing event – an apocalyptic sensibility last seen in late 1950s nuke novels.[16] Paradigmatic novels produced during this period, such as Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), tended to

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[14] As David Mitchell notes, Britain's invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq damaged not only the reputational integrity of the Labour Party but that of Britain worldwide (as cited in Kidd).

[15] Although the case-study texts under consideration first appeared in print between 2004 and 2007, all were conceived in the early 2000s in response to historical events that transpired in the late 1990s. This dissertation therefore attempts to address the correlation between literary text and historical event cautiously in recognition of the temporal lag that often separates the production of a literary text from the onset of socio-historical, economic, and technological developments.

[16] See, for example, Pat Frank's *Alas Babylon* (1959), Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959), or Nevil Shute's *On The Beach* (1957).

centre on a conclusive catastrophe recalled in retrospect as the narratological present careened toward a future "annulled in advance" (Baucom 138). As ecocritic and cultural theorist Frederick Buell suggested in 2003, contemporary authors increasingly depicted the post-apocalyptic as a condition already "dwelt in," rather than a future "to be feared."

As this dissertation demonstrates, British post-apocalyptic novels penned during Prime Minister Tony Blair's turbulent second term (2001-2007) tended to couch late Cold War sensibilities within a metamodernist "mode" to install a post-catastrophic awareness of the historical present accelerating toward human extinction. As literary ecocritic Adam Trexler notes in his extensive survey of "Anthropocene fictions" (2015), cli-fi novels published between the IPCC's Third Assessment Report (2001) and Al Gore's defeat (2004) register both unified calls to action and the geopolitical failure to act. The early 2000s saw British authors treat climate change not as an emergent "situation" so much as a symptom expressive of converging historical forces (Heise, *Imagining* 7). The case-study texts under consideration slightly predate the glut of British cli-fi novels published shortly thereafter (c. 2008), most of which imagines either a flooded near-future (Julie Bertagna's *Exodus* and Stephen Baxter's *Flood*), climate-changed predation (Sarah Hall's *The Carhullan Army*, Liz Jensen's *The Rapture*, and Marcel Theroux's *Far North*), or multiplanetary expansion (Paul McAuley's *The Quiet War*). In contrast to the aforementioned cli-fi, the case-study texts under consideration all deploy the "ruined-island-as-future-Earth" motif as a potent metonymic equivalent to articulate an anticipatory sense of historical finitude, presumably in order to prompt metanoia in the reader.

To date, ecocriticism devoted to the cli-fi genre tends to concentrate on speculative depictions of: soaring temperatures, wild fires, and desertification; rising seas, catastrophic flooding, and forced displacement; or the frozen realms of a speculative ice age. As such, literary ecocriticism has yet to theorize the proliferation of British cli-fi devoted to the speculative archipelagation of coastal communities (let alone that which uses metamodernist means to do so). This dissertation's focus contributes to ecocritical scholarship by filling this void. With the exception of Astrid Bracke and Adam Trexler,[17] contemporary ecocriticism has generally overlooked the literary contributions of Will Self's *The Book of Dave* (2006), David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004), and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007), even though all three novels offer productive points of entry for ecocritical interpretations. This project, therefore, builds on the scholarly contributions of Bracke and Trexler by attending to the ecocritical significance of texts "with no obvious environmental dimension" that advance an oblique critique of the contemporary sociopolitical systems implicated in the Anthropocene (Bracke, "A Sextet" 429; Trexler). Indeed, this dissertation maintains that these case-study texts constitute a climate-fictional subset of literary metamodernism foremost because all three foreground the inseparability of human experience from climatological phenomenon.

As the body chapters of this project demonstrate, the case-study texts under review play a notable role in twenty-first-century British prose that responds to climate change in part because they refuse to return the reader to either a nostalgic past *or* nightmarish future. Rather, the novels selected transport the reader to a "futureless" past that negates the projection of hope (or doom) into some further future. Moreover, all

[17] Astrid Bracke is one of few literary ecocritics to deem David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* climate fiction ("A Sextet" 429). Adam Trexler also stands apart for including Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* and Will Self's *The Book of Dave* in his survey of "Anthropocene fictions."

three novels are "double-mapped" to render transhistorical crises coeval with present catastrophe *and* future extinction. To articulate the shift in perspective that differentiates twentieth- from twenty-first-century British climate fictions, this dissertation devotes three chapters to three case-study texts: the first chapter focuses on the ruined island imagined in Will Self's *The Book of Dave* (2006), whereas the second and third chapters explore the ruined island motif in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004) and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007).[18] The chapters that comprise this dissertation progress structurally, rather than chronologically, to familiarize the reader with increasingly complex variations of British metamodernist cli-fi.

This dissertation concentrates on the aforementioned texts because they most strongly epitomize the future-Earth-as-ruined-island motif that typifies a metamodernist subgenre of British cli-fi. This dissertation suggests that the case-study novels selected represent a growing constellation of texts that critics have yet to theorize as a cohesive subgenre. Indeed, the relationship between cli-fi, sci-fi, post-apocalyptic, and speculative realist fiction remains murky and few scholars (save Astrid Bracke, Greg Garrard, Ursula Heise, and Adam Trexler) demonstrate extensive knowledge of the development of twentieth- and twenty-first-century British environmental novels.[19] As such, this

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[18] Given the number of post-apocalyptic texts authored by heterosexual Caucasian men, my inclusion of Winterson's *The Stone Gods* is, in part, intended to counteract the glaring absence of female authors from scholarship on contemporary post-apocalyptic fiction. In *Writing the Apocalypse* (1989), scholar Lois Zamora attributes the relative scarcity of female post-apocalyptic authors to the destructive, militant, totalizing, or macrocosmic elements associated with the genre (7). With the notable exception of author Octavia Butler, the dominant "voice" of the post-apocalyptic genre remains male, Caucasian, and heterosexual – a trend that suggests important correlations between post-apocalyptic prose and contemporary anxieties pertaining to heterosexual masculinity.

[19] Environmental novels produced in 1950s Britain tend to focus on the onset of nuclear winter (Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*) or terraformed planets (Arthur C. Clarke's *The Sands of Mars*). The environmental novels of the 1960s generally concentrate on population growth, urbanization, and environmental toxins (Heise, *Imagining* 7). Given this context, J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World*

dissertation is concerned with how contemporary climate change shapes the thematic and formal sensibilities of British fiction from the late 1990s to the early 2000s. Indeed, this project proceeds from the premise that melting ice caps and rising seas have altered not only the temporal horizon for human survival but the "formal possibilities of the [British] novel" (Trexler). This dissertation therefore engages with the literary tropes deployed by British authors to convey the conditions and consequences of unchecked climate change. This project takes particular interest in the potential strengths and limitations of the literary tactics British authors have used to surmount the narratological obstacles inherent to making legible the confluence of transnational and transhistorical processes of which climate change is a symptom.

In keeping with the ecocritical scholarship of Ursula Kluwick, this dissertation aims to assess the effectiveness of the metamodernist modality in prompting readers to (re)conceive of climate change as a phenomenon "symptomatic" of historical factors and contingencies (502). Indeed, this project suggests that the "structure of feeling"[20] that undergirds metamodernist cli-fi is particularly well-suited to articulating the felt experience of climate change, even if such texts fail to prompt an ideational ethos in their reader. This research therefore engages with contemporary ecocritical scholarship in its assessment of how British authors have imagined a climate-changed present and future in their prose and the role of metamodernist techniques to that practice. By applying an

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(1962) stands apart for depicting the cataclysmic consequences of melted ice-caps and rising seas. The environmental novels of the 1970s register collective confusion regarding the "greenhouse effect" through boiled *and* ice-aged Earths (Trexler). British cli-fi penned during the 1970s and 1980s tended to use the anticipated effects of climate change as a convenient backdrop for interpersonal conflict, with greater attention devoted to ozone depletion and biodiversity loss (Heise, *Imagining* 7).

[20] van den Akker, Gibbons, and Vermeulen draw on Raymond Williams' coining of the phrase to describe a "sentiment" that is so "pervasive" that it functions as a "structure" (*Long* 69).

ecocritical lens to metamodernist cli-fi, this project endeavors to discern the degree to which the texts selected both reflect and stand apart from the cultural sensibilities dominant during their period of production. My critical methodology consequently combines ecocritical cultural theory, literary criticism, and formal close readings set firmly within the context of historical research. As such, this introduction (re)situates metamodernist cli-fi with respect to precursory ruined island narratives to distinguish the former as a recognizable subgenre of British post-apocalyptic prose.

Although the bulk of this project is devoted to discussing the "ruined-island-as-future-Earth" motif in twenty-first-century British prose, literary representations of islands are an ancient and protean trope and, thus, provide a potent means for gauging the collective sensibilities specific to an age. As a literary device, island settings are used for a variety of psychological, mythical, or metaphorical purposes. Though generally pictured as discrete sites set apart from the main, islands enjoy diverse literary treatment: if encountered involuntarily through shipwreck, exile, or abandonment, the island may function as a site of unwanted confinement, limitation, subjugation, or demented experimentation. Alternatively, this selfsame site may unveil the capacity of humans to adapt to environmental or circumstantial hardship. If encountered voluntarily, the island may invite adventure, discovery, or intrigue that often culminates in colonial encounters with exoticized Others. By extension, islands may act as romanticized sites of refuge that return their world-weary inductees to a more "authentic" or emancipatory condition divorced from historical complexity. In facilitating a retreat from civilization, the island may additionally enable personal reinvention or spiritual growth. As literary and cultural theorist Joanna Rostek notes, seventeenth-century literary representations of islands often

combine the thrill of exploration with lofty colonial aspirations, as exemplified by Thomas More's *The Island of Utopia* (c. 1516), William Shakespeare's "The Tempest" (c. 1610-11), Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627), or Henry Neville's *The Isle of the Pine* (c. 1668). Island studies scholars Maeve McCusker and Anthony Soares suggest that the rapid expansion of global trade in the eighteenth century contributed to the cultural reconfiguration of islands as scientifically managed or standardized sites, as witnessed in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)[21] – arguably the most influential precursory text under consideration. Authorial treatments of islands as insular sites of scientific inquiry persisted well into the 19th and 20th century, as evidenced by H.G. Wells's dystopic *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896).

Whereas eighteenth-century satirists used the island to critique contemporary shortcomings from without, as demonstrated in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century novelists rendered the island a romantic symbol to express nostalgia for the perceived plenitude, freedom, or simplicity of a mythic past – as pictured in Johann David Wyss' *The Swiss Family Robinson* (1800), Robert Louis Stevenson *Treasure Island* (1881-82), and R.M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858). Conversely, Loxley notes that this period also saw authors deploy the island to caution against utopian visions of insularity, as exemplified by Joseph Conrad's *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896) and D.H. Lawrence's "The Man Who Loved Islands" (1927). As scholars Brigitte le Juez and Olga Springer observe, the ascent of twentieth-century postcolonial studies prompted the proliferation of postcolonial retellings of precursory texts, as epitomized by J.G. Ballard's satirization of "The Tempest" in

[21] Considered by many to be the first English novel. The first half assumes the guise of a "spiritual autobiography" before morphing into "realist" prose that extolls the economic perks of British colonialism (Franzen).

*Concrete Island* (1974) or J.M. Coetzee's critique of Defoe in *Foe* (1986). In addition to authorial efforts to rewrite the literary canon through a postcolonial lens, the twenty-first century saw the emergence of postmodernist sensibilities, in which literary depictions of rhizomatic archipelagos served to concretize liminal states, as seen in the communal mysticism of Aldous Huxley's *Island* (1962), the uncharted terrain of José Saramago's *The Tale of an Unknown Island* (1997), and the amorphous "floating island" pictured in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* (2001). Concurrent with the proliferation of ontologically indeterminate islands, the postmodern period saw authors use the island to satirize neo-Darwinist theories from a posthuman perspective, as witnessed in Bernard Malamud's *God's Grace* (1982) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Galápagos* (1985).

While more recent literary depictions of islands persist in supplying potent means to gauge the cultural *zeitgeist,* the authors considered here do not use the island as a device to facilitate the expression of a latent psychological drive. Unlike the self-as-island pictured in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, authors of metamodernist cli-fi render an island of an Earth to concretize the consequences of a climate-changed planet (Franzen). To the extent that these islands allow their authors to depict states of plenitude, austerity, depravity, or resilience, they do so because the archive suggests as much. Strikingly, the island narratives under review depart from the decentred, uncharted, or indefinite archipelagos that typified their postmodernist precursors; rather, these islands are predicated on the projection of a reiterative history deduced from past and future precarity. As the body chapters of this dissertation demonstrate, each selected novel maps the historical ruination of a remote island community onto a speculative future extrapolated from the prognostications of the IPCC. In so doing, each novel gifts the

reader with a "vision" that is at once eerily familiar and *unheimlich* in aspect to register the climatological transformation of Earth into an Earth-like planet.

**0.2 A Planetary Archipelago**

This dissertation commences with *The Book of Dave* because Self's novel contains the most straightforward depiction of the ruined-island-as-future-Earth motif: here the reader encounters twinned plotlines that alternate between a "recent past" set in millennial Hampstead Heath and a "distant future" set two-thousand years later, on the fictive Isle of Ham – a topography that maps historical Hiort[22] onto a postdiluvial Hampstead. This chapter is then followed by the sextet of "worlds" imagined in Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, of which five are cut-short then recontinued in reverse order after the introduction of the novel's central ruined island narrative. In keeping with Self's ambitious scope, Mitchell's reader is ferried from 1850s Rēkohu (Chatham Islands) through three subsequent spacetimes before arriving in thirtieth-century Ha-Why (Hawai'i's Big Island). After parsing Mitchell's metamodernist approach to historical Hawai'i's unification, this dissertation concludes with the most expansive text under review: Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*. Here, Winterson's reader is whisked through sixty-five million years dispersed across one island (Rapa Nui) and three planets (a terraformed Mars, a biodiverse Venus, and a boiled Earth), in which the latter are proxy for historical Rapa Nui, Tahiti, and Antarctica, respectively. This dissertation is devoted to these case-study texts and not, for example, to the metamodernist cli-fi of Charles Avery's *The Islanders* (2004) or Sam Taylor's *The Island at the End of the*

[22] This dissertation refers to each island by its indigenous title (Hiort, Rēkohu, Rapa Nui) instead of its colonial designation (St. Kilda, Chatham, Easter Island) in recognition of its indigenous inhabitants.

*World* (2009), because the novels selected uniformly adopt a kaleidoscopic structure that privileges the ruined island narrative as the cipher through which the novel's other worlds are accessed. Given the structural primacy of the ruined island narrative in these case-study texts, this dissertation proceeds from the foundational premise that the reader cannot make sense of these novels without first attending to the historical referents that undergird the speculative islands imagined therein.

Though contemporary scholars have written extensively on the works of Self, Mitchell, and Winterson, comparatively few attempt to explain the impetus for the ruined islands foregrounded in their post-apocalyptic novels. Given this gap in critical scholarship, my dissertation suggests that these case-study texts warrant closer critical attention because they shed light on the recent emergence of a British metamodernist cli-fi. Indeed, current literary scholarship often overlooks the historical referents coded into these ruined island narratives and therefore frequently mischaracterizes these novels as science-fiction that evinces a postmodernist rejection of referentiality, as when Maylis Rospide deems Self's sunken Hampstead rife with "incomplete" referents (203), or else when Julie Morère compares Mitchell's "Ha-Why" to a Tolkien fantasy (290). Put plainly, critics too often presume the speculative sections of each novel to unfold in an ahistorical or fabular realm. In light of such (mis)interpretations, critics frequently characterize the ruined-island-as-future-Earth topos as a device deployed to satirize a contemporary shortcoming, as when Nicole Merola deems Winterson's "Easter" a critique of twenty-first-century ecological contamination (127). To the extent that critics devote exclusive or extensive attention to the ruined island narrative, most treat that narrative as one of multiple realms within a larger structure that affirms a quantum

understanding of time, as when Sonia Front reads Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* as spatializing a quantum multiverse (73-4). This dissertation therefore intervenes in extant literary criticism by contending that Self, Mitchell, and Winterson exemplify an emergent metamodernist cli-fi that defamiliarizes the historical ruination of actual islands to make a speculative future of a "futureless" past.

If, as Berlant contends, the historical present is first perceived affectively prior to its cognitive assimilation into the narratological genre of "situation" and "event" (4), then part of the purpose of this project is to shed light on the "structure of feeling" that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s prior to climate change "becoming historical" within Britain's cultural *zeitgeist* (6). That is, this dissertation seeks to identify the dominant sociopolitical discourses that inform metamodernist cli-fi to glean a more accurate understanding of the political "impasses" that shape twenty-first-century Britain (Berlant 4). As such, this research aims to theorize not only the discursive properties that define metamodernist cli-fi but, also, to challenge certain ecocritical premises on which metamodernist cli-fi depends. In keeping with van den Akker's and Vermeulen's insistence that their scholarship is not intended to act as "a manifesto, social movement, stylistic register, or philosophy" ("Periodizing" 5-6), this dissertation does not push a metamodernist agenda but, instead, concentrates on metamodernism as a heuristic for articulating the descriptive traits that distinguish recent British cli-fi from its post-apocalyptic precursors. The purpose of this dissertation, then, is not to instrumentalize the reader into the performance of defiant acts, nor does this project evince a dissociative engagement with how best to exercise historical agency on a climate-changed planet.

Rather, this study approaches the "aesth-ethical"[23] aims of metamodernist cli-fi descriptively to better understand how narratological genre renders the affective experience of climate change "historical" (Berlant 6).

Though scholarship on contemporary post-apocalyptic fiction abounds, there is relatively little research on post-apocalyptic cli-fi. Instead, post-apocalyptic scholars tend to focus on meanings ascribed to the end[24] as a theoretical concept or as an expression of historical crises. Those who consider the latter usually concentrate on cultural representations of the end during a particular historical period, namely the late Cold War (Booker, Boyer, Cohen, Dewey, Dowling, Quinby) or interwar period (Berger, Cohen, Farrell, Grausam, Wegner). Fewer still consider literary depictions of the end during the "war on terror" years (Bellamy, Calder-Williams, Heffernan). Critics also tend to read post-apocalyptic prose in terms of transnational, national, or regional affiliations (Zamora, Goldman), literary-historical designations (modern, postmodern, or post-postmodern), or the literary treatment of class (Jameson), gender (Keller, Watkins), sexuality (Dellamora), and race (Grausam). When critics do address the significance of literary form, that address most often serves to corroborate a modernist or postmodernist designation. In short, extant scholarship on post-apocalyptic fiction has yet to note the

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[23] A neologism that denotes a politicized form of aesthetic resistance that deploys reconstructive metaxis as the means through which to advocate an ecocosmopolitical awareness of the "indebted" and "complicit" relationality of all humans to each other, to previous and subsequent generations, and to the ethical obligations that result from that relation (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 2; Gibbons, "Take" 31). The resulting "structure of feeling" prioritizes an affective perception of climate change "becoming historical" to prod readers to account for how their (in)actions contribute to the (im)possibility of a shared and sustainable planet (Gibbons, "Take" 31).

[24] Throughout this project, the "end" is used as a term to signify both a temporal *and* spatial concept: temporally, the end refers to an imagined event that ruptures the regular "flow" of time to produce a historical sense of *before* and *after*. The end also marks a spatial arrangement that sees totalizing human structures cataclysmically undone to allow new configurations to emerge.

emergence of a metamodernist strain. As such, this project strives to link contemporary British post-apocalyptic fiction, climate-fiction, and literary metamodernism in productive ways.

This dissertation thus proceeds on the operative assumption that metamodernist cli-fi is an emergent subgenre distinguished by the following characteristics: such novels feature multiple realms that span several millennia to dramatize a recursive history of ecocidal human predation. Such novels feature a ruined island narrative that collapses vast distances to draw dispersed realms together. Each island narrative is coded with intra- and extratextual cues designed to prompt the reader to note the presence of submerged referents. Moreover, most novels invite a reconstructive approach to reading[25] that, if undertaken, unveils the presence of two time periods mapped onto a single site: one that re-enacts historical events and one that enacts events yet-to-occur. Given their expansive scope, most ferry their reader between worlds and, thereby, give the reader an aerial perspective of the reiterations that unify the whole. Prior to concluding, such novels introduce a self-reflexive frame that reconfigures the whole into a series of embedded texts that are received and revised by the recurrent characters that people them. Bizarrely, such novels fuse that frame with the contents of the narrative proper, with the overarching effect of destabilizing the ontological hierarchy of realms presented. Ultimately, the reader comes away with the sense that the novel they have just read is not just a story about a "future-Earth-as-ruined-Island." Rather, the reader is led to intuit that the novel they have just finished is an *outdated tale* about the Earth-as-an-Island.

[25] A reciprocal and performative process induced by episodic metaleptic collisions that foreground how genre conditions both readerly expectations and responses (Huber and Funk 153). Metamodernist novels collapse "author, reader, and text as distinct entities" to render the text an "immersive site" that simultaneously accommodates both belief in and skepticism of authentic representation (Huber and Funk 156).

This dissertation concurs with contemporary scholars that literary metamodernism proffers potent means for processing the affective "intensities" of the twenty-first century (Gibbons, "Section II" 85). Indeed, since the appearance of the term in *The Guardian* (2014) (Batty)*, The Huffington Post* (2015) (Abramson), *The Atlantic* (2016) (Ball), and *GQ* (2018) (Woolf), over two dozen scholars have commented on the crystallization of metamodernist prose at the turn of the twenty-first century.[26] Of these, scholars tend to fall into one of three critical camps: those for whom metamodernism represents a synthesis of modernism and post-modernism[27] (Abramson; van den Akker; Contos; Dember; Gibbons; Heiser; Kersten; Toth; Turner; Vermeulen; Wilbers);[28] those who claim metamodernism remobilizes literary modernism as an Anglo-Eurocentric form of "nostalgia" (James and Seshagiri; Brunton 74);[29] and, those for whom metamodernism remains "insufficiently delineated" from postmodernism to warrant the introduction of a "new literary category" (Bentley 729; Eve 8). Of the scholars listed, only a handful identify Self, Mitchell, and Winterson as authors of metamodernist prose: Richard

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[26] See, for example: Seth Abramson, Robin van den Akker, Nick Bentley, Richard Bradford, Sam Browse, James Brunton, Brent Cooper, Martin Paul Eve, Wolfgang Funk, Alison Gibbons, Jöog Heiser, Irmtraud Huber, David James, Dennis Kersten, Patrick O'Donnell, Urmila Seshagiri, Nicoline Timmer, Sjoerd van Tuinen, Luke Turner, Marcus Verhagen, Timotheus Vermeulen, and Brian Wilbers.

[27] Even within this critical camp tensions emerge between those for whom metamodernism's synthesis of modernism and postmodernism is primarily descriptive (van den Akker, Gibbons, Verhagen, Vermeulen) and those for whom the metamodernist modality is prescriptive (Abramson, Cooper, Hanzi, Turner). This dissertation follows in the tradition of the former in understanding metamodernism to be neither a movement nor a philosophy but a pervasive "structure of feeling" within recent British cli-fi.

[28] The aforementioned critics read W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001), Brian Castro's *Shanghai Dancing* (2003), Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memories of a City* (2005), Mark Z. Danielewski's *Only Revolutions* (2006), Charles Avery's *The Islanders* (2010), Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2010), Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011) and Adam Thirwell's *Kapow!* (2012) as exemplifying metamodernism's synthesis of modernism and postmodernism.

[29] Such critics commonly read Ian McEwan's *Atonement* (2001), J.M. Coetzee's *Youth* (2002), Tom McCarthy's *Remainder* (2005), Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2013), and Zadie Smith's *How to Be Both* (2014) as epitomizing metamodernism's recuperation of literary modernism.

Bradford, Nick Lavery, David James, and Urmila Seshagiri single out Will Self's *Umbrella* (2012) as worthy of the designation; Nick Bentley, Richard Bradford, and Patrick O'Donnell place Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* within the metamodernist canon; and, James and Seshagiri stand apart in identifying Winterson's prose as metamodernist. With the exception of Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, then, this dissertation largely concentrates on cli-fi novels that critics have yet to consider within the context of British metamodernism.

While this dissertation concurs with Nick Bentley in reading metamodernism as a "category of response" that is both coeval with postmodernism[30] and shares postmodernism's tendency towards intratextual and metafictional playfulness (Bentley 735), this research disputes Bentley's assessment of metamodernism as too closely aligned with postmodernism to warrant an autonomous designation. Instead, this project understands the metamodernist modality to diverge from postmodernism in terms of the reconstructive process through which a totalizing metareality[31] surfaces to articulate the reader's felt experience of the historical present. Indeed, as metamodernist cultural theorist Alison Gibbons observes, the metamodernist modality privileges a relational structure that conceives of "modernist essentialism and postmodernist deconstruction" as of limited use in isolation but invaluable in combination ("Section II" 86). This dissertation also aligns with Robin van den Akker and Timotheus Vermeulen in reading metamodernism as an emergent modality that gestures to a shared "sensibility" that is not

[30] This dissertation is informed by Lyotard's efforts to distinguish postmodernism (as an aesthetic practice) from postmodernity (as a historical period) through Kant's theorization of the sublime. In keeping with Lyotard, this dissertation understands modernist texts to compensate for an absent sublime through unity of form and, as such, understands postmodernist texts to deny their reader the "solace" of formal unity ("Answering" 81).

[31] Defined by Abramson as a single diegetic realm comprised of incompatible data that is neither wholly connected to nor discrete from the spacetimes from which that data is gleaned ("Metamodernist").

easily "pinned down" ("Periodizing" 7). Indeed, metamodernist texts typically generate a "structure of feeling" that is "epistemologically among, ontologically between, and historically beyond" modernist belief and postmodernist doubt to advocate an aesth-ethical attitude toward the existential threat of climate change (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 2). That is, these texts implicitly espouse a pragmatic optimism that remains skeptical of modernist idealism without succumbing to postmodernist cynicism (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Utopia" 58). Rather, each novel advances a provisional grand narrative in which the non-inevitability of any given future is counterbalanced by the improbability of large-scale transformational change and the impossibility of utopian closure. At heart, the implicit ethos of metamodernist cli-fi treats the attempt to "live right" as, at once, honorable, necessary, problematic, and "illusory" (Abramson, "Ten"). The case-study texts selected epitomize metamodernist fiction in that all use reconstructive metaxis,[32] heterochronic topos, pronominal deixis,[33] and code-inversion to generate a "metareality" between and beyond the dialectical spectra.

To grasp the literary, theoretical, and historical context necessary to situate British cli-fi within the broader constellation of texts affiliated with the metamodernist modality, this dissertation turns to the scholarship of Alison Gibbons, Robin van den Akker, Marcus Verhagen, and Timotheus Vermeulen to periodize metamodernism as a modality that emerged in the early 2000s through literary depictions of heterochronic archipelagoes. Significantly, the islands discussed here do not depict the rhizomatic

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[32] In Plato's *Symposium* (c. 385-370 BC), metaxy (μεταξύ) denotes an oscillating movement among, between, and beyond two poles (202d13-e1). Contemporary political philosopher Eric Voegelin has since used the term to denote a reflexive perception of the world that oscillates between the infinite/finite, becoming/being, and immanence/transcendence ("Reason: The Classic Experience" 289-90).

[33] A person, space, or time that relies on extra-linguistic cues to establish self-world orientation.

relation of a decentred global archipelago engaged in "localized insurrections," as Nicolas Bourriaud suggests (*The Radicant* 185-86). Rather, these texts feature heterochronic islands that depict the harrowing ecological consequences of circumscribed techno-predation. To better grasp the rationale that motivates Self, Mitchell, and Winterson to conflate the speculative collapse of a climate-changed Earth with the historical collapse of a remote island community, this dissertation builds on the scholarship of van den Akker, Bentley, Gibbons, Verhagen, and Vermeulen to suggest that metamodernist authors use the spatiotemporal misalignment of the double-mapped island to register the implosive tendencies of closed ecological, financial, and geopolitical networks. In order to grasp metamodernism's "neo-historical turn" and the "reconstructive realism" that pervades metamodernist prose, this dissertation cites the scholarship of Wolfgang Funk, Peter Gratton, and Jörg Heiser. To articulate the cosmodernist[34] subject and "transnational turn" associated with the metamodernist modality, this research draws on the scholarship of Theo D'haen, Christian Moraru, Patrick O'Donnell, and Berhold Schoene. As such, this dissertation's discussion of contemporary cli-fi consequently participates in a much larger critical conversation concerned with the structure, affect, and aims of British metamodernist prose. Close readings of *The Book of Dave*, *Cloud Atlas*, and *The Stone Gods* are performed to assess the degree to which this modality succeeds in articulating a period in British history widely perceived to be bracketed by catastrophe and extinction. In so doing, this project contributes to current scholarship by evaluating the extent to which metamodernist texts reconfigure literary representations of historical finitude to instrumentalize an ideational

[34]A modality derived from "kosmopolites" (world citizen) and "cosmos" that uses "reconstructive" speculation to "map" the relation of the present to the future (Miller 4).

ethos in the reader – a topic that should interest contemporary metamodernist and post-apocalyptic scholars alike.

### 0.3 "machine. Unexpectedly, I had invented a time-"[35]

In her epilogue to *The Politics of Postmodernism* (2nd edition) published in 2002, Linda Hutcheon challenged her readers to find a label suitable to replace the reigning designation of "post-postmodernism" (181). Eight years later, Vermeulen and van den Akker answered Hutcheon's call with the publication of "Notes on Metamodernism" (2010).[36] Contemporary scholars have since described metamodernism as an "emergent cultural philosophy" (Turner), a "psychology of form" (Bourriaud, "Charles"), a "set of experiential first principles" (Abramson, "Metamodernist"), a "post-ideological open source" (Cooper, "Metamodern"), and an aesth-ethical attitude typified by the return of history and the historical agent (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 2). Fittingly, given this dissertation's focus on ruined islands, critics have compared metamodernism to a "boat being built or repaired as it sails" (Dumitresco) or, more specifically:

> [to] a scenario in which the ship sinks and the sailor, the judge, has to set sail for one island whilst understanding that each island has its value. For us metamodernism is this moment of radical doubt, of constantly, at times desperately, repositioning between the islands. (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Misunderstandings")

As Vermeulen and van den Akker clarify in "Notes," the "meta" of metamodernism does not refer to the self-reflexive "meta" of metafiction but to the

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[35] From Currie's "The Expansion of Tense" (2009): 364.

[36] Although Zavarzadeh first coined the term "metamodern" in "The Apocalyptic Fact and the Eclipse of Fiction in Recent American Prose Narratives" (1975), in this instance the term describes a body of fiction that depicts 1970s "technetronic" culture (70). Nicolas Bourriaud is widely credited with theorizing metamodernism in *The Radicant* (2009) under the designation of the "altermodernism." In "Notes on Metamodernism" (2010), Vermeulen and van den Akker substitute "meta" for "alter" to stress the structural and affective primacy of metaxy within metamodernist texts.

"meta" of metaxy – a term used by Vermeulen and van den Akker to describe the sense of structural oscillation foundational to the modality. In contrast to the deconstructive "both/and" dialectic of postmodernism (Hutcheon 49) that arose to contest the double-bind posed by the "either/or" binary of logical thought, metamodernist texts aspired to a "both/neither" paralogic established through reconstructive metaxis (van den Akker and Vermeulen, "Periodizing" 10-11). To this, Abramson clarifies that metamodernist metaxy does not denote structural oscillation between "discrete states [at] either end of a dialectical spectra" ("Metamodernism"). Rather, metamodernist metaxy prevents one pole from gaining prominence at the expense of the other to allow the emergence of a "metareality" that is simultaneously both/neither (Abramson, "Metamodernism"). In practical terms**,** metamodernist authors generate this type of metaxy by mapping multiple spacetimes onto a single site in a manner that preserves both spacetimes as distinct while allowing their interaction to produce an otherworldly third that is both/neither.

Theorists of the metamodernist modality generally concur that metamodernism crystalized in the early 2000s[37] as a cultural response to twentieth-century postmodernism and its perceived loss of "historicity, affect, and depth," then subsided a decade later (Vermeulen, "Metamodern" 149).[38] Metamodernist theorists also posit that the modality emerged in response to: the modulating networks of global capitalism and successive financial crises (dot-com bubble; Great Recession); the onset of "fourth-wave" terrorism and the subsequent "war on terror;" the connectionist logic of the Internet and the rise of

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[37] Abramson and Gibbons acknowledge that a few exceptional precursory texts date back to the 1990s (Abramson, "Metamodern;" Gibbons, "Altermodernist").

[38] In support of their claim that postmodernism's cultural currency waned in the late 1980s and 1990s, van den Akker, Gibbons, and Vermeulen cite the scholarship of Nicolas Bourriaud, Alexandra Dumitrescu, Raoul Eshelman, Andre Furlani, Alan Kirby, Gilles Lipovetsky, and Christian Moraru.

anti-globalization (WTO Seattle; Occupy) and populist movements (alt-right; Arab Spring); collective awareness of climate change coeval with the rise of geopolitical "denial machines;" and, lastly, the generational "coming of age" of millennials (c. 1981-96) in the 2000s (van den Akker and Vermeulen, "Periodizing" 4-5, 8).

As curator and art critic Nicolas Bourriaud observes, metamodernist efforts to make an island of a planet are not surprising given that orbiting satellites and GPS tracking systems have largely displaced *terra incognita* into space ("Charles" 150). Indeed, the double-mapped islands of British cli-fi unveil both the volatility and asynchronicity (*ungleichzeitigkeit*) of twenty-first-century climatological, financial, technological, and geopolitical networks (van den Akker and Vermeulen, "Periodizing" 10-12; Heiser, "Super-Hybridity" 56-7). Since globalized networks tend to avail to intuition rather than sight, the topos of the ruined island offers one possible answer to the novelistic problem of how to concretize networks normally obscured from view. The double-mapped archipelago also enabled metamodernist authors to express the collapse of global distances achieved through digitized networks, in which historical events are experienced and enacted simultaneously from multiple locations (Turner, "Metamodernist"). Through reconstructive heterochronicity, British metamodernist cli-fi authors sought to fuse the local and global to convey the reader's felt sense of the Earth as a networked structure to generate a range of vision that is neither "phenomenologically nor physically possible" (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 4).

Throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, Mitchell, Winterson, and Self expressed their dissatisfaction with available literary modalities: Mitchell insisted that continuing to conceive of the world's "unknowability" in terms of "mazes or mirrors" no

longer "cut the metaphysical mustard" ("Enter") and, instead, called for an approach that would "smudge the pencil lines" between sci-fi and non-fiction to "illuminate the contemporary world in ways that straight history [can]not" ("On Historical" 558-59). Winterson joined Mitchell in deeming literary postmodernism insufficient given "21st-century needs" and called for an approach that would reinstate affect without succumbing to the sentimentality, nostalgic escapism, or realism of the nineteenth-century novel (Fau 176). Self, too, declared postmodernist literary techniques ill-suited to "the reality of life in the 21st century" (Doherty) and, instead, sought to destabilize the "categories within which [readers are] used to perceiving their world" (Finney, "Will") by challenging the "limits of naturalism" and "commonplace realism" ("Modernism"). As writer/blogger Seth Abramson argues in his boldly titled "Metamodernist Manifesto" (2015), metamodernism displaced postmodernism as the "dominant cultural logic of Western capitalist societies" because twenty-first-century authors recognized postmodernism's strengths as limited to "deconstructive binaries within two-dimensional spectra" ("Metamodernism").[39] Thus, in the wake of the IPCC's Third Assessment Report, a distinctive "post-postmodernism" emerged: one that applied a postcolonial lens to modernist sensibilities while evincing a postmodernist understanding of modernism as a historical paradigm and cultural repository (James and Seshagiri 88; 91).[40]

As a still-emergent literary modality, metamodernist cli-fi exhibits wide-ranging characteristics. Although theorists affiliated with the so-called "Dutch School" often note

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[39] Although this dissertation builds on Abramson's suggestion that the metamodernist modality differs from other modalities in its production of an affective "metareality" that oscillates between and beyond that of the dialectic spectra, this dissertation recognizes that metamodernist scholars fault Abramson with violating academic integrity standards.

[40] Metamodernism periodizes modernism as a "historically conditioned" (c. 1890-1940) and "culturally specific" (Anglo-Western European) cluster of texts (James and Seshagiri 88; Bentley 736).

the modality's "utopian" (MacDowell), "post-solipsistic" (Timmer) or "neo-romantic" (van Tuinen) traits, the aforementioned qualities are largely absent from (or of secondary importance to) the metamodernist novels under consideration here. Rather, metamodernist cli-fi tends to feature certain "historioplastic" (Toth) or "performative" (Eshelman) elements associated with the modality as well as "reconstructive" approaches to reading (Huber and Funk). As the body chapters of this dissertation demonstrate, Self renders the nineteenth-century ruination of a remote island in the Scottish Outer Hebrides (Hiort) spatially indistinguishable from that of millennial Hampstead Heath; Mitchell transposes Hawai'i's eighteenth-century "unification" onto thirtieth-century "Ha-Why;" and Winterson maps the annihilation of nineteenth-century Rapa Nui onto a terraformed Mars. To depict the historical desecration of their respective islands aslant, each author projects that history onto a speculative topography that, in turn, registers the speculative consequences of a climate-changed Earth: rising seas submerge Self's speculative Hampstead; territorial displacements upend Mitchell's Ha-Why; and, soaring temperatures scorch Winterson's Mars. To make an island of Earth, Self's novel unveils poignant affinities between the technological dependencies that catalyze Ham's collapse and the technological dependencies that cemented Hiort's own. Mitchell similarly renders speculative Ha-Why temporally indistinguishable from historical Hawai'i through congruent acts of techno-predation. Winterson too makes an island of a planet by drawing poignant parallels between present-day "visionaries" seeking to off-world humans to Mars (Hawkings; Musk) and the colonial aspirations of eighteenth-century seafarers (Cook; Dutrou-Bornier).

As such, each case-study text centres on a historical island made *unheimlich*, in part, through topographical displacements and temporal compressions that enable the synchronic arrangement of incompatible spacetimes (Abramson, "Metamodern"). To the extent that these texts diverge from recorded history, they do so to foreshorten the historical gap that separates a "distant past" destabilized by remediable crises from a "recent past" rocked by catastrophe: Self, for example, condenses over two-hundred-years of Hiortan history (c. 1684-1878) into a period of fourteen (c. 1864-78) to link the island's economic collapse to techno-predation enabled by religious zealotry; Mitchell too condenses Hawai'i's historical unification to underscore territorial consolidation as enabled by British intervention (c. 1790-94); Winterson likewise distills events separated by several centuries into a single afternoon to reframe Rapa Nui's civil war (c. 1680-1774) and colonial occupation (c. 1868-1914) in light of earlier ecological crises (c. 1450-1680). Ultimately, all three novels effect temporal compressions that reframe historical catastrophe in terms of precursory crises to negate the notion that catastrophe strikes without warning, as if from some historical vacuum. Moreover, each historical island is rendered otherworldly through ironized inversions made legible through intra- and extratextual cues. Self's speculative treatment of Hiort, for example, structurally repositions seventeenth-century establishment cronies as nineteenth-century political dissidents, whereas Mitchell's speculative Hawai'i reimagines Anglo-European carriers of Eurasian diseases as racialized others immune to contagion (*Cloud* 259-60). Both novels invert the peripheral perspectives of "historical Others" to call attention to omissions in the historical archive with the effect of unsettling Anglo-European accounts (Rousselot 11). The ironized inversions of historical referents function here to generate a

"ludic distance" between the historical period narrativized, the ironized surface of the text, and the contemporary sensibilities of its author (Bentley 731). In contrast to works of historiographic metafiction, metamodernist novels are designed to be regarded as "outdated" to call attention to history as a "genre" indistinguishable from that of Empire (Bentley 732). Metamodernist novels thus strive for historical accuracy while undermining claims to "total" or "perfect" understandings (Rousselot 4). In this respect, metamodernist cli-fi features rigorously faithful *inversions* of recorded history to conjure a sense of "depthiness" through the appearance of contact with an "ultimate ground" (Vermeulen, "Metamodern" 148).

Significantly, all three novels couch the ruination of their respective islands with the arrival of an outsider. Self's inaugural chapter announces the arrival of the island's rent-collector (*Book* 10). Mitchell's "Ha-Why" commences with the arrival of foreign traders. Winterson too begins her account of Rapa Nui with the incursion of European explorers. On the one hand, this trope serves the literary function of supplying the author with cause to describe aspects of the island that a local would simply take for granted. For Mitchell and Winterson, the initiate's progression from alienated outsider to knowing inductee matches that of the reader and thereby encourages readerly identification and investment. Yet, counter to convention, Self, Mitchell, and Winterson do not dramatize first contact as *the* moment of contamination. Far from acting as the unwitting or malicious agent of the island's collapse, these newly arrived "outsiders" occupy the dual role of detective and witness: they work to decipher who or what contributed to the island's current crisis and are left to testify to its apogee: whereas Self's novel anticipates the catastrophe-to-come but withholds its fruition, Winterson's novel commences at its

height, and Mitchell's novel intercedes long after its advent. This moment of arrival is significant because it establishes both the timeliness of the protagonist to the catastrophe itself and, by extension, the perceived timeliness of the novel to the catastrophes of a warmed world.

In her analysis of metamodernist heterochronicity, Gibbons comments that part of what enables the double-mapped island to generate an affective "third" through reconstructive metaxy is the collapse of pronominal difference (I/you) that delineates proximal deixis (here/now) from distal deixis (then/there) ("Take" 32). To achieve this form of collapse, the case-study texts selected all feature transmigratory characters whose projected lives exceed their spatialization (Morton 156). In *The Book of Dave*, for example, Ham's Antonë Böm recurs as Hampstead's Anthony Bohm – characters that satirize historical Hiort's Alexander Buchan (c. 1705-30). In *The Stone Gods*, Rapa Nui's Billy Crusoe recurs as Orbus' Billie Crusoe – characters in turn modelled after Captain Cook's astronomer, William Wales (c. 1734-98). Although most transmigratory characters lack the perspectival "distance" required to discern their participation within the vast reiterative history of the novel, some occasionally glimpse aspects of the greater whole through metalepsis.[41] In each metaleptic episode, the future-past momentarily impinges on the novel's narratological present to gift select characters with the ability to intuit transhistorical resonances, as when Mitchell's future-most protagonist briefly glimpses "all the lives [his] soul ever was" (*Cloud* 302) or, else, when Self's millennial cab-driver is visited by a sudden vision of central London submerged in "rivers of light" (*Book* 404). Frequently, these uncanny episodes enable characters to deduce

[41] A narratological term coined by Gérard Genette (c. 1983) to denote the violation of embedding that disturbs the ontological hierarchy of diegetic levels, as when a narrator intrudes upon the realm of the narrated or vice-versa (131).

transhistorical affinities between the historical present and that of another diegetic realm – a process that in turn mirrors the experience of the reader who is similarly encouraged to discern affinities between the autocatalytic crises pictured within the novel and those that unfold outside the text (Hopf 111).

In addition to momentarily perceiving the whole of which they are a part, select transmigratory characters recover, rewrite, and disseminate the immersive textual world inhabited by their "future" selves. Self's speculative protagonist, for example, recovers the "Book of Dave" interred by his millennial precursor. Likewise, the protagonist of Winterson's penultimate section retrieves the manuscript penned by her speculative successor. And, in the most ornately patterned text of the three, Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* is revealed to be a travel journal described in a letter received in a detective novel depicted in a film screened for a clone whose holographic projection astonishes a goatherd whose life-story is told to an unspecified audience. In short, all three case-study texts use metalepsis to collapse author, reader, and text as distinct entities with the aim of prodding the reader to reconceive of the self as a "discursive construction" (Bentley 731).

The ontological hierarchy of worlds that sees transmigratory character-authors modify the text of their precursor while, on occasion, glimpsing the contours of the fiction of which they are a part is then *further* complicated by the addition of a metafictional frame that structurally repositions the worlds imagined therein as fictive episodes within an all-encompassing manuscript. Winterson's *The Stone Gods*, for example, renders two of three Crusoes virtual avatars in the manuscript of the third. Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* likewise renders four of six transmigratory protagonists avatars in the tale of the sixth. The delayed addition of this metafictional frame initially appears to

award the greatest ontological weight to the outermost diegetic realm through which the novel's other worlds are accessed; however, the metaleptic episodes that transpire within that frame structurally prevent the text (as medium) from fusing with its ideological contents (as sign-within-medium), thereby generating a "post-medium" awareness of the ontological hierarchies within the text as genres used to lend form meaning (Bourriaud, "Charles" 148, 151). These metaleptic episodes structurally reposition the fictive author as both interior and exterior to their own text as, for example, when Winterson's author-protagonist is asked by one of her own characters "if this is how [her manuscript] will end" (*Stone* 203) or, else, when the fictive-author of the "Book of Dave" crosses diegetic levels to reassure another character that the island's "destruction would have come anyway, sooner or later" (*Book* 450). Ultimately, incompatible virtual realms are conjoined within a "post-medium" metareality that destabilizes the ontological weight upon which eternal return depends (Abramson, "Metamodernist").

In spatializing time as a doubled-mapped island "looked upon" as if "from a height," metamodernist novels espouse a logic that is at once affective yet incompatible with common-sense (Gibbons, "Take" 32). That is, metamodernist novels compress and displace multiple spacetimes to gift the reader with sufficient "prevision" to "look back" on the historical present as if from a state of future obsolescence (Gibbons, "Take" 32). Heterochronic devices displace the parameters of the present with that of a future-past to afflict the reader with a paradoxical sense of being simultaneously "here, there, and nowhere" (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 12). Metamodernist novels thus couch the "embodied actualities of catastrophe" within a heterochronic architecture to

structurally surmount the perspectival determinism of the "future anterior"[42] (James and Seshagiri 96). As Robin van den Akker explains in his comments on "metamodern historicity," contrastive to the futurist aspirations of modernism (that walks out the "front door" toward a "radiant city") and the "presentism" of postmodernism (that glances "out the back window" while "redecorating the interior"), the heterochronicity of metamodernism opens "a back door while walking [out the] front" ("Metamodern" 22-3).

### 0.4 "Fiction as a Medium"[43]

Metamodernist cli-fi differs from other climate fictions in that the former creates a sense of affect accessible to the reader only through extratextual engagements with history. To discern the historical referents mapped onto speculative topographies extrapolated from the prognostications of the IPCC, contemporary readers must adopt an unconventional approach to reading. To detect the presence of historical referents partially veiled by temporal compressions, ironic inversions, and double-mapped displacements, the reader must connect the reiteration of transhistorical patterns scattered across the novel's recursive "worlds" to those keyed into the extratextual fiction and nonfiction penned by that author. To accommodate readerly engagement with references woven across multiple texts, the author must first conceive of each text as Will Self does, as a discrete "topography" embedded within a much larger "archipelago" of which it is "a piece" (*Junk Mail* 341), or as David Mitchell does, as a discrete chapter within a "sprawling macro-novel" (Mason). As the methodology deployed in this dissertation

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[42] Novels "tensed" in the future anterior render the historical present predetermined in advance by recalling the near future as the ruinous past of some still-further future (Antakyalioğlu 4). Kurt Vonnegut's *Galápagos* (1985) offers a particularly striking example of the perspectival determinism created by the future anterior.

[43] Bourriaud's "Charles Avery: A Topology" from *The Islanders*, 148.

demonstrates, it is only through reading each novel in lateral relation to the author's extant corpus that the reader gleans an awareness of the semi-veiled referents that undergird the whole. This dissertation follows from the premise that each case-study text invites a reconstructive approach to reading: one that encourages the reader to decrypt algorithmic patterns woven through heterochronic topographies. Arguably, what facilitates this shift in the role of the reader from passive consumer to reconstructive detective is the ubiquity of digitized texts equipped with searchable fields. In contrast to the postmodernist practice of literary pastiche, metamodernist authors exploit the "super-hybridity" of digitized repositories to evoke a "structure of feeling" specific to the early twenty-first century.

Although parsing the significance of extratextual reiterations might appear antithetical to the proliferation of digitized texts as disposable surfaces capable of sustaining only limited attention, any reader so motivated can exploit searchable fields to resituate a text in lateral relation to the digitized contents of another. Reconstructive reading therefore hinges on the degree to which the reader commits to the labour of attentive reading and strategic rereading. While the keen reader may exploit searchable texts to discern historical references half-hidden, the effort required to do so is likely to alienate those who simply lack the time, means, or inclination. Given the degree to which each novel relies on the historical dimensions of its ruined counterpart for narratological coherence, one might question the rationale behind couching each within a defamiliarizing frame instead of depicting that history overtly? This dissertation contends that these authors do not make a distant future of a recent past to disclose the specific conditions that catalyzed the historical ruination of their given island; their purpose is to

compel their reader to confront "history" itself as a genre of thought. By ferrying the reader through the twenty-first century towards an increasingly precarious "future-past," each author indirectly critiques the condition of perpetual crises that limits 1990s novels to the long or moving now. Self, Mitchell and Winterson all require their reader to "dredge" the history of the present from the "mire of futurity" to show how the past shapes actions performed in the present that then collide with happenstance to potentiate transhistorical outcomes (Self, "On the Thames"). At the risk of alienating their readers, the aforementioned authors make a ruined island of the Earth to bypass the insufficiencies of anterior retrospection while retaining the structural potency of that tense. In so doing, each enables their reader to grasp, on a conceptual level, what the author cannot otherwise portray phenomenologically: the incremental propulsion of the present towards the status of a "futureless" past.

Metamodernist texts are laced through with intratextual echoes, metaleptic collisions, inverted referents, and the delayed addition of a metafictional frame to call the reader's attention to transhistorical networks of "indebted" relationality (Gibbons, "Take" 31). In depicting the advance of the present toward a "futureless" past, metamodernist novels espouse an ethos that presumes that the reader cannot escape their "participation in global systems" ("Take" 39). As such, metamodernist texts conceive of the twenty-first century as a "social simulation rife with ideological inconsistency, technological oppression, and alienation from species-being" without foregoing belief in the possibility of a more equitable world (Cooper, "Metamodern"). While Self, for example, once aspired to the "wholesale transformation of the social order by whatever means necessary" in his youth, in adulthood the author realized both the "incommensurability of

the means available and the ends desired" ("Oscar"). Similarly, metamodernist cli-fi espouses a pragmatic idealism that anticipates the worst while hoping to align "what is right with what is possible" (Cooper, "Metamodern"). Self now espouses a "quietistic" stance of simply "doing less harm" rather than "more good" (Doherty). By extension, the novels under review adhere to an ideational ethos that values individual actions undertaken to mitigate autocatalytic warming, even if those actions ultimately prove ineffective in achieving substantive results (Bentley 726, 729; Gibbons, "Take" 31). It is better, such authors imply, to strive to "live right" and fall short of that objective than to accept the alternative (techno-escapist optimism; enviro-materialist pessimism). The texts considered therefore do not presume, through localized or individual example, to catalyze the reiterative performance of likeminded actions by a multitude to affect an alternative historical trajectory for humanity, as Luke Turner (2011) and Seth Abramson (2015) imply in their respective "Metamodernist Manifestos." The metamodernist cli-fi considered within this dissertation is not apolitical or defeatist but "performative" in that each novel performs the notion of belief in historical agency (Dember). Indeed, the both/neither and between/beyond oscillation that undergirds the metamodernist project short-circuits the type of cynical optimism that envisions human survival in terms of divine, authoritarian, or techno-escapist intervention.

### 0.5 "In the Ruins of the Future"[44]

Significantly, the emergence and ascent of literary metamodernism in the early 2000s coincided with much broader cultural efforts to "think, feel and perceive historically, spatially and corporeally" (Vermeulen, "Metamodern Depth" 149). As

[44] From DeLillo's "In the Ruins of the Future." *Harper's*, Dec. 2001, pp. 33-40.

metamodernist blogger Brent Cooper argues in his assessment of the "Metamodern Condition," widespread desire for greater spatiotemporal and affective "depth" prompted the proliferation of "deep" fields (deep psychology/ecology/sociology) as well as the pattern-seeking "depthiness" of contemporary conspiracy theory ("Deep-State"). Renewed interest in reinstating grand unified theories through "depth" found expression in efforts to (re)situate the historical present with respect to transhistorical phenomenon (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 2-3). Variously described as a History's "Return" (Kagan) or "Revenge" (Milne), the late 1990s and early 2000s witnessed numerous cultural attempts to restore collective belief in futurity through the concretization of deep time (van den Akker, "Historicity" 21; van den Akker and Vermeulen, "Periodizing" 2). In certain circles, this cultural sensibility found expression in the proliferation of sweeping cultural studies (Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*) and popular science texts (Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel*; Ronald Wright's *A Short History of Progress*) that sought to probe the "precise laws and specific effects" of topographical variables on human behaviour (O'Donnell 12).

Akin to the metamodernist project, enviro-materialist approaches to the study of human civilizations also tend to centre on the historical collapse of the ruined island. As the body chapters of this dissertation demonstrate, the metamodernist novels under consideration all appropriate from popular science enviro-materialist accounts of the ruined island to restore to the reader the felt experience of being present in history. At the same time, all three case-study texts couch their respective histories within a metamodernist modality that refutes the predictive determinism associated with popular science. As such, this dissertation proposes that the ruined islands imagined within *The*

*Book of Dave* (2006), *Cloud Atlas* (2004), and *The Stone Gods* (2007) register the impact of enviro-materialist approaches to history that purport to place the present in "measureable relation" to the past while resisting enviro-materialist formulations (O'Donnell 18). More specifically, this dissertation posits that all three novels register the cultural impact of Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997) and *Collapse* (2005): bestselling popular science texts that link circumscribed "grain-fed" populations to ecocide on the grounds that techno-predation requires unlimited territorial expansion. Whereas *Guns* supplies the reader with a biogeographical account of thirteen millennia to (re)contextualize five-hundred years of Western European colonial domination, *Collapse* parses the biogeographical constraints that cause geophysically circumscribed societies to collapse at the height of their affluence, when popular demand for resources peaks (Clark 205). Diamond arrives at these central theses by staging sweeping "natural history experiments," in which circumscribed populations descended from a common ancestor[45] are compared to assess the impact of climatological and topographical variables on techno-predation (*Collapse* 87; *Guns* 53-66).

Using remote islands as "control sites" from which to test the impact of environmental variables, Diamond deems foraging communities prone to decentred egalitarianism and agricultural communities to expansionist predation, as the lee and windward communities of Hawai'i's Big Island demonstrate (*Guns* 64-5). Diamond goes on to posit that egalitarian societies tend to succumb to predation unless inoculated against encroachment through geophysical obscurity, as Norse Orkneys' indigenous Pict population evidences (*Collapse* 191-95). Yet, once indigenous isolationism is

[45] *Guns, Germs, and Steel* takes for its "control" population the Polynesian migration of Lapita potters from the Bismarck Archipelago of New Guinea (53-66), whereas *Collapse* tracks the North Atlantic migration of Norse Vikings (178-210).

"breeched," encapsulated topographies prove particularly conducive to techno-predation from without, as the Moriori of Rēkohu demonstrate (*Guns* 53-56). While geophysical and climatological variables often potentiate civilizational collapse, Diamond ultimately suggests that circumscribed populations may still exercise some agency in their response to environmental limitation.

At least initially, critics deemed *Guns* and *Collapse* "timely, compelling" (York and Mancus 159), and, even, the "most incisive story of senescing human civilizations ever written" (Flannery 45). However, critics have since faulted Diamond's theorization of techno-predation as an autocatalytic process curbed largely by authoritarian degree[46] or environmental limitation. Although Diamond does not cast techno-predation as biologically innate, his "natural history experiments" insinuate that it remains a latent human tendency. Ultimately, Diamond's sweeping studies seek to replace a "great man" model of history comprised of "one damn fact after another"[47] with a "Deep History" predicated on environmental variables that, once isolated, might reveal causal chains with predicative applications (*Guns* 421-22). As the subtitles of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* and *Collapse* indicate, Diamond aspires to translate historical facts into transferable formulations to gauge, with greater accuracy, the "*Fates of Human Societies"* given *"How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive*." Indeed, Diamond concludes *Collapse* by

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[46] Although Diamond concedes that autocrats have occasionally prevented or eradicated technologies essential to predation (guns in Japan, for example) such instances are exceedingly rare and almost always necessitate complete geophysical and cultural isolation (*Guns* 257-58).

[47] Tellingly, Diamond's phrase modifies historian Arnold Toynbee's modification of a misquoted excerpt from the personal correspondence of poet Edna St. Vincent Millay. Originally, the latter wrote: "It is not true that life is one damn thing after another – it's one damn thing over and over" (c. 1909). In the 9th volume of *A Study of History* (1954), Toynbee misquoted Millay to refute the notion that "life is just one damn thing after another" (195). In the 1957 abridgement of *A Study*, Toynbee replaces the word "life" with "history" (267). Diamond modifies Toynbee's statement further by replacing "thing" with "fact," thereby implying that life is reducible to history and that history is comprised of "facts" and not "things."

expressing his "optimism" that the enviro-materialist methods championed therein might enable contemporary historians to theorize the fate of the human species as "scientifically" as paleontologists' have theorized that of the "dinosaurs"[48] (*Guns* 423-25).

A much noted shortcoming of Diamond's enviro-materialist approach to the study of human civilizations is that it tends to gloss over uneven patterns of response and contradictions internal to most human collectives (York and Mancus 160-61). In electing to view human civilizations as holistic totalities shaped by biogeographical propensities, Diamond's account often overlooks how spatiotemporal and ethical assumptions as well as historical forms of contingency might, in turn, shape the "fates" of human civilizations. As sociologists Richard York and Philip Mancus contend, Diamond's popular science often suffers from "the myopia of the present, where it is all too easy to see past events inevitably leading to the contemporary world" (160). Worse still, Diamond frequently curates archeological data to downplay the role of colonial violence in the "formation and maintenance of state power" (Wilcox 98). As postcolonial anthropologist Michael Wilcox observes, Diamond's displacement of the genocidal consequences of European techno-predation onto the "accident" of biogeographical precondition in *Guns* complements the "choice" of environmental mismanagement attributed to indigenous islanders in *Collapse* (99-100). Bizarrely, Diamond extends human agency exercised in response to biogeographical preconditions only to circumscribed indigenous populations, not Anglo-European colonialists (Wilcox 92-93). Considered collectively, then, *Guns* and *Collapse* displace the impacts of techno-

[48] Diamond's failure to comment on the implied posthuman prognosis invoked by his humans-as-dinosaurs analogy suggests an unintended yet striking connotation.

predation onto the predated by rendering indigenous populations an "ecological" rather than social category in a "move" that (unwittingly) unveils the reliance of European exceptionalism on fictions of indigenous environmental mismanagement (Correia 5).

Despite the disquieting premises that underpin Diamond's "natural history experiments," twenty-first-century climate science adopted enviro-materialist approaches to the study of civilizational collapse. Throughout the early 2000s, respected climate science journals[49] reframed the past as "littered with the wreckage of history's climate victims" (Correia 4). These climate-collapse histories cite the "demise" of "ancient, low-tech, small-scale societies" on the pretext that such histories offer twenty-first-century humans salutary lessons for grappling with contemporary climate change (McNeill 174). Explicitly or not, the climate-collapse genre purports to furnish readers with the means to avoid or correct the short-sighted dependencies presumed to cement the historical collapse of circumscribed indigenous populations.

This dissertation argues that Self, Mitchell, and Winterson follow Diamond's lead in using the remote island as the singularity through which to gauge the relation of the recent past and distant future. In keeping with Diamond, the aforementioned authors all situate ecocidal predation as a phenomenon that transpires in isolated topographies predisposed to technological diffusion despite climatological hardship. In other words, in their depiction of their respective islands, all three authors take up Diamond's suggestion that geophysical isolation is both an attractant to and consequence of unchecked predation, and that circumscribed sites are disproportionately prone to collapse (*Guns* 291-92). The historical islands that undergird the novels of Self, Mitchell, and Winterson

[49] In 1995, for example, *Nature* attributed the demise of the Mayans to population growth and drought, thereby ushering in a spate of subsequent articles noting "climate/collapse correspondences in Mesopotamia, West Asia, Egypt, and Maghreb" (Correia 4).

are all exceptionally remote: Hiort lies 180 kilometres west of the Scottish mainland (Self, "On the Rocks"); Hawai'i is set at a 3,673 kilometre remove from California (*Guns* 237); and 3,690 kilometres separate Rapa Nui from Chile (Schalansky 174).

Apart from their shared status as discrete "worlds," the aforementioned islands developed in near total social isolation: the Hiortans and Hawaiians both enjoyed roughly two thousand years of cultural isolation before the arrival of Norse Vikings (c. 800 AD) and the British (c. 1778), and approximately eight hundred years separated Rapa Nui's original settlement from its "discovery" by Dutch explorers c. 1722 (Maclean 31; *Guns* 64; *Collapse* 80). The authors also assume Diamond's premise that geophysical remoteness, cultural isolation, and loss of mobility rendered the islands susceptible to collapse from techno-predation. On Hiort and Rapa Nui, the islanders' subsequent loss of mobility further enshrined their physical isolation from "outsiders:" within five generations, the Hiortans lost the "know-how" to fashion a seaworthy canoe and, within twenty, the Rapa Nui lacked sufficient materials to do so (Maclean 100; *Collapse* 106-8).

Aside from their shared isolation, Hiort and Rapa Nui both sit at latitudes that induce cold, windy, and arid climates. Whereas the Hiortans thrived for centuries as egalitarian foragers of seafowl (Maclean 90), the Hawaiians and Rapanui devised agricultural stockpiles sufficient to sustain techno-predation sanctified through the construction of ceremonial monuments (*Guns* 61; *Collapse* 92-3). When the Hawaiians exceeded their islands' resources, they forcibly expanded their territorial holdings; the Rapanui, on the other hand, exhausted the means to extend their bounds and redirected their labour to the desecration of ceremonial monuments (*Guns* 64; *Collapse* 110-11; Bossen 248-50). In this respect, these novels appear to confirm Diamond's overarching

thesis that environmental propensities enable latent tendencies towards techno-predation that, once enabled, stimulate an autocatalytic process halted only by environmental limitation or authoritarian command. Indeed, the authors share Diamond's reverence for indigenous ingenuity exercised under such conditions. Given the common climatological and geophysical attributes of Hiort and Rapa Nui, it is no small achievement that the islanders managed to surmount the environmental challenges of their respective islands to sustain continuous populations for such substantial intervals.

Similarly, all three novels proceed by dramatizing Diamond's contention that, once mapped, isolated topographies attract particularly virulent strains of techno-predation installed through colonial incursion. Once "discovered," the relative obscurity of Hiort, Hawai'i, and Rapa Nui made each an attractive target for colonialist exploitation: whereas colonialist entrepreneurs seized Hiort in the 15th century (Maclean 36), enterprising 18th-century explorers jostled for possession of Hawai'i and Rapa Nui (Bossen 248; *Collapse* 112). Collectively, colonialist expansion motivated by resource capture resulted in the enslavement of indigenous groups, the militarized occupation of ancestral land, environmental scarcity, the introduction of non-native species, and outbreaks of virulent epidemics. Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* paints a particularly striking portrait of the "domino effect" sparked by colonial expansion, in which newly displaced communities utilize the techniques of their colonizers to seize the territory of other vulnerable populations. Confronted with depletion, famine, and disease, all three islands saw a spike in religious zealotry and civil unrest. On Hiort and Rapa Nui, geophysical isolation and climatological hardship compelled an ardency of belief that subsequently

rendered the locals vulnerable to lethal religious rites billed as curative, with the effect of cementing an otherwise remediable crisis (Maclean 122; *Collapse* 109).

However, while Self, Mitchell, and Winterson share Diamond's inclination to read twenty-first-century Earth as an ecocidal island and global capitalism as feudal kleptocracy magnified (*Guns* 417), they depart from Diamond in deeming cultural belief and religious practice responsive to, but not determined by, environmental preconditions. Through offering their readers ironized depictions of Anglo-European colonizers, Self, Mitchell, and Winterson posit a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between socio-environmental precarity, epistemological polarization, and communal scapegoating than Diamond. Although Self agrees with Diamond that predation is sustained through technological dependencies that repurpose technological losses into recuperative gains, Self refutes Diamond's claim that technological dependencies, once entrenched, are curbed only by environmental limitation or authoritarian prohibition. Mitchell is perhaps the most overt in rejecting Diamond's enviro-materialism for presuming to access a total history with which to isolate and project human propensity. Mitchell counters that techno-predation is not a latency enabled by enviro-materialist variables but a perspective enabled by intergenerational fictions that install a teleological model of human progress. Winterson expands on Mitchell's critique by exposing Diamond's account as, itself, predicated on the fiction of a fixed origin (date of settlement). For Winterson, techno-predation recurs because such practices purport to restore to a near-future the imagined plenitude of a mythic past. Though Self, Mitchell, and Winterson follow Diamond's lead in anchoring their prose in the materiality of their respective islands, all critique Diamond's enviro-materialism for discounting the *material* impact of inculcated patterns

of belief. These authors therefore surpass Diamond in offering their reader a more nuanced account of how enviro-materialist preconditions coalesce with ritualized belief to catalyze ecocidal collapse. Ultimately, it is the historical inputs that Diamond dismisses as inconsequential because idiosyncratic (religious belief and cultural practice) that Self, Mitchell, and Winterson foreground as foundational to the "fates" of human societies.

**0.6 Chapter Summaries**

The first chapter of this dissertation is devoted to Will Self's *The Book of Dave* (2006) and takes for its focus the novel's distant future, which transpires on the speculative "Isle of Ham" (c. 509-524 AD).[50] This chapter argues that Self does not merely model his fictive islet after a climate-changed Hampstead, as critics tend to assume. Rather, this chapter contends that Self models speculative Ham after historical Hiort – a remote archipelago in the Scottish Outer Hebrides. More specifically, this chapter suggests that Self models his novel's distant future after Hiort's recent past (c. 1684-1878) to foreground poignant parallels between present-day crises born of petroleum dependencies and the conspiratorial price-fixing that decimated Hiort's (fulmar) oil industry. As such, this chapter aims to establish that Self's speculative future is neither speculative nor futuristic but a satiric compression of Hiort's recent past that enables Self's reader to look back on the present as if from a future-past that is "futureless." This chapter posits that Self's speculative Ham yokes Diamond's Norse Greenland "experiment" in *Collapse* with the thesis advanced in *Guns, Germs, and Steel,* in which Diamond cites paraffin's demise as incentivizing gasoline's ascent to illustrate

[50] Here AD is an acronym for "After Dave" to denote the postdiluvial discovery of Dave's "Book."

how corporations repurpose economic losses into recuperative gains through the fabrication of "unmet" needs. Echoing Diamond, Self illustrates the implosive tendencies of closed geopolitical systems in the form of short-lived "boom and bust" economic cycles; however, Self goes on to refute Diamond's theorization that technological "diffusion" constitutes an autocatalytic process disrupted only by environmental restriction or authoritarian decree (*Guns* 257-58). Instead, Self's speculative future establishes a nuanced spectrum of complicity in which religious zealotry enables techno-predation as much as geophysical and corpocratic encapsulation. Thus, while Self shares Diamond's view that contemporary global capitalism amplifies the machinations of nineteenth-century kleptocracies (*Guns* 417), Self oscillates in his assessment of the capacity of individuals to challenge the structural obstacles and moneyed interests that perpetuate petroleum dependency. At heart, this chapter asserts that the historical past on which Self's speculative future is based repositions present-day petroleum dependency as a perspectival problem arrived at through historical distortion, cynical opportunism, and corpocratic encapsulation as much as environmental propensity.

The second chapter of this dissertation considers the distant-most future depicted in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004). Akin to the speculative portions of Self's *Book of Dave*, Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* hinges on the speculative collapse of a remote island community: here, Ha-Why's Big Island similarly functions to enable the reader to look "back" on the present from a future-past that is "futureless." Moreover, Mitchell's novel also registers the cultural impact of Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997) – specifically, its second chapter, in which Diamond cites Rēkohu and Hawai‘i as evidence that geographical and climatological propensities contributed to the differential

development of Polynesian archipelagos (*Guns* 53-66). Thus, in keeping with Self's engagement with Diamond, Mitchell's speculative Ha-Why registers Diamond's thesis that grain-fed high-density populations are prone to predation and that, had Hawai‘i enjoyed "a few more millennia" of isolation, the "proto-State" might have emerged as "a full-fledged Empire" (*Guns* 66). Mitchell's speculative portrait of Ha-Why disputes Diamond's characterization of the archipelago as a "pristine" proto-State by emphasizing, through satiric inversion, the intrusive presence of British seafarers who, in supplying advanced weaponry to enterprising chiefs, enabled the expulsion of Hawai‘i's windward communities (*Guns* 282). Ultimately, *Cloud Atlas'* distant-most future suggests that Diamond's "natural history experiment" is flawed on two counts: first, Diamond attributes the expansive reach of Empire to the Earth itself, at the expense of happenstance and willed-acts sanctioned by belief; second, Diamond presumes to formulate universal theories from historical outcomes without accounting for the necessary mediation of history as a storied reconstruction. At heart, this chapter contends that Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* frames Diamond's account of Empire as an intergenerational fiction sustained through deterministic claims to "being-in-time." To that end, Mitchell peppers his novel with metaleptic episodes that underscore the transmigratory subject as responsive to flux, tempered by contradiction, and occupying a condition of perpetual becoming that resists simple extrapolation.

The final body chapter of this dissertation concentrates on Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007) – a novel that also deploys defamiliarizing devices to give Rapa Nui's recent past the appearance of a distant-future. This chapter commences with an examination of the second section of Winterson's four-part novel, entitled "Easter Island"

(*Stone* 97-116). This chapter argues that Winterson's "Easter Island" dramatizes a ninety-year interval (c. 1680-1774) that saw the apex of Rapa Nui's civil war coincide with the arrival of the Union Jack (*Collapse* 109-11). This chapter goes on to suggest that Winterson seeds eighteenth-century "Easter" with events that predate this period by several centuries (c. 1450-1680) to reframe Rapa Nui's civil war as a product of the island's ecological crises. This chapter then turns to the novel's speculative portions to argue that those sections set on Planet Orbus (Mars) dramatize a devastating forty-year interval in Rapa Nui's recent past (c. 1868-1914), which included the island's conversion into a sheep ranch (c. 1868-88), its bifurcation into a labour camp and leper colony (c. 1888-1903), and the islanders' defeated bid for indigenous sovereignty (c. 1914). In keeping with Self's harrowing portrait of circumscribed predation, Winterson's "distant future" depicts the stages through which the island's ruling elites dismantle democratic norms to shore up borders and install economic monopolies over local consumption. Ultimately, this chapter suggests that Winterson transposes successive phases of Rapa Nui's ruination onto celestial bodies to refute the thesis Diamond advances in the second chapter of *Collapse* (2005) that techno-predation, geophysical circumscription, and eco-amnesia cemented Rapa Nui's demise (79-119). Echoing Mitchell, Winterson faults Diamond's scholarship for failing to account for the genocidal consequences of colonial incursion. More broadly, Winterson rejects Diamond's environmental materialism as reliant on the recuperation of a pure origin (date of ancestral settlement) to explain the terminal trajectories of failed Empires. In refutation, Winterson attributes societal collapse to the intergenerational transmission of fictions that presume to restore to the present the imagined purity of a non-existent past. As such, Winterson proposes that

humans can devise narratological "interventions" sufficient to disrupt the compulsion for originary return.

This dissertation concludes its analysis of *The Book of Dave*, *Cloud Atlas,* and *The Stone Gods* with brief observations regarding the literary contributions and political shortcomings of twenty-first-century metamodernist cli-fi. Having parsed the noticeable similarities and more subtle differences that distinguish the metamodernist novels under review, this dissertation concludes by assessing the cultural impact of literary metamodernism on British cli-fi. After outlining the strengths and achievements of this modality, this conclusion endeavors to historicize the primary factors that contributed to the waning cultural influence of metamodernist cli-fi nearly a decade after its emergence (c. 2010-present). To account for the latter's more recent loss of cultural currency, this project concludes by evaluating the degree to which the subgenre fell short of achieving its implicit aesth-ethical objectives: to prompt the reader to reconceive of historical agency aslant through the literary production of an affective (post-medium) metareality beyond the dialectical spectra. After briefly considering how the more recent conflation of literary postmodernism with deconstructionism threatens to undermine the political capacity of literary metamodernism (Cooper, "Metamodern"), this dissertation posits that metamodernism's ideational ethos largely failed to spur readers to perform belief in acts of ecological stewardship for two reasons: the reconstructive labour required of the reader and the aesth-ethical commitment foundational to the modality. This project concludes by contending that British cli-fi proved politically ineffective in its aims primarily because the "structure of feeling" central to literary metamodernism served to contain rather than

resolve the cognitive dissonance that renders “feeling-as-knowing” and “doing” a world apart.

## Chapter One: Fatalism and Petro-Apocalypse in Will Self's *The Book of Dave*

"Every generation gets the End-of-world anxiety it deserves."[51]
"Every age gets the comfort savagery writer it deserves."[52]

### 1.1 The Recent Past as a Distant Future

British satirist Will Self once confided that he copes with periods of pronounced stress by mentally fleeing to an "imaginary island" ("On Location"). In a characteristically confessional meditation on the relationship between long-term memory and spatial acuity, Self describes in meticulous detail a tear-shaped islet of "turf and rock" adrift in the "margins of the Atlantic" roughly "an hour or so from the nearest populated landfall" ("On Location;" "On Charles"). What is striking about Self's comments is that the author writes as if he routinely imagines himself on an island entirely of his own invention. Yet specific details within this reverie reveal Self's arcadia to be an actual one: an exceptionally remote island in Scotland called Hiort (also known as Hirta or Saint Kilda).[53] As the outermost landmass in the Scottish Outer Hebrides, Hiort is afforded the unique status of being the most remote island in the United Kingdom. To provide some perspective, Hiort is at such a remove from the Scottish coast that the archipelago is usually excluded from maps of Scotland or else appended on a special fold-out flap. Even from Conachair's summit, North Uist appears no more than a "limpid blue streak" (Schalansky 46). In keeping with Self's "imaginary" island, Hiort too possesses a west-facing "brough" and a "natural harbor" at its southernmost tip ("On Location"). If Self's

[51] From Will Self's "Introduction" (2002) to Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker* (1980): vi.
[52] From Will Self's "The Joy of Armchair Anthropology" (2013).
[53] I refer to the archipelago by its Gaelic name, rather than the British permutation Hirta or Dutch misnomer St. Kilda, in recognition of the island's indigenous population.

own private island is indeed Hiort, then the author has imaginatively elected to squat in the rustic croft that once housed Hiort's notorious rent-racker: a simple "white washed" hut fitted with a small window that overlooks Village Bay ("On Location"). There is, however, one aspect of Self's reverie that refuses to fit: whereas Self's personal island peaks at six hundred feet, Hiort's lofty Conachair more than doubles that height ("On Location"). This notable discrepancy raises the question: Why would the author elect to drastically diminish Hiort's pinnacle when, in every other respect, Self's reconstruction remains so painstakingly exact?

One possible answer is that Self's island is imaginary in one specific sense: that in aspiring to retreat from what Self calls the "great auto-cannibalizing conurbation" of contemporary life, the author transports himself not to Hiort in the here-and-now but to Hiort as it will appear in the distant future ("Joy"). This would not be the first time Self's flights of fancy have cast him from the present into a speculative future. Elsewhere Self gleefully ponders what archeologists ten thousand years hence will make of our serpentine motorways and diaper-clogged landfills ("Mad" 133; "Five-Swing" 189). It is quite possible, given the author's long-standing interest in the post-apocalyptic, that Self's "imaginary" island is predicated on what will remain of Hiort once the Earth's glaciers have completed their melt. In this respect, Self's novel is consistent with other metamodernist novels set on speculative archipelagos drawn from the dire climate Assessment Reports of the IPCC. For such a "misanthropic existentialist" as Self, it makes sense that the author might lull himself to sleep with the cheery thought of a posthuman Hiort half-submerged beneath the Atlantic ("Garment" D974). For when Conachair's peak does top six hundred feet, it may well have come to pass that Hiort will

be truly rid of that "hellish thing," by which Self means to say, "other people" ("On Location" n.p). Indeed, seven years prior to publishing this particular piece, Self defined his "idea of hell"[54] as the prospect of being "marooned on [Hiort] when that remote Hebridean island was still utterly dependent on seafowl" ("Captain").

What this chapter aims to demonstrate is that Self's seventh novel consolidates the author's longstanding obsession with and ambivalence towards Scotland's "sea girt isle" (Seton 318). In essence, this chapter argues that the distant future imagined in *The Book of Dave* (2006) displaces onto a climate-changed Hampstead Heath the "hellish" conditions and short-sighted dependencies that culminated in historical Hiort's economic collapse. In this respect, Self's prose coheres with that of Mitchell and Winterson, which also maps the historical collapse of remote island communities onto speculative topographies that anticipate the catastrophic consequences of a warmed world. As this chapter illustrates, the speculative sections of Self's novel put into practice the defamiliarizing techniques deployed in Self's aforementioned reverie: that is, the author projects Hiort's recent past onto a distant future extrapolated from the prognostications of the IPCC to challenge the determinism of the future anterior. Counter to speculative novels that transport the reader to a distant future to look back on the contemporary condition as if an age already transpired, Self's distant future ferries the reader to a "futureless" past to warn against the catastrophic consequences of continued petroleum dependence. In keeping with recent metamodernist cli-fi, Self uses temporal compressions and satiric inversions to rewrite Hampstead's speculative future as Hiort's recorded past to expose present-day petroleum dependency as a condition propelled as

[54] Tellingly, elsewhere Self envisions "hell" as a traffic jam comprised of "driverless cars" that force hapless commuters to succumb to total inertia ("Scotland" 41).

much by ideological rigidity as by corpocratic circumscription. As the second and third chapters of this dissertation demonstrate, Self is not alone in citing the historical collapse of a circumscribed topography to refute the perceived inevitability of a global climate catastrophe. *The Book of Dave* is consistent with a constellation of metamodernist texts published at the turn of the twenty-first century that use the topos of the ruined island to contest the fatalistic sensibilities that previously dominated British post-apocalyptic prose.

This chapter argues that *The Book of Dave* is paradigmatic of metamodernist cli-fi that achieves its aesth-ethical objection to the inevitability of a petro-apocalypse[55] through reconstructive metaxis, heterochronic topos, pronominal deixis, and code-inversion (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 2; Gibbons, "Metamodern" 83-6). Akin to the metamodernist cli-fi of Mitchell and Winterson, Self reimagines a distant-future Earth as a "double-mapped" island "looked upon from a height" to generate an otherworldly "third" that functions to unveil both the expansive scope and implosive tendencies of closed geopolitical, financial, and ecological networks (Gibbons, "Take" 32). In a typical metamodernist move, Self complicates the ontological status of the double-mapped island and its affective "third" through metaleptic collisions that prod the reader into reconceiving of corporate power, petroleum dependence, and historical resistance aslant. *The Book of Dave* stands apart as a noteworthy case-study text because it exhibits many of the traits that distinguish metamodernism from other modalities: that is, Self's novel evinces a distinctly metamodernist "structure of feeling" that compels the reader to look back on the twenty-first century as if from a state of future obsolescence

[55] A neologism popularized by American TV documentary *Petroapocalypse Now?* (2008).

(Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 2). Ultimately, this chapter contends that the metamodernist sensibilities that inform *The Book of Dave* work, at once, to concretize the embodied actualities of a climate catastrophe while discrediting the historical determinism of anterior retrospection that reads the future as already writ.

### 1.2 A Pair of Grotesque Mirrors that Reflect Nothing[56]

Although reviews in the popular press do an admirable job of distilling the structural intricacies of Self's seventh novel down to a hundred words or less, only a handful of scholars have performed a rigorous analysis of *The Book of Dave* – a fact that is surprizing given the accolades awarded to Self's short and nonfiction alike.[57] The inexplicable dearth of scholarship devoted to *The Book of Dave* is particularly apparent when measured against the critical abundance enjoyed by Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004) and, to a lesser extent, Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007) – two novels published within a few years of *The Book of Dave* that tackle much the same topic in much the same fashion (as will be discussed in chapters two and three). It is tempting to attribute the relative obscurity of Self's novel to the fact that *The Book of Dave* does not yield to postcolonial, posthuman, ecocritical, or feminist analysis as readily as *Cloud Atlas* or *The Stone Gods*. Indeed, the half-dozen scholarly articles devoted to *The Book of Dave* focus almost exclusively on the novel's discursive irreducibility: Didier Girard, Anne-Laure Fortin-Tournes, and Maylis Rospide concur that *The Book of Dave* is so mired in multivalent referents and linguistic excesses that the novel "means" only insofar as the

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[56] Rich "Cabbie Road" F52.
[57] Both *Dorian, an Imitation* (2002) and *Umbrella* (2012) were shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize.

novel's structure encourages the reader to deduce meaning as proximate or provisional (Fortin-Tournes 28; Girard 15; Rospide 203). For Fortin-Tournes, the novel's discursive ambivalence turns the act of reading into "an encounter" with an "elusive Other" (28). For Girard, the novel's ambiguity is a "posthuman tactic" designed to compel readerly engagement (10). For Rospide, the novel frustrates the reader's efforts to derive a coherent unity from "fragmented and incomplete" referents (203). While it is understandable that *The Book of Dave* lends itself to these scholarly interpretations, such readings inaccurately imply that Self's novel constitutes yet another postmodernist text to force its reader to grapple with the play of irreconcilable surfaces, rather than a metamodernist text that relies on heterochronic topos and reconstructive metaxis to disclose an aesth-ethical stance on contemporary climate change (Gibbons, "Metamodern" 83-6; Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 2).

This chapter contends that this near ubiquitous reading of *The Book of Dave* results from the way critics have tended to misinterpret the structural bifurcation of the novel, which oscillates between a contemporary narratological present set in urban London and a speculative future that unfolds two thousand years later, after an apocalyptic flood has transformed England into the "Ing" archipelago (488). Over the course of the novel, the reader gradually discerns that Self's fictive "Isle of Ham" is postdiluvial Hampstead Heath – a hilly garden district less than a mile from the author's childhood home (Hayes 7). To the extent that the novel's distant future is mentioned at all, critics tend to treat that future as the "zany" or "corkscrew" device through which Self achieves his satirization of contemporary life (Anderson WP20; Mullan 7). Indeed

most, if not all, of Self's novels hinge on farfetched "what if" scenarios[58] – an approach the author dubs "dirty magical realism" (Hayes 5). When interviewed, Self stresses that he intended the *Book of Dave* to act as a *zeitgeist* novel capable of evoking the "sin bin" sensorium of London in the years prior to and following the regimes of Thatcher (1979-90) and Blair (1997-2007): a period marked by global terror and economic disparity that the author identifies as "*the moment* England 'came of age'" (*Feeding* viii, 2; *Junk* 208-9). In this respect, Self's novel is in keeping with other works of metamodernist cli-fi that are similarly preoccupied with the sensed precarity of "closed" geopolitical, economic, ecological, and climatological networks at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Although it would be misleading to characterize scholarship on *The Book of Dave* as engaging in robust debate, scholars tend to fall into two camps: those for whom Self's distant future evinces the postmodern dissolution of master narrative (Fortin-Tournes; Girard; Rospide), and those for whom the distant future exposes the "true" target of Self's satire. Tellingly, the latter diverge wildly in their assessment of which social ill constitutes the "real" object of Self's ire. Thus far, critics have read *The Book of Dave* as a critique of patriarchy (Lukes; Cojocaru), a parody of organized religion (Rychter; Grossman), a polemic on urban London (Driscoll; Jenner; Robogate; Tew), a caricature of "utopian localism" (Trexler), and a diatribe against rationality itself (Finney). The range of satiric targets identified by the scholars above illustrates both the expansive reach of Self's critique and the degree to which critics concur in their classification of *The Book of Dave* as a satire in the first place.

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[58] Some of Self's more outlandish "what-ifs" include a man who detects a vagina behind his knee (*Cock and Bull*), a man who discovers self-aware chimpanzees have displaced humans as the Earth's dominant species (*Great Apes*), and a deceased woman who learns that the "hereafter" is not an ethereal realm but a non-descript suburb (*How the Dead Live*).

While Self openly acknowledges his tendency to "carp, ridicule, and excoriate" contemporary British culture (*Feeding* v), he does not consider himself a "true satirist" because his novels so often lack a "covert agenda of moral reform" (Taylor). Indeed, if put to the test, *The Book of Dave* would fail Self's own litmus test for determining whether a novel should be categorized as a work of satire: that is, neither the novel's distant future nor its recent past can be said to "afflict the comfortable [nor] comfort the afflicted" ("Charlie"). Rather, *The Book of Dave* retains "a residue of doubt" that is designed to provoke precisely the type of critical dissonance noted above (Taylor). In this respect, Self's satiric impulses are more in keeping with Mennippus and Varro than Juvenal (Abrams 276-78).[59] The noted lack of prescription in Self's satiric prose is consonant with the author's general approach to writing: rather than setting out to impart a universal "truth," Self seeks to "shock" and "astonish" his reader by destabilizing "certain categories within which [the reader is] used to perceiving the world" (Finney, "Will"). To the extent that Self maps Hiort's recorded past onto a climate-changed Hampstead to satirize a contemporary target, the author does so to destabilize the genre of thought that insists on the inevitability of human extinction based on contemporary consumption of petroleum (by)products.

Those who find *The Book of Dave* not to their liking usually object to the novel's satiric target, tactic, or tone.[60] In arguably the novel's most disparaging review, *The Book of Dave* is said to present the reader with a pair of "grotesque worlds" that mirror each

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[59] Whereas Juvenal's satires are peopled with moral protagonists who renounce human vice (Abrams 276), those of Mennippus and Varro include multiple points of view satirized as ludicrous, including that of the protagonist (277). In keeping with the latter, Self's satire targets the inanity of the contemporary condition, of which the protagonist is a part.

[60] For a more fulsome discussion of the novel's perceived satiric failings, see: Christopher Bray 66; John Harrison 16; Matt Kavanagh D5; Donna Rifkind T07; Oscar Turner 24.

other but reflect "nothing" (Rich F52). In this and similar assessments, critics tend to take for granted that the success of Self's novel relies on the degree to which his speculative future achieves its satirization of a contemporary failing. While extant scholarship on *The Book of Dave* generates a nuanced understanding of how Self's satire ridicules a contemporary target, such readings too often reduce the purpose of the novel's speculative plotline to that of a fun-house mirror: a reflective surface that serves to expose, through exaggeration and distortion alone, a contemporary shortcoming. Instead, this chapter contends that the target of Self's satire surfaces in the tension generated by the spatiotemporal displacement of the "double-mapped" island and its production of an affective "third" that is "both/neither" (van den Akker and Vermeulen, "Periodizing" 10-11). As such, this chapter suggests that Self's distant future functions both independently from and on equal footing with its contemporary correlate. Ultimately, this chapter is predicated on the operative assumption that the reader cannot fully appreciate the satiric target of the novel's contemporary narrative, nor the cautionary function of its speculative setting, without first identifying the recorded history on which Self's "imaginary" island is based.

### 1.3 Island on the Edge of the World[61]

This chapter contends that *The Book of Dave* deserves greater critical attention not only because it ranks among Self's most ambitious and imaginative novels to date but also because it ranks among his most misunderstood. In general, extant scholarship on *The Book of Dave* tends to concur with that of Daniel Lukes, who identifies fatherhood as the nexus through which Self critiques patriarchy (271). From this perspective, Self's

[61] Maclean's *Island on the Edge of the World* (1972).

distant future appears merely to amplify gendered antagonisms endemic to contemporary child-custody legislation. However, readers familiar with Self's non-fiction (1992-2001), particularly that collected in *Feeding Frenzy* (2001), may arrive at the conclusion that informs this chapter. In a travel piece penned for the *New Statesmen* ("Scotland"), Self discloses that the sight of Rousay's Midhowe Broch (Neolithic fortification) set amid modern military barracks (7) prompted the author to reconceive of the near future as the ruinous past of some still-further future (10). This fleeting experience of "second sightedness"[62] occurred in 1992, when the author elected to overwinter at a friend's cottage in the Scottish Orkneys ("Orkney"). The author returned to the Orkneys the following winter after the dissolution of his first marriage, and then sporadically over the course of the next decade to complete subsequent novels ("On Charles").

It was during the dismal winter of his divorce that Self read Charles Maclean's *Island on the Edge of the World: Utopian St. Kilda and Its Passing* (1972) – an obscure account of historical Hiort that Self admired for its skillful "construction of alternative worlds that both mirror and refract the reality of our own" ("On Charles"). Maclean's vivid account of the physical and social estrangement of the Hiortans "chimed" with Self's own "isolate condition" ("On the Rocks"). Hiort's example also resonated with Self's "sense of fictional possibility" ("On Charles"). With much of the intellectual groundwork already laid for the contemporary portions of *The Book of Dave*, Self found in Hiort "a real-life version of one of [his] own fictions" ("On Charles"). After reading widely – some might say obsessively – about Hiort's decline, Self came to appreciate Maclean's account for refusing to ruminate on how the Hiortans might have avoided their

[62] From the Scottish "*an da shealladh*," meaning "two-sighted" ("Incidents;" Campbell).

"fate" ("On Charles"). Maclean's "chilling" portrait of human predation impressed Self with its equally poignant affirmation of the "limitless potential" of humans to adapt to environmental and circumstantial hardship ("On Charles"). Of greatest import to Self's subsequent fiction, Maclean's account compelled the author to reconceive of Great Britain from the perspective of a "skeptical outlier" who, "marooned on the North Atlantic," peers at the "unhappy antheap of mass human society" as if from a great distance ("On Charles"). So profound was Maclean's influence on Self that the author professes to reread Maclean's masterpiece "every year since" ("On Charles"). Inspired by the resilience of a people who survived for so long "on the edge of the world," Self doggedly sought and, eighteen years later, obtained military clearance to overnight on the "lonely isle" ("On the Rocks").[63]

In light of the aforementioned findings, this chapter contends that Maclean's *Island on the Edge of the World* is essential reading for those struggling to make sense of the "distant future" that informs *The Book of Dave*. Though Self makes no direct reference to Hiort within the novel – nor in his comments on the novel's composition – this chapter posits that Self's novel is coded with intra- and extratextual cues that redirect the reader to perceive of Ham's hardships as modelled after Hiort's own. This chapter therefore proceeds by arguing that the "revelation" named in the novel's subtitle – *A Revelation of the Recent Past and Distant Future* – obliquely refers to the sense of epiphany that ensues once the reader recognizes that postdiluvial Ham stages the successive crises that cemented the demise of Hiort's lamp oil – a product "milked" from

[63] Twice, in the late summers of 2010 and 2011, Self tried to reach Hiort by boat, but inclement weather forced his vessel to reverse course within sight of Hiort's shores. The author's unflagging determination finally paid off in August 2012 when Self secured safe passage to Village Bay ("On the Rocks").

the throat glands of the northern fulmar bird (Maclean 92).

The manner in which Self transposes Hiort's demise onto that of a semi-submerged Hampstead is consistent with metamodernist cli-fi in which the "double-mapped" island serves to warn readers against the catastrophic consequences of collective complacency and the fatalistic sensibilities seen to deter meaningful intervention. Ultimately, *The Book of Dave* casts an ironized recent past as a not-so-distant future to discredit contemporary petroleum dependence as a historically unprecedented or uniquely insurmountable crisis. Self's novel is, in this respect, consonant with the metamodernist cli-fi of Mitchell and Winterson, which similarly projects the collapse of historical archipelagos onto speculative topographies to curtail collective denial, apathy, or despair. The seemingly speculative future imagined in *The Book of Dave* is more broadly in keeping with the "psychogeographical turn"[64] scholar Alastair Bonnet identifies in British literary culture in the 1990s, which saw authors experiment with double-mapping techniques aimed at transposing futureless pasts onto distant futures to destabilize the perceived determinacy of the historical present (46-47, 61).

### 1.4 Gaslighting: Vested Interest and Technological Necessity

In addition to arguing that Maclean's obscure history undergirds the contents of Self's speculative future, this chapter contends that *The Book of Dave* engages with two additional texts by cultural anthropologist Jared Diamond: *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997) and *Collapse* (2005), as outlined in the preceding chapter. When Self first set foot on Hiort's shores in August 2012, the author was struck by the island's profusion of cleits

[64] As a self-proclaimed disciple of "Situationist" Guy Debord, Self's fiction partakes of the "Magico-Marxist" arm of the Manchester Area Psychogeographers (*Psychogeography* 40).

(*Feeding* 7).[65] Akin to Self's experience of second-sightedness two decades earlier, the visual juxtaposition of Hiort's modern missile tracking station[66] set amid a profusion of Neolithic cleits provoked a renewed awareness of the recent past and distant future as coterminous temporalities (*Feeding* 7). The sheer abundance of cleits (roughly 1,400) scattered across Hiort's scant 8.5 square kilometres prompted Self to briefly ponder their kinship to Rapa Nui's ceremonial *mo'ai* ("On the Rocks").[67] Although the author's tour guide quickly disabused Self of the notion, Self's association of Hiort's cleits with Rapa Nui's *mo'ai* bears mentioning because it underscores the impact of Jared Diamond's *Collapse* (2005) – a dizzying anthropological survey of human ruination that cites Rapa Nui's *mo'ai* at length (as will the final body chapter of this dissertation).

Roughly a year after touring Hiort, Self expressed his admiration for Diamond in a piece for *The Guardian* lauding the joys of "armchair anthropology" ("Joy"). Here Self attributes his longstanding interest in popular anthropology to the "comfort savagery" evoked by the genre: there is nothing more pleasurable, Self quips, than marveling at the resilience of tribal communities from a position of Western luxury ("Joy").[68] In transporting contemporary readers to topographies bereft of "great grainy surpluses," readers can partake of the "wild yonder" yet remain "snugly tucked" in their twenty-first-century present ("Joy"). From the glut of cultural anthropologists labouring to introduce

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[65] Rudimentary huts used to dry and store the carcasses of birds (Fleming 137).
[66] The National Trust for Scotland currently leases Hiort to the Ministry of Defence to use as a missile-tracking station, despite ongoing pressure to close the base ("On the Rocks").
[67] Commemorative stone monuments thought to manifest the "living face" of the local clan gods, as discussed in chapter three (*Collapse* 101-2).
[68] Self first became interested in popular anthropology in his mid-twenties when he chanced upon the writings of Barry Lopez, Roland Huntford, and Colin Turnbull.

"WEIRD"[69] readers to "vanishing" peoples, Self singles out Jared Diamond as *"the* comfort savagery writer" of our time ("Joy"). Self goes on to explain that part of what sets Diamond apart is that, in keeping with Maclean, Diamond avoids the "starry-eyed" idealizations of his peers ("Joy").

Of Diamond's corpus, Self reserves his highest praise for *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997), which Self parsed prior to composing the speculative sections of *The Book of Dave*. The author's endorsement of Diamond suggests that Self also read Diamond's account of the Norse Orkneys in the sixth chapter of *Collapse* one year prior to the publication of *The Book of Dave* – presumably whilst overwintering in the Orkneys to complete the novel ("On Charles"). Indeed, in his otherwise lukewarm assessment of *Collapse,* Self echoes critics Tim Flannery (45) and J.R. McNeil (174) in singling out Diamond's analysis of the Norse Orkneys as a noteworthy case-study given the "supine" dependencies of twenty-first-century readers ("Joy"). Akin to the "natural history experiment" performed in the second chapter of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (discussed at length in the next chapter), Diamond's *Collapse* stages a commensurate "controlled experiment" to isolate the environmental variables that enabled Norse colonists to thrive in specific North Atlantic topographies (the Orkneys) yet falter in others (the Faeroes) (*Collapse* 21; 191-93).[70] Echoing Maclean's account of Neolithic Hiort, Diamond's account details how the Norse conquered the Orkneys (c. 800 AD) and ruled over its indigenous Pict population for several centuries before ceding the whole to Scotland (c. 1472) (*Collapse* 195). At heart, this chapter proposes that Self's speculative portrait of

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[69] Here Self obliquely cites Henrich et al.'s "The Weirdest People in the World" (2010) in which "WEIRD" acts as an acronym for "Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic" societies.

[70] Here, Diamond attributes the collapse of certain Norse settlements to climate change, ideological rigidity, and geophysical circumscription.

Hiort's demise marries Diamond's Norse Orkney "experiment" with the thesis proposed in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*: that technologically advanced, encapsulated populations are doomed to auto-cannibalistic implosion because human techno-predation requires continuous territorial expansion. In this respect, *The Book of Dave* coheres with the other case-study texts considered, which similarly embed an enviro-materialist analysis of human propensity within a metamodernist structure that negates the extrapolation of universal formulations from the wide-angle lens of natural history.

Accepting that the speculative sections of *The Book of Dave* stage the short-lived ascent of Hiort's oil industry, this chapter argues that Self's "distant future" engages with the thirteenth chapter of *Guns, Germs, and Steel,* in which Diamond proposes that most technologies acquire their "purpose" retroactively through the fabrication of an "unmet" need (245-46). Diamond illustrates this claim by citing the collapse of gas lighting as incentivizing the ascent of the internal combustion engine. In extracting paraffin from petroleum's "middle distillate," nineteenth-century chemists generated the by-product gasoline, which they discarded until demand for paraffin waned (c. 1900s) and gasoline proved an "ideal fuel" for the internal combustion engine (247). To offset the anticipated losses of electric conversion, American paraffin producers lobbied their military to supplant horse-drawn wagons with gas-powered trucks (243).[71] By attributing gasoline's ascent to paraffin's demise, Diamond proposes that "vested interest" and "geophysical proximity"[72] propel technological "diffusion" more than societal need (258). Self's double-mapped future structurally extends the scope of Diamond's analysis to include

[71] In contrast, British municipalities concocted "regulatory obstacles" designed to prevent electric conversion; as a result, Britain was gas-lit until the late 1920s, "long after U.S. and German cities converted to electric" (*Guns* 249).

[72] According to Diamond, societies situated in proximity to cross-cultural "hubs" tend to be more "receptive" to technological innovations (*Guns* 256).

paraffin's eighteenth-century precursor (fulmar oil) and gasoline's twenty-first-century successor (the electric car) to unveil poignant parallels between the historical ascent of electric lighting and the imminent ascent of hybrid motorized vehicles. In so doing, Self insinuates that, just as mass conversion to electric lighting ousted the petroleum-derivative paraffin, twenty-first-century "moto" manufacturers must adapt "sooner or later" to the reality of the electric car, or else be rendered obsolete (*Book* 450).[73] In mapping historical Hiort's demise onto a speculative Hampstead, Self's novel affirms Diamond's characterization of technological "diffusion" as a reiterative process that repurposes economic losses into recuperative gains through the fabrication of an "unmet" need (*Guns* 257). At the same time, Self's portrait refutes Diamond's theorization of technological dependency as an autocatalytic process disrupted by environmental limitation or authoritarian decree (*Guns* 257-58).[74] Although Self considers technology an "outgrowth" of human species-being, Self's speculative sections suggest that ideological rigidity potentiated by geophysical isolation and environmental propensity renders circumscribed populations vulnerable to techno-predation (Doherty, "Will"). As such, Self uses reconstructive metaxis, heterochronic topos, pronominal deixis, and code-inversion to draw Maclean's obscure history into conversation with Diamond's popular science to destabilize the collective "structure of feeling" provoked by the existential threat of climate change.

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[73] As cultural theorist Nicole Shukin notes in *Animal Capital* (2009), peak oil coupled with contemporary climate change has more recently repositioned renewable animal biofuels at the "resource frontier of capital" (84).

[74] As evidence, Diamond cites the abandonment of guns in Japan, "oceangoing" ships in China, and pottery in Polynesia (*Guns* 257-58).

**1.5 Millennial Hampstead as Postdiluvial Hiort**

Before parsing how Self's speculative future reprises Hiort's historical past, a cursory synopsis of the "recent past" and "distant future" imagined in *The Book of Dave* is required. In the plotline devoted to the novel's twenty-first-century "past," the reader is introduced to Dave Rudman[75] – a bitter and bigoted forty-year-old taxicab driver who privately disparages his well-to-do passengers (29). One such passenger, the jilted former model Michelle Brodie, invites Dave to her apartment for casual sex (112). Seven months later, Michelle informs Dave that she is pregnant and the two marry (116). A decade later, Michelle files for a divorce to resume her relationship with affluent former beau Cal Devenish (338).[76] A vicious custody battle ensues in which Dave unsuccessfully vies for partial custody of his fourteen-year-old son Carl (169-70). Deranged by the dissolution of his marriage – coupled with the revelation that Carl is the biological son of Devenish – Dave composes a "Book of Dave," in which he lashes out at his ex-wife, her new partner (328-29), her divorce lawyer, the Child Support Agency (394-95), and London's Public Carriage Office (PCO) – the bureaucracy responsible for licensing taxicabs (346). Dave borrows money to have his screed etched onto metal plates, which he buries in Michelle's garden in the hopes that Carl might one day unearth his manifesto (354-55). Shortly thereafter, Dave is hospitalized for psychosis but recovers under the care of psychiatrist Anthony Bohm (291-93) and embarks on a romantic relationship with Phyllis Vance (407). With her encouragement, Dave writes a second book that repudiates the first (419-21). Not long after its completion, Dave is fatally shot by the men to whom he owes money (470-71). Phyllis gives Dave's "New Testament" to Carl, who reads then seals the

[75] Self's contemporary protagonist alludes to "Dave Too" from *Tough, Tough Toys for Tough, Tough Boys* (1998) – a short-story that imagines a world inundated by "Daves."
[76] Devenish recurs as an alter-ego for Self in *Dorian: An Imitation* (2003).

document in a film canister before burying the whole in his mother's garden (476). The novel's "recent past" concludes with Carl quipping that he would rather be a lawyer than a cabdriver because there is "more of a future in it" (477).

In the plotline devoted to the "distant future," the reader is led to infer that an apocalyptic flood has obliterated most of the cultural archive and transformed contemporary Hampstead Heath into the archipelagated "Isle of Ham" (74). The only text spared from the flood is Dave's first metal "Búk," which the "Hamsters" (islanders) worship as a sacred relic (60). Despite Ham's bucolic aspect, the Hamsters are ruled by the "PCO" – a tyrannical theocracy stationed in Nú Lundun (492). State-appointed priests are installed on Ham to ensure that locals comply with Dave's edicts (175). The Hamsters greet each other with "Ware2guv" worship the symbol of the wheel, and call over the "runs" and "points" of obsolete cab routes (177-78). In a ritualized enactment of Dave's custody battle, the women and men of Ham live in complete segregation and children are shuttled from male to female households twice weekly during "Braykup" (Breakup) and "Chaynjovah" (Changeover) (481-82). And – in what stands apart as the most science-fictional aspect of Self's speculative future – small children are nursed to maturity by the "moto:" a genetically engineered mammal akin to a manatee with the functional intelligence of a human toddler (*Book* 491).[77] Aside from their role as nursemaids and caregivers, the moto supply the islanders with the bulk of their diet as well as their chief exports: medicinal oil and lamp fuel (15-18). Not surprisingly, the islanders worship the moto as sacred (123) to the dismay of Ing's "Dävinist" priests who consider the species an abomination (495). Despite the efforts of the PCO to retain theocratic control of Ham,

[77] An early prototype for the moto appears in "Caring, Sharing" from *Tough, Tough Toys for Tough, Tough Boys* (1998). Here, the fictive species similarly supplies humans with the physical intimacy that is absent from human-to-human interactions.

two unlikely defectors emerge to champion the existence of an apocryphal text: twelve-year-old Carl Dévúsh and schoolmaster Antonë Böm. The pair embark on a perilous quest to locate Carl's estranged father, Symun Dévúsh – a heretic exiled for purportedly unearthing Dave's "sekkun Búk" (second Book) (140). With the assistance of the moto, Carl and Antonë venture to Nú Lundun where they narrowly escape execution (238) only to learn that the man they mistook for a deranged hermit is, in fact, Carl's biological father (432). Upon their return to Ham, Carl and Antonë encounter the remains of Symun's corpse and find amid his scant belongings a film canister containing only "Dävwurks" (439-40).[78] Worse still, the pair learn that PCO agents have coerced the Hamsters into exterminating their motos in a mass slaughter (448). The novel's "distant future" concludes with the ominous image of Carl and Antonë descending an embankment to the slaughter-in-progress below in calm acceptance of "whatever fate" awaits (450-51).

In their assessment of the novel's cross-hatched plotlines, critics often describe *The Book of Dave* as tracing the bizarre events that enable a contemporary cab driver to unintentionally found a brutal post-apocalyptic theocracy. While this summation accurately captures the macro-narrative that unifies the novel's recent past and distant future, this reading overlooks how the novel's distant future ironizes the failings of a veiled recent past to underscore the congruent failures that presently afflict twenty-first-century Londoners. In effect, the heterochronic structure of Self's novel produces a "structure of feeling" that casts human agency as a transhistorical exercise contingent on flux and responsive to actual and remediated residual pasts. To do so, Self's distant future compresses over two hundred years of Hiortan history (c. 1684-1878) into a period of

[78] Plastic flotsam from the "MadeinChina" period (484).

fourteen (c. 1864-78) to reveal time itself as riven with reiterative "eddies and cross-currents" perceivable only in transhistorical relation ("Incidents"). To affect the transhistorical dispersal of the metamodernist subject, Self patterns memorable images, motifs, phrases, and themes across the novel's twinned plotlines, and pairs each postdiluvial character with a contemporary precursor so that both share the associative weight of a submerged historical referent.[79] Akin to the cosmodernist protagonists of *Cloud Atlas* and *The Stone Gods*, *The Book of Dave* is peopled with recursive characters who dramatize being-in-time as responsive to transhistorical variations that render the human subject prone as much to internal contradiction as to historical reiteration or inversion. In keeping with recent metamodernist cli-fi, Self's recursive worlds are focalized through transmigratory subjects whose pronominal interchangeability collapses proximal (here/now) and distal (then/there) distinctions with the effect of reconfiguring a multitude as an interdependent singularity.

Moreover, Self's novel is punctuated with metaleptic episodes that enable the futureless past to impinge on the twenty-first century to gift select characters with the ability to intuit transhistorical resonances. One particularly striking example of this occurs when Self's twenty-first-century taxi driver briefly glimpses the catastrophic flood still to come:

> The city was a nameless conurbation, its streets and shop signs, its plaques and placards, plunked then torn away for a tsunami of meltwater that dashed up the estuary. He saw this as clearly as he'd ever seen anything in his life. The screen had been removed from his eyes, the mirror cast away, and he was privileged with a second sight into deep time. (404)

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[79] Antonë Böm (523-24AD) recurs as Antony Bohm (2002). In turn, both characters harken to historical Hiort's Alexander Buchan (c. 1705-30). Likewise, Symun Dévúsh (509-24AD) recurs as Dave Rudman (2001-2003) and, in turn, the pair recall Roderick MacKenzie (c. 1691-97) – to name just two of several transmigratory subjects who allude to semi-veiled historical Hiortans.

Though most of Self's characters lack the ability to "see" beyond their own temporal horizon, Self's reader is privileged with a transhistorical vantage with which to discern both the thematic reiterations used to lend coherence to the whole as well as the structural tensions used to complicate straightforward correspondence. The overarching effect is in keeping with other works of metamodernist cli-fi: Self's heterochronic topos encourages the reader to conceive of contemporary Hampstead and postdiluvial Ham as vexed by the same fatalistic sensibility as that which cemented historical Hiort's collapse. And, yet, Self's strategic code-inversion renders the potentiation of future outcome attributable as much to environmental propensity and happenstance as to the transhistorical matrixes of power.

### 1.6 MacLeod, MacRaild, MacKay, and MacKenzie: Ho My Fulmar[80]

In the decade since the publication of *The Book of Dave*, Self has yet to acknowledge modelling his novel's distant future after Hiort's recent past – a striking omission given the eclectic miscellany Self singles out as inspiring the novel. When interviewed, Self routinely attributes the novel's creation to a heated exchange with fundamentalist Muslims in a "local curry house;" a whirling Dervish festival in Turkey (Taylor); Finkelstein's and Silberman's critique of revealed religion in *The Bible Unearthed* (2001); and an unspecified report[81] that warned of rising seas breaching the Thames Barrier to cause catastrophic flooding (Mullan, "Week Three" 7).[82] Self even

[80] A variation on the Hiortan lilt that obliquely critiqued MacLeod's dairy tax: "*Macneill! Macleod! Clan Ranald! Ho my heifer"* ("The Milkmaid's Lullaby" XCIX).
[81] Likely one of a series of reports disseminated by the United Kingdom Climate Impact Programme (UKCIP02) that predicts the impact of rising sea levels on the United Kingdom in 2020, 2050, and 2080.
[82] As mentioned in the Introduction, the Thames is already experiencing "storm surges" and "equinoctial tides" ("On the Thames").

admits to "lifting" particularly gory episodes imagined in the novel from sources as diverse as Laura Ingalls Wilder's *The Little House in the Big Woods* (1932) and archival accounts of capital executions in Elizabethan era Tyburn (Mullen, "Week Four" 8). Yet nowhere does Self acknowledge a literary debt to either Maclean's *Island on the Edge of the World* (1972) or to Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997). Though Self once admitted to mentor Martin Amis that he finds it "very hard" to acknowledge his sources (*Junk* 386), this omission does not appear to be a defensive tactic on the author's part, nor a ruse staged for the author's amusement. Rather Self's oblique references to Maclean and Diamond register the transformation of the codex given the digitization of contemporary texts. As Self observes, "the permanent *now"* of electronic texts frustrates "top-down, educative humanism" because their permeability encourages lateral readings (Doherty, "Will"). In this respect, *The Book of Dave* exemplifies the "super-hybridity" associated with literary metamodernism, in which bidirectional sources are intra- and extratextually spliced to call attention to direct, mock, or mis-quotation (Heiser, *Metamodernism* 67).

This chapter contends that *The Book of Dave* demands an unconventional approach to reading – one that requires significant detective work on the part of the reader. Indeed, it is only through careful scrutinization of the author's extant corpus that the reader gleans a sense of how the novel's submerged referents correspond to those keyed into Self's travelogues and book reviews. Though Self's literary output includes scathing political commentaries, culinary reviews, solipsistic confessionals, psychogeographical travelogues, and five-hundred-page novels, Self maintains that his non-fiction and fiction are of a piece. Self takes the "aerial view" that each text he

authors is a discrete "topography" embedded within a much larger "archipelago" that is, itself, suggestive of a "numinous parallel world" (*Junk* 341). In his address to the Hillingdon Literary Festival (2016), Self admits to peppering his fiction with historical references that "nobody will get" to discredit the notion that contemporary readers require, or even enjoy, novels that adhere to a "self-referential" platform ("An Evening"). On the one hand, Self's admission confirms what extant scholarship on *The Book of Dave* reveals: that very few readers are likely to discern the historical inversions that unveil the specific target of Self's satire. On the other hand, Self's comments suggest that the author has yet to champion an alternative modality with which to achieve his broader aesth-ethical aim: to "shock" and "astonish" the reader into conceiving of the world aslant (Finney, "Will"). Counter to the notion that contemporary novels "mean" only insofar as their meaning is bounded by the "codex," Self acknowledges that the "ubiquity of bi-directional digital media" means that contemporary readers are far more likely to encounter his prose on a screen than in hardcopy, and may therefore exploit searchable fields to "pierce" the codex and resituate a given text in lateral relation to other texts and the extratextual sources referenced therein ("An Evening"). The manner in which Self patterns his corpus with intra- and extratextual references is paradigmatic of recent metamodernist cli-fi. Contrastive to the "free-floating signs" associated with postmodernist pastiche, Self's prose consistently collapses "double-mapped" referents into a singularity to unveil an affective "third" incompatible with the reader's common logic (Gibbons, "Metamodern" 83). Contrary to contemporary consumer culture in which readers are encouraged to digest and discard prose as an expendable product, *The Book of Dave* requires both attentive rereading and the reading of disparate texts in lateral

relation. As this chapter sets out to establish, without these extratextual points of reference, Self's reader cannot possibly arrive at the "revelation" that clarifies the contents of the novel's twinned plotlines, nor the dark humour that informs Self's historical inversions.

This chapter aims to demonstrate that Self's "speculative future" dramatizes a notably turbulent two-hundred-year interval (c. 1684-1878) in which the Hiortans suffered the demands of not one but six petty tyrants: Free Church Reverend John MacKay (referred to in *The Book of Dave* as the "dryva"), proprietor Sir John MacPherson MacLeod (the "loyah"), MacLeod's rent collector Norman MacRaild (the "hack"), MacRaild's lackey Neil Ferguson (the "guvnor"), local cult leader Roderick MacKenzie (the "geezer"), and schoolmaster Alexander Buchan (the "flyer"). In his portrait of this period, Self extends MacLeod's proprietorship by seven years (c. 1813-1871) and MacRaild's lease by four (c. 1842-73) so that both men are present for the duration of Reverend MacKay's exceptionally long and brutal reign (c. 1864-89). Self likewise displaces the historical ascent of MacKenzie (c. 1684-97) and Buchan (c. 1705-30) by several centuries to make both men contemporaries of MacKay. From a literary perspective, Self's tinkering serves to simplify the complexity of Hiort's recorded history, generate greater dramatic tension, and limit the number of characters introduced. More importantly, however, Self's strategic manipulation of Hiort's recent past enables the author to reimagine historical rivals as convivial co-conspirators angling to profit from the "grievous depredations" of a captive populace (*Book* 245). In so doing, Self's prose calls attention to the transhistorical reiteration of power that sees enterprising factions displace their historical rival yet leave intact the "architecture" inherited from

that regime.

In his speculative portrait of Hiort's demise, Self insinuates that the island's landlord, missionary-priest, rent-collector, and governor conspire to deceive locals into believing that popular demand for their lamp oil has waned and that it is in their best interest to export as much as possible, as cheaply as possible, before demand evaporates entirely. Over the course of the novel, Self discloses to the reader that the PCO has empowered the Loyah of Chil to supplant Ham's indigenous dryva with a state-sanctioned priest. Ham's loyah then empowers the hack to appoint Ham's guvnor to ensure the loyalty of the island's only literate resident. The rent-collector and the guvnor contrive to keep the islanders geophysically isolated from the rest of Ing so that they can manipulate the price of Ham's moto oil. The priest shrewdly intuits the guvnor's conspiratorial alliance with the rent-collector and, for a cut of the profits, supplies the religious doctrine necessary to defeat local resistance (123). The cult leader, too, detects a conspiratorial alliance between the guvnor and rent-collector, but is removed by the latter (172-73). In exchange for disposing of the cult leader, the guvnor pressures locals to comply with the rent-collector's distorted pricing (174). The reader is left to infer from the novel's conclusion that the moto massacre will proceed and – in robbing locals of the means to subsist – compel a mass evacuation (449). Self's "distant future" thus illuminates in "bigwatt splendor" the absurdity of what has transpired: in their efforts to maximize profit through market distortion, Self's co-conspirators incite a boom-and-bust cycle that admits no alternative to auto-cannibalistic implosion (451).

Self's proposed conspiracy thus partakes of journalist John Sand's nineteenth-century exposé on Hiort, in which Sand compares MacLeod's monopolization of the

island's exports to a "cunningly contrived" and "infernal" machine so "carefully encased and concealed that it requires study and reflection" (as cited in Seton 320). To date, however, historians of Hiort's recent past have yet to unearth the type of sweeping conspiracy Self stages in his speculative portrait of Ham, thus leaving open the question as to whether the novel's distant future reflects the author's flight of fancy or an astute conclusion arrived at through previously overlooked archival evidence. It appears possible that a perplexing fowling inventory transcribed by Maclean may have given Self cause to imagine the presence of something amiss. In Maclean's tally of total fulmar caught on Hiort (c. 1829-1929), the Hiortans' fowling practices remained oddly fixed despite sharp market reversals: when popular demand for fulmar oil peaked (c. 1878), the Hiortans caught 9,056 fulmar; yet, when demand all but evaporated (c. 1901), the Hiortans still ensnared 9,600 fulmar – more birds per inhabitant than the previous seventy years (Maclean 93). Maclean's inventory thus provides compelling evidence that the Hiortans remained oblivious to dramatic fluctuations in market demand. Given Hiort's remove from the Scottish coast, the island's lack of seaworthy vessels, the infrequency of Hiort's mail service, and the Hiortans' non-fluency in English, it is at least theoretically possible that the Hiortans remained unaware of market trends and, by extension, the severity of their exploitation under MacLeod. Indeed, this hypothesis is confirmed early in the novel when Self reveals that rent-collector Keith Greaves has confined the islanders to Ham for the past thirty years, thereby forcing the Hamsters to rely on visiting Chilmen for "news of the outside world" (68). The implicit connection Self establishes between the conspiratorial manipulation of the islanders and the geophysical isolation of the island itself harkens to Diamond's analysis of kleptocratic predation, in which

culturally isolated populations are rendered particularly vulnerable to economic exploitation from within and without (*Guns* 291-92). As subsequent chapters of this dissertation demonstrate, the speculative topographies of Mitchell and Winterson also take up Diamond's suggestion that geophysical isolation is both an attractant to and consequence of unchecked predation and that circumscribed sites are disproportionately prone to collapse.

### 1.7 Ham's Moto as Hiort's Fulmar

While Self faults geopolitical encapsulation and economic predation with compelling the islanders' lethal dependence on "moto oil," the specific history that undergirds much of *The Book of Dave* pertains to Hiort's fatal misuse of the northern fulmar bird, reimagined in Self's novel as an "antediluvian" moto species dating back to the "MadeinChina" period (491). According to Hamster lore, the moto are begotten of the union of a mythic "beast" and "giant" and the Hamsters, in turn, are believed to issue from the union of Man and moto (58-9). As such, the Hamsters cleave to the belief that God wills the coexistence of man and moto "for eternity" (19) and that Man could no more part with his moto than "walk over the sea" (125). In addition to supplying the islanders with fuel for their lamps, milk for their young, meat for their table, and medicine for their ailments, the moto produce the sacred elixir required to initiate infants into communal life and function in local lore to explain the islanders' cosmological origin. Indeed, the Hamsters conceive of their fate as so intimately bound to that of their moto that they thrice repeat the adage that "vares no Am wivaht ve moto" (There's no Ham without the moto) (121, 173, 449). Self's moto thus act within the novel as the

novum[83] that yokes the sacred and economic significance of Hiort's northern fulmar bird with the economic exploitation of the Hiortans as a "sloven," "inelegant," and "bestial" race (Macauley 44; Maclean 63).[84] This chapter contends that the ritualized butchering of Ham's native moto (16-7) harkens to the "milking" of the northern fulmar, whose tetanus-laced oil MacRaild exported to the Scottish mainland to cure disease and fuel lamps. Given Hiort's near total lack of arable soil,[85] the Hiortans largely subsisted on the seafowl that nested in the "fissured galleries" of the islet's granite cliffs ("On the Rocks"). Of the 750,000 seafowl that migrated to Hiort annually, the islanders held the northern fulmar in highest esteem for, unlike other seafowl, the fulmar nested on Hiort year-round (Buchan 13; Maclean 90). Given the islanders' immobilized condition, the Hiortans revered the fulmar for its capacity to leave Hiort, cross the watery abyss, and return at will (Maclean 53).[86] Self's reinscription of Hiort's fulmar as Ham's moto lends affective depth to the novel as a whole because the conflation implies that congruent entanglements afflict twenty-first-century Londoners: present-day humans remain similarly tethered to their "motos" because the latter represent the promise of transcendence made all the more precious by circumscribed techno-predation.

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[83] A term coined by scholar Darko Suvin to describe the scientifically plausible innovations often found in speculative fiction (as cited in Dunlop 215).

[84] Even the motos' "lilting lisp" reflects linguistic quirks specific to the Hiortans, who struggled to pronounce d, g, r, and h (Maclean 33). Self's use of diacritical markings in the novel's speculative sections is also explained by the fact that "h" rarely appears in nineteenth-century Gaelic texts; instead an umlaut is added to the softened consonant (as in Böm). Moreover, Self's addition of acute accents to non-standard vowels (as in Dévúsh) is likewise consonant with nineteenth-century Gaelic orthography (Robertson 223-39).

[85] The Hiortans' use of manure derived from seabird carcasses unwittingly contaminated the soil with toxic levels of lead, zinc, cadmium, and arsenic (Meharga 1818–828).

[86] Strikingly, the island-bound Rapanui also worshipped migratory seafowl. As chapter three discusses, the *Matatoa* (anti-establishment militia) shrewdly aligned themselves with the image of a bird as a potent emblem of freedom and divine transcendence to attract devotees (*Collapse* 111).

Throughout the 1870s, the Hiortans came to rely so completely on imports "purchased" through the sale of fulmar feathers and oil that the Hiortans cleaved to the premise that Hiort would be "no more" if deprived of fulmar (Maclean 90; Macauley 145-46). As such, this chapter argues that Self's "distant future" reenacts Hiort's catastrophic dependence on the northern fulmar, commencing with the rebranding of Hiort's fulmar oil as a sought-after lamp fuel (c. 1864) and concluding with the onset of peak production (c. 1878), roughly a decade prior to the introduction of the petroleum competitors (c. 1890) and electric substitutes (c. 1902) that would spell the death of Hiort's lamp oil industry. This chapter argues that Self stages this interval in Hiortan history to suggest that contemporary petroleum consumption was, at the time of the novel's composition, similarly poised to enter a period of peak production buoyed by collusive price-fixing intended to forestall conversion to electric and hybrid alternatives.

### 1.8 Ham's Absent Fathers: "Loyah" MacLeod and "Hack" MacRaild

Self's speculative portrait of Hiort's fulmar oil industry unveils the sophisticated hierarchy of managers and middlemen whose wealth relied on the exploitation of a captive labour force. The bulk of Self's speculative future spans the proprietorship of Sir John MacPherson MacLeod,[87] pictured in *The Book of Dave* as the Loyah of Chil (80).[88] Despite holding Ham in "tack" for over fifty years, Self discloses that Ham's loyah last visited the islet thirty years prior (68). Rather than residing with his "tenants" on Ham, Self's loyah rules the Hamsters remotely from his "Bouncy Castle" at "Wyc" (300).

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[87] Clan MacLeod first took possession of the archipelago in the fifteenth century and retained ownership until 1932 (Maclean 36-37).

[88] Self uses "loyah" and "lawd" interchangeably to denote a "wealthy landowner" (490). The moniker "Chil" alludes to the stream "sunt childa," which seventeenth-century Dutch cartographers erroneously ascribed to the archipelago in the belief that the Isle was named to honour a (non-existent) Saint Kelda (Maclean 33).

Self's characterization of Ham's loyah as a largely absent proprietor is historically consistent with Hiort's own: MacLeod set foot on Hiort's shores only twice during his fifty-year reign (c. 1813-71) and ruled the Hiortans by proxy from Dunvegan Castle on the Isle of Skye (Maclean 37; Rackwitz 346). Fittingly, Self's loyah makes but one, exceedingly brief, appearance within the novel: sporting a "scarlet carcoat," the loyah is seen astride a "jeejee" (horse) hunting "munchjack" (deer) with his consort (242). When members of his party spot motos schlepping in the "wallows," the loyah orders his men to return the wayward moto back to Ham (242-43) – a directive that recalls MacLeod's own failed efforts to prevent roughly a third of Hiort's population from fleeing to Australia (c. 1852) (*Napier*).[89] Counter to Maclean's assessment of MacLeod as a "fair and reasonable" proprietor (37), Self paints Ham's "Lawd" as a "boorish" and "grasping" profiteer (245) who rules the Hamsters from afar through the "good offices" of his hack, Keith Greaves.

Described in *The Book of Dave* as a pox-scarred man of modest fortune (13), Greaves pays Ham's loyah "hard dosh" for the "privilege" of serving as his "hack" (25).[90] In exchange, Greaves negotiates with Ham's appointed guvnor the terms of "rent;" in lieu of currency, Greaves collects "fevvas" (feathers) and "moto oil" from the Hamsters, which he redistributes to Inglish suppliers at a substantial mark-up (172). Self's satiric depiction of Ham's loathsome "rent-racker" is historically consistent with MacLeod's tacksman: MacRaild rose from the "cadet" ranks of MacLeod to lease Hiort's "tack" (c. 1842) for an undisclosed sum and, in exchange, the Hiortans paid the bulk of their rent in fulmar feathers, which MacRaild exported to Scottish suppliers at a three-

[89] Of the thirty-six evacuees, twenty died en route. The remaining sixteen settled in Melbourne where they founded the suburb of St. Kilda (*Napier*).
[90] Self coins the term "hack" to satirize the historical designation of tacksman.

fold profit (Brougham 107). When popular demand for Hiort's "pest-proof" bedding waned (c. 1860),[91] MacRaild convinced mainland health practitioners to prescribe fulmar oil as a potent catholicon to treat pain, inflammation, and infection (Morgan 109). So successful was MacRaild's campaign that he established a lucrative enterprise ferrying desperately ill mainlanders to Hiort to purchase fulmar oil for an astronomical fee (Maclean 38). When the reader first encounters Ham's hack, Greaves is shown transporting scores of sick "Chilmen" to purchase "moto oil" falsely billed as medicinal (13-15). With the charm of a snake-oil peddler, Greaves reassures those with "fresh pox scars" and "weeping goiters" that Ham's moto oil is the "most effective of remedy for whatever ails you" (14-15). Historically, the sudden influx of ailing visitors to Hiort sparked virulent outbreaks of cholera, influenza, leprosy, and small pox (Morgan 111), as Self acknowledges in his nod to the epidemic that transpired "two generations back" that "carried off" half of Ham's already sparse population (85). Not surprisingly, popular demand for Hiort's "medicinal" oil fell sharply (c. 1865) once disillusioned consumers realized the unctuous balm to be rich only in vitamins A and D (Maclean 92).[92]

*The Book of Dave* thus commences at a crucial turning point in which the failure of Ham's feather trade, the discrediting of its medicinal moto oil, and the imminent loss of its tourist industry forces Greaves to rebrand moto oil from a "potent prophylactic" to a long-lasting lamp fuel (68). Self suggests that, shortly after launching this new industry (509 AD), Greaves conspires with Guvnor Brundi to export Ham's moto oil at a grossly distorted rate (66-67). Historically, MacRaild's rebranding of Hiort's fulmar oil as lamp

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[91] MacRaild billed the putrid musk of fulmar feathers as a natural repellent to lice and bedbugs (Maclean 92). In reality, Hiort's feathers were host to a variety of parasites – a fact known to the Hiortans who slept on straw and fashioned pillows from bundled clothing (Steel 120).

[92] Its viscosity, bitter aftertaste, and rank odor did, however, render fulmar oil a particularly effective "vomiter" (Buchan 13).

fuel (c. 1864) could not have been better timed, as the economic ascent of the industry coincided with the twenty-year window between the collapse of the Nantucket whaling industry (c. 1871-90)[93] and paraffin's ascent (c. 1890s) (Steel 118-19; Thompson). Within ten years of repurposing Hiort's fulmar oil as lamp fuel, MacRaild's successor exported five hundred gallons to mainland suppliers at a five-fold profit (Steel 118). In what should have marked a period of unrivalled abundance for the Hiortans (c. 1870s), scathing exposés reported widespread starvation (Maclean 127).[94] In response, numerous "philanthropists" agitated to clear the Hiortans from their "lonely rock" to allow professional fowlers unfettered access to Hiort's fulmar (Seton, "Preface"). Though there is insufficient archival evidence to confirm that MacLeod knowingly permitted MacRaild to starve his "tenants," MacLeod's absence enabled MacRaild to exploit the Hiortans with impunity. The vast communicational gulf that separated Hiort from the Scottish mainland ensured that the violence and exploitation on which MacLeod's prosperity relied remained concealed from mainland authorities, the popular press, and perhaps even MacLeod. Self's speculative portrait of MacLeod and MacRaild therefore serves to underscore how geophysical compartmentalization permits absent elites to transpose personal culpability onto negligent middle-managers and malicious ground agents.

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[93] American whalers supplied mainland consumers with lamp fuel c. 1816; however, with the discovery (c. 1847) and widespread distribution (c. 1859) of paraffin, the whaling industry fell into decline (c. 1870s) (Thompson). Having plundered the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans, American and European whalers sought "smaller whales in colder and more extreme waters in bigger vessels over longer periods of time with fewer and fewer capital returns [while] the price of whale oil doubled" (Nikiforuk). Striking parallels thus emerge between the eighteenth-century bid for whale oil and the twenty-first-century bid for petroleum. Although Self does not credit Melville's *magnum opus* with inspiring the contents of *The Book of Dave*, the author's admiration for *Moby Dick* is evidenced by his reading of the novel's forty-second chapter for *BBC Radio* in 2012 (Flood).

[94] For more comprehensive accounts in the popular press, see: Angus Smith's "A Visit to St. Kilda" (1873); Lady Baillie-Polkemmet's "A Visit to St. Kilda" (1874); John MacDiarmid's "St. Kilda and its Inhabitants" (1877); George Seton's *St. Kilda* (1878); and John Sand's "Out of the World" (1878).

Moreover, Self's portrait intimates that geophysical isolation not only generates a perspectival disconnect between the agents of predation and the predated; the perspectival gulf also cultivates a condition of collective relativism in which the exploited cannot gauge the extent of their exploitation through comparison to any other condition. Perversely, MacLeod's alienation from his "tenants" led the Hiortans to revere their "Lawd" as an absent "deity" (Maclean 37).

**Ham's Abusive Fathers: "Guvnor" Ferguson and "Dryva" MacKay**

Despite repeated allegations of abuse levelled at MacRaild, MacLeod retained MacRaild for the duration of MacLeod's proprietorship[95] and empowered his "hack" to appoint a favoured candidate to Hiort's governorship, thereby stripping the Hiortans of their social democracy (Hutchison).[96] Akin to Self's guvnor,[97] who manages Ham remotely from a "semi at Stanmaw" (200), MacRaild managed the Hiortans from a croft on Pabbay through the "good offices" of Governor Neil Ferguson Senior (Gannon and Geddes 15).[98] When the reader first encounters Ham's guvnor, Ridmun is shown "calling over" the "slaughter run" as he guts a slain moto (11). Later, the reader learns that Ridmun inherited the guvnorship from his father-in-law Dave Brundi (63), after learning

[95] When MacLeod refused to renew MacRaild's lease (c. 1873), the latter assumed his brother's tack in Colbost (Hutchison). A decade later (c. 1883), crofters in Colbost accused MacRaild of "capricious eviction and rack-renting" (*Napier*).
[96] Prior to the 18th century, the Hiortans held democratic elections to determine who among them would act as their ambassador to MacLeod (Maclean 39).
[97] An anachronistic title Self substitutes for the historical designation of ground officer (Buchan 29).
[98] The first of several Fergusons to hold the esteemed title: Neil's brother assumed the position (c. 1890); shortly thereafter, Neil's nephew inherited the governorship (c. 1910) and remained Hiort's "uncrowned king" until the island's evacuation (MacDonald 1825).

to read the "run" in Dave's Búk (72).[99] Self intimates that Ridmun's appointment to the guvnorship hinges as much on his fluency in Inglish "Arpee" as his betrothal to Brundi's daughter (495). Shortly after assuming Brundi's office (510 AD), Ridmun complies with Greaves' "imposition of a substantial ticket" and informs his "constituents" that, henceforth, the Hamsters have "but one priority:" to make good on rent (174). In exchange, Ridmun enjoys an "extra rip" of land, an "extra tank" of moto oil (72-3) and the right to wear a baseball cap (129).[100] Self's portrait of the vested interests served by Ridmun's appointment is historically consistent with MacRaild's installment of Ferguson to Hiort's governorship (c. 1870-90): an appointment that centred as much on Ferguson's bilingualism as his willingness to execute MacRaild's bidding (Sand 142; Steel 15). By awarding the lucrative post to Ferguson, MacRaild purchased the loyalty of the only local sufficiently literate to discern the market value of Hiort's chief exports.[101] Although historians have yet to uncover evidence that Ferguson colluded with MacLeod's rent-collector to distort the price of Hiort's fulmar oil, archival records confirm that Ferguson quashed entrepreneurial initiatives intended to liberate locals from MacLeod's "charity" while concealing Hiort's deterioration from mainland authorities (Seton 139). In this respect, Self's novel is illustrative of Diamond's contention that kleptocracies tend to task ground agents with censoring in- and out-going communications to obscure the operations of their economic monopolies (*Guns* 279). Prior to the collapse of Hiort's medicinal oil trade (c. 1860s), Ferguson worked feverishly to prevent the Hiortans'

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[99] Most Hamsters have the "tacit" understanding that "having too many words" is heretical because literacy infringes on the exclusive domain of the dryva (71-2).
[100] Even this detail is historically consistent: Hiort's hack fashioned a bonnet for the island's governor to wear when visiting MacLeod (Martin 51).
[101] Within an overwhelmingly illiterate community of Gaelic speakers, Hiort's governors stood apart as bilingual intermediaries ("On Charles").

emigration to Australia (c. 1852), as his prosperity relied on keeping the Hiortans "chained" to their "little rock" (Seton 282). Ultimately, Self's depiction of Ham's lucrative lamp oil casts the loyah, hack, and guvnor as the industry's primary beneficiaries – each earning a hefty cut for their respective roles in supervising the extraction, processing, and distribution of the prized fuel.

Having established the stratified hierarchy enriched by Ham's moto oil trade, Self goes on to describe the expansive reach of the PCO's bounds, achieved through the strategic installation of dryvas tasked with indoctrinating Ing's extended labour base in the "exactions" of the "slaughter run" (307). Crucially, Self identifies Ham's newly appointed "dryva" (priest) as supplying the religious doctrine required to justify the economic exploitation of the Hamsters. As second in command to the loyah, the dryva lords over Ham's hack and guvnor: both recognize that it only "benefits their cause" to be "seen" cooperating with the dryva and "beyond him, the PCO" (25). Self therefore credits the dryva with dominating the islanders "more than their isolation, [more] than their peculiar symbiosis with the motos, [more] than the Book itself" (174). When the "vigorous" middle-aged bachelor surfaces "out of the void" to unseat local cult-leader Symun Dévúsh (510 AD), the Hamsters passively accept the Dävinist orthodoxy foisted onto their community (174). In exchange for installing a schoolteacher and surgeon on Ham, the dryva browbeats the Hamsters into attendance at lengthy sermons that affirm the worthlessness of their "moto oil:"

> …you must understand that [moto] oil is no longer in demand elsewhere in Ing; there are diverse other fuels, beeswax, tallow, and suchlike, with which to conjure 'lectric. In accepting the oil in place of dosh-rent, my Lawd's Hack is supporting you as if you were the meanest foundlings! [Mister Greaves] will no longer offer you a good price for the oil of [these] toyist beasts! (123)

The dryva's speech is later exposed as false when Carl and Böm visit Risbro, Bril, and Lundun where 'lectric lamps are still "widely" fuelled with moto oil (364). Although historical evidence has yet to confirm that MacKay conspired to distort the commercial value of Hiort's lamp oil, his sermons did prevent the Hiortans from staging organized protests, coordinating entrepreneurial initiatives, or hatching resettlement options. Thrice on Sundays, MacKay inflicted the Hiortans with "fire and brimstone" services totaling nine hours in duration (Steel 81).[102] The mirthless minister forbid conversation, eye contact, and popular pastimes on Saturday through Monday and, likewise, restricted farming, fishing, and fowling, thus leaving the Hiortans little time to accomplish anything save making good on rent (Maclean 119). Worse still, the Free Church to which MacKay belonged obliged the Hiortans to finance their own oppression: over a fourth of MacKay's annual stipend came from the pockets of his parishioners (Maclean 118). Though MacKay's reign was extraordinarily grim, it was not unique: many of the ministers who succeeded MacKay similarly relished the opportunity to indoctrinate a captive population with little oversight. Self's satirization of MacKay's tyranny is thus consistent with Diamond's claim that kleptocracies tend to achieve their dominion over local populations through the installation of religious authorities tasked with supplying the doctrine for gross wealth inequalities (*Guns* 277). Overall, Self's speculative treatment of Hiort's decline calls attention to the stratified arrangement of absent benefactors, semi-absent middlemen, predacious ground officers, and priestly intermediaries that coerced the island's captive population to internalize wealth disparities to prevent reform.

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[102] MacKay's Sunday sermons consisted of three services, each three hours in length, held at 11:00am, 2:00pm, and 6:00pm (Maclean 117).

### 1.10 Phármakon: Ham's Poison as Hiort's Cure[103]

Although the conspiracy that undergirds *The Book of Dave* largely attributes Ham's collapse to the intrusive presence of predacious "outsiders," the islanders do not escape Self's scrutiny. From "time-out-of-mind" to 510 AD, the moto-worshipping Hamsters ascribe to an "ancient pagan ritual" in which they anoint the cut umbilicuses of newborns with moto oil – a compulsory initiation rite that causes most to die of a "locked jaw" within a week (181). The ritualized infanticide that threatens to depopulate Ham is likewise modelled after Hiort's neo-natal crisis which, at its height (c. 1855-76), saw eight out of ten infants die after the *bramach-innilt* (midwife) anointed their navels with fulmar oil ("On Charles;" Steel 110). Unbeknownst to the Hiortans, the gannet gut pouches used to store fulmar oil provided an ideal culture for the tetanus bacilli (Maclean 122). Self's dramatization of Hiort's neonatal crisis implicitly disputes Maclean's characterization of the Hiortans as the guileless victims of a baffling epidemic (Maclean 123). Instead, Self's Hamsters question the curative properties of their moto oil yet cleave to the performative power of the rite to absolve and "bind" the newly born to the land:

> It was if these first eleven days of life were only a final stage of incubation, and the thick coating of moto oil [the] final membrane through which [the infant] must pass into independent life. For in as much as a Hamster was born of a woman, so he was also born of the island itself (180).

When Ham's dryva eventually abolishes the "vile practice," he capitalizes on its cessation by warning locals that they must substantially increase their exports if they intend to "support" the new additions to their number (123). Although there is no hard evidence to confirm that MacKay deliberately prolonged Hiort's neonatal crisis to

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[103] As Derrida observes in "Plato's Pharmacy" (1981), the ancient Greek term *phármakon* denotes a medicine, poison, and scapegoat. The curious relation of the last term is explained through the application of "curative" poisons used in sacrificial purification rites (*Dissemination* 99).

distract from MacRaild's distorted pricing of fulmar oil,[104] MacKay's sermonizing "normalized" eight-day sickness as God's method for keeping the Hiortans within the bounds of their island's resources (Maclean 122). Ultimately, Self's defamiliarized depiction of historical Hiort calls attention to the fact that peak oil production coincided with the apex of the island's neonatal crisis. Arguably, *The Book of Dave* hinges on this historical juncture to underscore the vulnerability of circumscribed populations destabilized by crisis to collusive manipulation and technological dependence (an issue revisited in the final body chapter of this dissertation). Ultimately, Self's suggestion that Ham's economic crisis merely compounded the collective precarity seeded by the island's neonatal epidemic is consistent with archival records: MacRaild repurposed fulmar oil at the apex of Hiort's neonatal crisis (c. 1864); fulmar oil anointments persisted throughout peak oil production (c. 1870s); and anointments abruptly ceased within a year of the industry's collapse (c. 1891). The Hiortans did not abandon this lethal rite voluntarily but complied with prohibitions imposed from without by theocratic authorities.[105] Instead of casting Ham as an Edenic realm tainted exclusively by the incursion of predacious outsiders, as Maclean portrays Hiort, Self attributes Ham's hardships to the illusion of fixed and necessary belief. The Hamsters persist in a ritual known to be lethal because changing the basis for their belief would require that locals acknowledge not only a grievous collective err but the fallibility of unquestioned authority. In keeping with Winterson's Rapanui (the focus of chapter three), Self's

[104] MacKay's negligence is made particularly apparent when set against the conduct of his successor, Reverend Angus Fiddes. Within a year of arriving on Hiort (c. 1891), Fiddes discerned the cause of the crisis and successfully recruited nurses to convince the Hiortans to abandon the practice (Woody and Ross 1339).

[105] Given the temporal synchronicities noted above, it is tempting to speculate that authorities halted the practice because maintaining a condition of perpetual crisis on Hiort no longer served their interests.

islanders cling all the more firmly to a "curative poison" as conditions worsen with the consequence of exacerbating an otherwise remediable crisis. The implicit connection between Hiort's geophysical isolation, the Hiortans' religiosity, and Hiort's neonatal crisis is best articulated by an unnamed Hiortan who posited that "elevated on this rock, suspended over a precipice, tossed on the wild ocean, [a Hiortan] can never forget God [for] he hangs continually on his arm" (Seton 268). Ultimately, Self's dramatization of Hiort's "eight-day sickness" suggests that the ardency of belief that sustained local morale during periods of prolonged hardship unwittingly cultivated collective resistance to conceiving of hardship as issuing from belief.

The primary source of Ham's affliction, Self contends, is not the "minatory" presence of its dryva but the "palisade of blisterweed" that encircles the Hamsters' "minds" (304). In accordance with Dave's Búk, the Hamsterfolk are indoctrinated in the belief that the moon is Dave's "édlite" (headlight), that the stars are "ve streetlites uv Nú Lundun" (the streetlights of New London), that the horizon is Dave's "dashbawd" (dashboard) and that the sun itself embodies an all-seeing Dave who watches the Hamsters covertly through his "mirra" (mirror) (22). The Hamsters perceive of themselves as Dave's "fares" and accept that Dave alone reserves the right to "pick them up" and "drop them off" (177). The Hamsterfolk court Dave's favour by calling over the "points" and "runs" of his "route," for they believe Dave hears their "calls" over his "intercom" (177). In short, the Hamsters' conceive of their universe as a cosmic cab and their God as an omnipotent cabdriver. Devout Dävinists understand human history to be a purposeful and redemptive sequence that culminates in the founding of a paradisiacal "Nú Lundun;" their emancipation is thus predicated on an interminable period of waiting

that spares the Hamsters from assuming "any responsibility" for what the achievement of "Nú Lundun" might entail (124). Rather than reform, overthrow, or flee from the sources of their oppression, the Hamsterfolk take comfort in the promise of future release. For devout Dävinists, Dave's "gospel" expresses a transcendent and universal "truth" understood to predate the establishment of Dävinity, the rise of the PCO, and the unification of Ing (177). As the foundation for all thought, Dave's Búk supplies the metaphoric "rock" upon which Ing is built (177). Just as the Hamsterfolk ascribe to the belief that God ordained the codependence of man and moto, orthodox Dävinists accept Dave's edicts as necessary and eternal. Buoyed by "phenomenal growth" and "burgeoning prosperity," the PCO contend that the "dävinic line" is "dävinely ordained to rule Ing – and beyond it the known world" (308). In response, foreign powers "hove" and pay "tribute" to the PCO to win its favour and emulate its successes (307). Dave's Búk thus renders the islanders, the Inglanders, and foreigners alike "unable to conceive of any purpose" beyond recuperating an imminent yet elusive state of past perfection (37) – a theme revisited in this dissertation's third chapter.

### 1.11 Ham's False Fathers: "Geezer" MacKenzie and "Flyer" Buchan

In distilling over two hundred years of Hiortan history (c. 1684-1878) into a period of fourteen (c. 1864-78), Self suggests that social instability born of local misuse of a native resource empowered foreign opportunists to exploit that same resource with the effect of transforming an isolated and reversible crisis into a catastrophe necessitating collapse. Self's speculative treatment of Hiort's demise not only reframes one crisis in the context of another to establish a more nuanced spectrum of complicity. The novel also

ironizes crucial aspects of Hiort's distant past to reposition seventeenth-century historical rivals as nineteenth-century political allies and seventeenth-century establishment cronies as nineteenth-century political dissidents.[106] In arguably his most striking inversion, Self reimagines the deranged cult-leader and serial rapist Roderick MacKenzie as the charismatic suitor and political dissident Symun Dévúsh. Dévúsh surreptitiously monitors Fred Ridmun's tutorials with Dave Brundi (72-73), and, through Fred's instruction, becomes literate (76). Whilst foraging in the "Ferbidden Zöne," Dévúsh recovers Dave's "sekkun Búk" (second Book) and founds a short-lived cult (509-13 AD) predicated on universal literacy and free love (77). The "comely suitor" then seduces guvnorness Caff Ridmun by convincing her that an infant conceived of "hardier stock" would be more likely to survive a compulsory anointment (82). Shortly thereafter, Guvnor Ridmun orchestrates Dévúsh's arrest (84-85), Greaves removes Dévúsh from Ham (172-73), and the Loyah of Chil exiles Dévúsh to Nimar, where Dévúsh dies of exposure (197). Dévúsh's arraignment, however, has little to do with avenging an infidelity. Rather, Ridmun authorizes Dévúsh's arrest because the latter's rhetoric threatens Ham's feudal concentration of wealth: Dévúsh's instructions to "stikk i 2 ve Ack, stikk i 2 ve Loyah uv Chil, vare awl skum" (Stick it to the Hack, stick it to the Loyah of Chil, they're all scum) (80) inspire subversives to contemplate sinking "the Hack's pedalo with bricks" next "midsummer" (83). In addition to feudal reform, Dévúsh also endorses greater economic independence through "fishin aw farmin [or] anifying vat myte B an urna err on Am" (Fishing or farming or anything that might be an earner here on Ham) (67-68).

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[106] Prior to staging an ironized inversion of a pivotal event, Self consistently draws the reader's attention to the presence of an irony, as when the author calls the reader's attention to an "evian" stream "rich in irony" (10) or raiment "hung with all manner of irony devices" (243).

Historically, "Roderick the Great" founded a short-lived cult on Hiort (c. 1684-97) on the pretext that the Virgin Mary had gifted him with a "prayer" that, if relayed in private, would protect Hiortan infants from harm (Maclean 58-9). Exploiting the fear and bafflement of Hiort's neonatal crisis, the eighteen-year-old fowler used the "prayer" as a ploy to sexually assault expectant women (Maclean 59). MacKenzie's misconduct eventually came to light after a brazen attempt to debauch the governor's wife. Yet, instead of reporting MacKenzie's misdeeds to MacLeod, Hiort's governor pledged a blood-oath of everlasting friendship to MacKenzie (Bartlet 21).[107] When MacKenzie's transgressions finally came to MacLeod's attention (c. 1689), MacLeod waited four years to respond. After charging MacKenzie with heresy and ordering "the imposter" to "cease preaching on pain of death," MacLeod inexplicably returned MacKenzie to Hiort (c. 1693) where the latter immediately re-established his cult (Bartlet 21-23). MacKenzie's brazen non-compliance with the terms of his pardon compelled MacLeod to dispatch a second vessel to Hiort (c. 1697) (Bartlet 22). Yet MacLeod's primary reason for doing so was not to quash MacKenzie's cult but to broker a truce between his rent-collector and the Hiortans, who sought to sink their tacksman's "pedalo" with stones to protest their diet of seaweed and "unclean meats" (Maclean 38). Most historians attribute MacLeod's lenience towards MacKenzie to the fact that the latter crewed his tackesman's trade excursions from Hiort to Harris. Historians speculate that MacKenzie may have become literate in English through interactions with MacLeod's retinue (Bartlet 23; Martin 74-76). If MacKenzie could read English, it is conceivable that the cult leader could have unearthed a second fowling inventory that contradicted the contents of the

[107] Thus lending an unexpected irony to Self's portrait of Ridmun as Dévúsh's "best bluddë mayt" (82).

first. What is significant about Self's portrait of the "Geezer" is that it brings to the fore additional correlations between geophysical circumscription, communal crisis, religious fervor, and cultural predation.

The ironic inversions that enable Self to reimagine a notorious sexual predator as a sympathetic political dissident are rivalled only by the author's ironized portrait of Antonë Böm - a bespectacled schoolteacher who inverts the historical failings of Reverend Alexander Buchan. Demoted for covertly worshiping the gospel of Dévúsh, Böm accepts Greaves' offer of employment to instruct the Hamsterfolk in the "phonics" of Dave's "Búk" (301). Whereas Self portrays Böm as a devoted disciple of Dévúsh (299), historically Buchan sought to obliterate all traces of MacKenzie's cult (Maclean 30). Upon arriving on Hiort (c. 1705), Buchan immediately set out to smash the "material monuments" of MacKenzie's "idolatry" (Buchan 37). Once established, Buchan's zealotry supplanted MacKenzie's "tyranny" with a "brand of despotism" that proved "far worse" (Maclean 57).[108] Though historians frequently credit Buchan with introducing literacy to the Hiortans, archival records show that, six years after its founding (c. 1706), Buchan's school boasted only one pupil: the youngest son of Hiort's governor (Maclean 119), pictured in *The Book of Dave* as the "spindle-shanked" twelve-year old, Carl Dévúsh (*Book* 1). In the vignette that concludes Self's distant future (450), Carl's paternal substitution of Böm for Dévúsh recalls the resignation with which the Hiortans accepted Buchan's installment in the wake of MacKenzie's exile (Maclean 57). Far from providing the reader with a heartening tale of a fatherless son who overcomes adversity to secure a decent paternal surrogate, the historical referents that underpin this sequence

[108] Though Buchan did not debauch local women, Buchan forced female transgressors to stand for long intervals in "sack cloths" soaked with sewage (Campbell).

imply that Carl has supplanted the brutal reign of a false prophet with that of a petty despot, thereby unveiling Self's larger critique of how the appearance of reform masks the replication of the same.

**1.12 "A Shrinking World"**

Given that Self could have dramatized Hiort's demise without the addition of defamiliarizing devices, this chapter posits that Self applies a speculative lens to Hiort's ruination because doing so allows the author to critique contemporary petroleum dependency in a manner that eschews prescription ("Scotland" 41). The ironic reversals that allow Self to cast Greaves as Ham's "sincere protector" (25), or to insist that Ham's guvnorship comes with "heavy responsibility" for only "modest rewards" (72), gesture more broadly to the perspectival limitations that leave the Hamsterfolk conceiving of rivals as allies and cronies as dissidents. Unable to grasp the "carefully encased" mechanisms of Ing's "infernal machine," the Hamsters can neither understand nor oppose the sources of their exploitation (Seton 320). By extension, Self's speculative future insinuates that twenty-first-century Londoners are similarly ill-equipped to apprehend the transnational motivations and collusive alliances forged under the regimes of Thatcher and Blair. In selecting a mode that requires the attribution of meaning to a detected irony, Self circuitously steers the reader to (re)conceive of contemporary petroleum dependence as a perspectival problem issuing as much from ideological rigidity and historical distortion as kleptocratic encapsulation.

At heart, the constellation of submerged referents that undergird *The Book of Dave* encourage the reader to see contemporary consumers of petroleum (by)products as similarly riven by their complicity in a "ritual" known to be detrimental to subsequent

generations yet indispensable to their sense of self and livelihood. Self directs the reader to view "dryvas" of "motos" as zealots who benefit a remote corpocracy by rationalizing the impending "massacre" as warranted and inevitable. The author encourages the reader to see fossil-fuelled "motos" as semi-mythic monstrosities hatched from the "artificial" conflation of human labour with human "essence." Moreover, Self asks the reader to view "moto oil" as a "curative" poison that starves the newly born of a viable future. Self challenges the reader to reconceive of the oil industry as facilitating the impending slaughter through coercive tactics designed to foreclose on reform, rebellion, or flight. More broadly, Self asks that the reader visualize geopolitical institutions enriched by petroleum dependence as distant yet ever-expanding corpocracies motivated by the absurd promise of perfecting a prophesied heavenly city. Finally, the author asks the reader to imagine the Earth itself as an encapsulated island beset by technological dependencies and diminishing resources that is lorded over by zealots, charlatans, and hypocritical opportunists who refuse its captive labour base both freedom of thought and freedom of movement. Self peppers his novel's twinned plotlines with structural parallels, thematic synchronicities, episodic collisions, and recurrent characters to call attention to the spectrum of complicity that informs the contemporary climate crisis. In so doing, Self suggests petroleum dependence is not an irremediable "given" but a condition that issues from individual actions performed collectively in the here-and-now. Self thereby encourages the reader to see climate change, peak oil, global neoliberalism, and geopolitical stasis as "different aspects of a single phenomenon" (Dator 498). Self's suggestion that global capitalism extends and amplifies the operations of nineteenth-

century feudal kletopcracies echoes Diamond's contention that the "new rules" of twenty-first-century global neoliberalism are but "variations on the old" (*Guns* 417).

In keeping with the metamodernist cli-fi of Mitchell and Winterson, Self uses the double-mapped island to produce an otherworldly "third" that is, at once, "here, there, and nowhere" (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 12). The resulting "structure of feeling" registers both the volatility of twenty-first-century geopolitical, financial, and ecological networks and the anticipatory threat of future obsolescence (Gibbons, "Take" 32). Ultimately, Self's revisionist account of historical Hiort intimates that the transnational corporations that oversee the extraction, distribution, and pricing of petroleum (by)products have much to learn from Hiort's ruination. Within twenty-five years of rebranding fulmar oil from a potent catholicon to a long-lasting lamp fuel, popular demand for fulmar oil fell sharply with peak paraffin production (c. 1890s),[109] then vanished entirely with widespread conversion to electric lighting (c. 1902) (Steel 118-19). Despite attempts to recoup revenue through the export of tweed and wincey, the collapse of Hiort's oil trade left the Hiortans with little option but to evacuate (Maclean 110, 142).[110] In bringing to the fore uncanny parallels between Hiort's fatal reliance on fulmar oil and twenty-first-century dependencies on petroleum (by)products, Self discredits the notion that contemporary climate change constitutes a historically unprecedented or uniquely irremediable predicament. Indeed, as cultural theorist Nicole Shukin notes in *Animal Capital* (2009), "the history of industrial capitalism [is]

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[109] To provide some perspective, American paraffin manufacturers produced two thousand barrels per year (c. 1859) and two thousand barrels every seventeen *minutes* (c. 1899) (Thompson).

[110] The Hiortans signed their resettlement agreement with the understanding that Scottish authorities would provide them with decent housing and steady employment; yet, after Hiort's evacuation on 29 August 1930, the Hiortans were housed miles apart, forced to perform labour-intensive work for little pay, and coerced into squalid dwellings more suited to livestock (Hutchinson).

coextensive with investment in and exploitation of nonrenewable fossil fuels" (83). Self suggests that readers need look no further than Village Bay to find evidence of an encapsulated community unwittingly dependent on a lethal resource ("On the Rocks"). If the oil crises responsible for Hiort's demise caution the reader against the global consequences of continued petroleum dependence, then Hiort's example also underscores one significant point of departure: there is as yet no "elsewhere" for humans to relocate. Whereas public pressure propelled Scottish authorities to facilitate the evacuation of the Hiortans to the mainland (c. 1930) once conditions proved insufferable, present-day humans lack an alternate planet capable of sustaining human life should Earth become inhospitable (a point the final body chapter of this dissertation revisits).

While Ham supplies the metaphoric vehicle through which Self unveils the geopolitical consequences of technocratic encapsulation, Self's desecrated island also registers a metamodernist awareness of the Earth as a circumscribed ecological network. That is, Self's fictive islet literalizes the physical consequences of unchecked climate change: the increasing archipelagation of the Earth's lowest-lying landmasses. It is not coincidental that the tacit cataclysm on which *The Book of Dave* hinges is an apocalyptic deluge triggered by advanced global warming: Self's London is reduced to a "nameless conurbation" by the "tsunami of meltwater"[111] that surges from London's estuaries (404). Prior to the narrative proper, Self's novel includes a detailed map of Hampstead Heath as it will look five hundred years hence if, as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts, sea levels spike seventy meters c. 2100 (Trexler). The fact that rising seas may one day swallow some of the most "hauntingly beautiful" topographies on

[111] As a young boy, Self routinely envisioned death as a great wave plunging the Thames Valley "into its own basin" (*Psychogeography* 170) – a childhood fear likely seeded by his father's account of the catastrophic flood of 1953 (*Self Abuse* 188).

Earth leaves Self sick at heart ("On the Rocks"). Indeed, the prospect that Hiort's Conachair may one day lose much of its height to the Atlantic is consonant with reports that isolate Scotland's Outer Hebrides as one of five "hotspots" in the United Kingdom predicted to bear the brunt of climate change (Zsamboky 1).

### 1.13 Am Parbh: A Turning Point [112]

Six years prior to publishing *The Book of Dave*, Self wrote a sneering review of the short-lived BBC reality TV program *Castaway* (2000), which broadcast the year-long attempt of thirty-six "social outliers" to create a self-sufficient community on the remote island of Taransay in Scotland's Outer Hebrides. Although Self objected to the series for succumbing to scintillating yet predictable dramas designed to boost ratings, Self's primary qualm was that the series' participants claimed to want to endure the deprivations that come with living "on the edge of the world," yet clearly enjoyed the media "apparatus" and its fortnightly delivery of provisions (Matthews 2). For Self, the series served as "synecdoche" for the "British public," who similarly longed for greater community, greater sustainability, greater simplicity, and greater autonomy without performing any of the necessary actions to achieve those aims (*Feeding* 97). By extension, Self's conflation of historical Hiort with postdiluvial Hampstead suggests that twenty-first-century humans are just as unlikely to abandon a "curative poison" of their own volition. In a heated debate with philosopher Slavoj Žižek, Self declared humans too wedded to "technological innovation" and notions of "progress" to conceive of a "world" decoupled from global neoliberal capitalism ("Dangerous").

[112] Winterson's *Lighthousekeeping* 11.

In a recent (2017) article for the *New Statesman*, Self discloses that his faith in human "perfectibility" ebbed in the "late 1990s" then was "kicked away" when Britain joined the "coalition of the willing" in 2003 ("I was"). By the time Viking published *The Book of Dave* (2006), Self no longer believed in the possibility of a "genuinely egalitarian society" brought about by a "collective feat of will" ("Oscar"). Accordingly, Self's seventh novel does not purport to "solve" contemporary petroleum dependence but to ascribe value to individual acts of resistance despite their presumed ineffectuality. In this respect, Self joins Maclean in refusing to ruminate on how humans might still "avoid their fate" ("On Charles"). Rather, Self's novel advances an ideational ethos in keeping with the broader aesth-ethical sensibilities of literary metamodernism, in which belief in historical agency is *performed* (Dember). That is, *The Book of Dave* cleaves to the "meliorist" position that it is honorable to struggle against what "already obtains," even if that struggle achieves little or nothing ("Observations"). This metamodernist sensibility is best captured in this poignant passage from Dave's apocryphal text that is later lost to the future:

> The ice caps may melt, the jungles shrivel, the prairies frazzle, the family of humankind may have, at best, three or four more generations before the breakup […] yet there can be no excuse for not trying to live right. Put a brick in the cistern, clean the ugly smear of motor oil from beneath your trainers and walk away from the city (420-21).

In directing an imagined reader to "walk away from the city," Self is not suggesting that humans should permanently abandon the trappings of twenty-first-century urban life. Rather, in this passage, Self alludes to the psychogeographic concept of the *dérive* (drift): an unplanned walk through a semi-urban space in which attentiveness to the historicity of the built and natural environment is thought to temporarily decouple the "warped

relation" of personhood to place by inviting chance encounters with "fixed vortices," spatial disorientation, and metonia (Self, *Psychogeography* 40). Self dramatizes the fleeting sense of "second-sightedness" afforded by the *dérive* midway through the novel's recent past, when his anti-hero suddenly abandons his taxi-cab to walk with no specific destination in mind "away from the city," allowing his body to be steered by the process of walking alone. Dave soon finds himself lost in an unfamiliar "interzone" from which he spies headlights in the distance "drilling the murk" (405). In contrast to the commuters he observes from afar, Dave no longer feels "pinioned" to the present but free to "swim the entire current of fluvial time" (406). In reconceiving of the "conurbation of contemporary life" from the vantage of a disaffected "outlier," Self's twenty-first-century protagonist gleans a more acute awareness of the automatism of daily life ("On Charles"). In valorizing acts of limited resistance over the achievement of any specific collective outcome, Self's novel advances an ideational ethos which recognizes that contemporary climate change cannot be remedied or reversed through individual acts of resistance. In this case, performed belief in historical agency offers only the means to express, with greater virulence, scorn for a world that refuses re-creation.

### 1.14 Self's "Ham" and Mitchell's 'Ha-Why"

As this chapter demonstrates, *The Book of Dave* is paradigmatic of recent metamodernist cli-fi that systematically cloaks recorded history in defamiliarizing devices to lend the recent past the appearance of a distant future in which rising seas archipelagate the planet. In this respect, *The Book of Dave* exemplifies a much larger, if critically overlooked, literary trend evidenced in the proliferation of historical islands reimagined as speculative. The following chapter argues that David Mitchell's *Cloud*

*Atlas* (2004) also uses reconstructive metaxis, heterochronic topos, pronominal deixis, and code-inversion to generate a metareality that prods the reader to reconceive of the twenty-first-century present aslant. In keeping with Self, Mitchell "codes" *Cloud Atlas*' distant-most future with semi-veiled referents that structurally dismantle the "tense" of the future anterior by permitting the reader to view the present from the vantage of a "futureless" past made speculative through ironic compression and distortion. Both authors require that their readers recognize not only the citation of a specific history but also that history's inversion. As such, Self and Mitchell both engage with recorded history in a manner that is, at once, "principled" and "tongue-in-cheek" (Cooper) – a tension that is consistent with metamodernism's preoccupation with the suggestion of historical depth through narratological "depthiness" (Vermeulen, "Metamodern" 168). The following chapter commences by positing that Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* also registers the cultural impact of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997). Whereas *The Book of Dave* augments Diamond's account of technological diffusion as instrumental to kleptocractic predation, *Cloud Atlas* discredits Diamond's analysis as reliant on deterministic claims to being-in-time that conflate the event itself with its virtual (re)mediation. In anticipation of Winterson's critique of Diamond (discussed in the third chapter), Mitchell rejects Diamond's environmental materialism on the grounds that human predation hinges on inculcated patterns of belief that are shaped, but not determined, by environmental propensities.

## Chapter Two: How David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* Dismantles the Future

> Ever since a disciple of Buddha preached on the spot centuries ago, every bandit, king, tyrant, and monarch of that kingdom has enhanced [the temple] with marble towers, scented arboretums, gold-leafed domes, lavished murals on its vaulted ceilings, set emeralds into the eyes of its statuettes. When the temple finally equals its counterpart in the Pure Land, so the story goes, that day humanity shall have fulfilled its purpose, and Time itself shall have come to an end. (*Clouds* 81)

### 2.1 "Society Islands"[113]

In the Malvern hills of Worcestershire, David Mitchell's "earliest creative acts" entailed filling "little notebooks" with maps of "imaginary archipelagos," which Mitchell named and peopled before contemplating their "international relations [and] wars" – childhood keepsakes that Mitchell now considers to be his "first novels" (Leith). These early notebooks are therefore all the more striking given that Mitchell's *magnum opus* is similarly preoccupied with island communities beset by war. Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004)[114] mentions no less than five islands[115] and two of the novel's six narratives unfold on archipelagos: one historical and one typically understood to be imagined. And, in keeping with Mitchell's "little notebooks," *Cloud Atlas* evinces the author's longstanding fascination with international relations, cultural predation, and war: the novel's distant past unfolds on 1850s Rēkohu fifteen years after the Maori massacre of the Moriori (3-39; 493-529), whereas the novel's speculative future unfolds on thirtieth-

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[113] *Cloud* 52.
[114] All direct citations refer to the British 2004 edition of *Cloud Atlas* which differs, sometimes significantly, from its American counterpart (Eve, "You").
[115] The first and final sections of *Cloud Atlas* feature Rēkohu (Chatham Island) and Rangiaotea (Pitt Island 3-39; 493-529); the third section concentrates on Swannekke Island (87-144; 405-53); and the sixth and middlemost section of the novel unfolds on Ha-Why's "Big I" (249-325).

century "Ha-Why" during the Kona[116] massacre of Big I's windward communities (249-325). While critics rightly note the thematic congruencies that link these two besieged island communities, they overlook the way in which Mitchell's Ha-Why engages historical Hawai'i's unification (c. 1790-94).

In keeping with Self's heterochronic treatment of historical Hiort (discussed in chapter one), Mitchell deploys defamiliarizing devices to give Hawai'i's recent past the appearance of a distant future. The tactics that enable Mitchell to rewrite Hawai'i's eighteenth-century unification as a "thoroughly annihilated future" (Bissell 7) are in keeping with other metamodernist novels produced at the turn of the twenty-first century that use the desecrated island as a vehicle to make a distant future of a "futureless" past (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 12). The structure of Mitchell's novel places the reader in the paradoxical position of "looking back" on the present as if from a condition of future obsolescence (Gibbons, "Take" 32). Mitchell achieves this "tense" by situating transmigratory characters in heterochronic topos "looked on" from a "height" and patterned with inverted referential cues ("Take" 32). Akin to Self's historical-Hiort-as-speculative-Hampstead, Mitchell's ruined island maps historical Hawai'i onto its speculative counterpart to produce an otherworldly third that is, at once, "both/neither" (van den Akker and Vermeulen, "Periodizing" 10-11). The "structure of feeling" that results gifts the reader with the uncanny sense of a spacetime simultaneously coded as "here, there, and nowhere" (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 12). Mitchell's "double-mapped" Ha-Why collapses spatiotemporal distances to unveil both the anticipated consequences of advanced climate change and the implosive tendencies of

[116] "Kona" is a term used to distinguish communities located on the leeward (dry side) of Hawai'i's Big Island from those on the *ko'olau* (windward or wet side) (Juvik).

"closed" geopolitical networks. Crucially, Mitchell's delayed addition of successive metafictional frames generates a centralizing "metareality" that proves neither wholly connected to nor discrete from the embedded realms it contains, thus exposing the process through which history-as-eternal-return conflates the event itself with its virtual (re)mediation.

To discredit the determinism of eternal return, Mitchell situates speculative Ha-Why as the outermost "frame" of six interpolated first-person narratives arranged in chronological order; five are cut off midway at their climax then resolved in reverse order following the introduction of the novel's Hawaiian "hinge" section – the only narrative within the novel relayed to the reader in its entirety without interruption. The novel's six sections span roughly 850 years across six countries: "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing" (Part 1) is set on 1850s Rēkohu and details the unexpected alliance of San Franciscan notary Adam Ewing and enslaved Rēkohu resident Autua. The latter thwarts a con-man's plot to poison Ewing and, in return, Ewing facilitates his rescuer's resettlement in Hawai'i (3-39; 493-529). "Letters from Zedelghem" (Part II) takes place in 1930s Belgium and describes the parasitic dependence of composer Vyvyan Ayrs on his amanuensis Robert Frobisher, in which the former vindictively destroys the reputation of the latter – a betrayal that prompts the suicide of Ayrs' protégé (41-86; 455-90). "Half-Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery" (Part III) unfolds in 1970s California and traces the botched assassination of investigative journalist Luisa Rey after the reporter unearths a nuclear power plant's scheme to cover up safety infractions (87-144; 405-53). "The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish" (Part IV) (145-83; 367-404) transpires in twenty-first-century London where Timothy Cavendish allies with other residents to escape the

nursing home to which the middle-aged publisher has been wrongfully admitted. "An Orison of Sonmi~451" (Part V) is set in a dystopian twenty-second-century Korea where the enslaved fabricant[117] Sonmi~451 leads an abolitionist uprising against the fast-food chain Papa Song after discovering that the corporation feeds its slave-base the transmogrified corpses of "retired" laborers (185-245; 327-65). The novel's final section, "Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After" (Part VI) transpires in a distant post-apocalyptic "Ha-Why"[118] where teenage goatherd Zachry O'Bailey forges an unexpected alliance with the Prescient[119] Meronym that enables the pair to escape Kona enslavement (247-325).

In aggregate, these six sections dramatize the central motif that undergirds Mitchell's novel: the eternal return of predation performed in circumscribed topographies counterbalanced by altruistic acts born of transmigratory alliances. In effect, Mitchell's reader is whisked from the apex of British colonialism, to interwar Europe, to Cold War America, to contemporary Britain, to corpocratic Korea, to stone-age Ha-Why, before reprising "civilization's advance in reverse" (O'Donnell 89). In economic terms, *Cloud Atlas'* "caesuras" span the first and second industrial revolutions, the advent of contemporary neoliberalism, and the onset of late-stage capitalism prior to the return of tribal feudalism – an interval, in other words, that both antedates the apogee of Empire and postdates its declination (O'Donnell 88). The collapse of spatiotemporal distances achieved through metamodernist means (such as heterochronic topos, pronominal deixis, reconstructive metaxy, and code inversion) suggests poignant affinities between the

[117] A human clone genetically modified to perform strenuous labour for long intervals with minimal maintenance.
[118] Critics vary as to the exact timing of "Sloosha's Crossin:'" however, most contend that the section occurs between the twenty-seventh and thirty-first century (Mezey 17).
[119] Technologically sophisticated seafarers who barter exclusively with the Ha-Why-ans.

expansionist techno-predation of eighteenth-century Hawaiians and that of twenty-first-century corpocracies.

**2.2 "This Elastic Moment"**[120]

This chapter proceeds by arguing that the centremost section of the novel, "Sloosha's Crossin' and Ev'rything After," explicitly engages with the second chapter of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997), in which Diamond cites Kamehameha's unification of the Hawaiian archipelago to cast human predation as a latent propensity enabled by enviro-materialist precondition (276-78). Mitchell's familiarity with Diamond is evidenced by the author's comments on *Cloud Atlas*' composition: apparently, it was Diamond's contention that "there is nothing inevitable about civilization" that first piqued Mitchell's interest in "society islands" and later (c. 2001) propelled his decision to conduct field work on Rēkohu and Hawai'i (Begley n.p). As such, numerous critics have identified *Guns, Germs, and Steel* as supplying the intellectual groundwork for "Pacific Journals;" however, critics have yet to extend this observation to the contents of "Sloosha's Crossin'" (493-529). Oddly, *Cloud Atlas'* "Acknowledgements" credits Michael King's *A Land Apart* (1990) with inspiring Ewing's "Journals" (531), yet makes no mention of the Polynesian experiment Diamond undertakes in the second chapter of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. Mitchell's suppression of Diamond's influence means that the reader must directly engage with Diamond's second chapter to arrive at the epiphany that the novel's distant-most future inverts a recent past that predates "Pacific Journals'" point of origin. If undertaken, the reader is likely to discern that Mitchell's speculative "Ha-Why" stages a four-year interval in Hawaiian history (c. 1790-94) that saw Kona forces

[120] *Cloud* 448.

under Kamehameha's command seize Hawai'i's Big Island (*Guns* 64). Ultimately, this chapter argues that Mitchell's Ha-Why inverts Diamond's Hawai'i to refute the notion that "redistributive economies" born of food surpluses necessitate the stratification of traditional chiefdoms into complex kleptocracies sustained through public works and wars of conquest (*Guns* 274-75; 291).

Although Mitchell joins Diamond in using the remote island as a cipher through which to explore being-in-time, Mitchell's rendering discredits the temporal model on which Diamond's account depends. By placing "Sloosha's Crossin'" as the outermost container of the novel's other worlds, Mitchell demonstrates that the totality on which human predation relies is an illusion achieved through the recursive transmission of virtual fictions. Ultimately, Mitchell suggests that Diamond's analysis overlooks how complexity, flux, and historical (re)mediation enables or curbs human predation. In refutation of the terms that inform Diamond's analysis, Mitchell argues that the only truth to be gleaned from the study of globally dispersed and historically disparate human collectives is that the intergenerational transmission of fictions used to install and perpetuate predation are always, at once, offset by those that discredit the recursive totality (total purity, total difference, total closure, total circumscription) on which predation relies. As such, Mitchell suggests that human collectives may disrupt the fictions that underwrite predation by reconfiguring how the virtual projection of a given future relates to its historical actualization. While humans cannot sever being-in-time from the production of virtual fields, humans can reconceive of the virtual as distinct from the actual and, in doing so, divorce being-in-time from the enviro-determinism propagated by Diamond and others. In this respect, *Cloud Atlas* is consistent with other

works of metamodernist cli-fi, which similarly espouse a pragmatic idealism predicated on transhistorical models of human agency.

### 2.3 "The Painstaking Reconstruction of a Lost World"[121]

Although *Cloud Atlas* has garnered a great deal of attention, praise, and critical scholarship since its debut (2004), as well as a nomination for the Booker Prize, and a subsequent adaptation into a Hollywood film (2012), most scholarship tends to focus on "The Pacific Journals of Adam Ewing,"[122] as this section lends itself most to the theme of predation. Scholars also frequently cite "An Orison of Sonmi~451" to establish how the theme of predation recurs, with variation, in the novel's subsequent sections. Of the handful of critics who mention "Sloosha's Crossin' and Ev'rything After," most do so to bolster a claim made with respect to the novel's "neo-Victorian" frame: that is, critics[123] tend to cite the thematic congruence of "Sloosha's Crossin'" to Ewing's "Pacific Journals" to affirm the recursive fall of human civilization or to underscore the illusion of total circumscription on which the will to power relies (McMorran 171; Sims 180). Apart from theorizing the relation of "Sloosha's Crossin'" to "Pacific Journals," critics tend to cite Mitchell's Ha-Why to bolster claims made with respect to "An Orison of Sonmi~451." Whereas for some the survival of Sonmi's "orison" confirms the transformative potential of narrative (Morère 295; Schoene 119), for others the reduction of Sonmi's Declaration to spectacle signals the failure of the fabricant revolt and the

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[121] Mitchell's "On Historical" 558.
[122] For close readings of "Pacific Journals," see: Gerd Bayer; Maria Beville; Peter Childs and James Green; Nicholas Dunlop; Paul Ferguson; Marie-Luise Kohlke and Celia Wallhead; Fiona McCulloch; Jason Mezey; Jennifer Rickel; Casey Shoop and Dermot Ryan; and Christopher Sims.
[123] For scholarship that reads *Cloud Atlas* as an affirmation of eternal ecocide born of techno-predation, see: Caroline Edwards 191; Marie-Luise Kohlke and Celia Wallhead 222; Oliver Lindner 364; Hélène Machinal 142-49; Fiona McCulloch 147; Patrick O'Donnell 85; and Christopher Sims 184-85.

realization of history's end (Parker 211; Rickel 163; and Shaw 114). Although critics frequently note "Sloosha's'" thematic reprisal of Rēkohu's ruination, scholars have yet to account for the partially submerged referents that inform "Sloosha's Crossin,'" in which the "treble" of Zachry's tale serves to complement history's "bass" (*Thousand* 558). Instead, critics are almost unanimous in describing "Sloosha's Crossin'" as set in a distant future that returns humanity to the preindustrial "origin" of a second "iron age" (Lindner 365) littered with remnants of the reader's own (Sorlin 76). Consequently, critics are more inclined to read Mitchell's Kona in terms of Tolkien's "orcs" (Morère 290) or the sci-fi villains of "Mad Max 3" (Leith) than as a speculative portrait of eighteenth-century Hawaiians.[124]

Although critics frequently deem "Sloosha's Crossin'" the "zenith" or "triumphant centre-piece" of Mitchell's achievement and the only section within the novel substantial enough to "stand alone as an independent story" (Abell 21), few discuss "Sloosha's Crossin'" in detail as a discrete section worthy of critical attention. To the extent that the section is mentioned at all, scholars often observe the thematic recurrence of Hawai‘i within the novel – most frequently noting the site's reiteration as a human slaughterhouse rebranded as a promised sanctuary (189-90). In fact, Hawai‘i first surfaces as Autua's final destination (36),[125] resurfaces as the site of Megan Sixsmith's "radioastronomy research" (96), reappears as Sonmi's promised salvation (189), then, at last, recurs as the outermost diegetic "world" of the narrative proper through which the novel's other "worlds" are accessed (249-325). As the central hinge through which the

[124] Even the 2012 film adaptation of the novel (re)imagines Mitchell's "Ha-Why" as an extraterrestrial colony.

[125] Though numerous critics characterize Hawai‘i as offering Autua refuge, few note Ewing's disillusionment when he, like Somni, discovers that Honolulu is no paradise but a "lawless hive" (526).

novel's subsequent sections are recovered and completed, and as the only section of the novel relayed to the reader in its entirety without generating a text of its own, critics often describe "Sloosha's Crossin'" as the node through which Mitchell's many worlds are yoked (Lindner 366; O'Donnell 77-8). Indeed "Sloosha's Crossin'" is most often mentioned in passing, as a means for critics to cite Meronym's observation that "*Savages and Civ'lized ain't divided [nay], ev'ry human is both*" (319), or to cite Zachry's poignant comparison of souls to clouds, from which the novel's title derives.[126] In short, critics are more likely to read the contents of "Sloosha's Crossin'" as anticipating the decline of Western democracies and rise of the "East" as an uncontested world power (Lindner 375) than as a section that gains its uncanny aspect from inverting that which has already transpired.

Given this context, Courtney Hopf, Patrick O'Donnell, and Berthold Schoene stand apart for conducting rigorous analyses of "Sloosha's Crossin'" to argue that the section exemplifies Mitchell's larger ambition to create a distinctly cosmodern subjectivity. Hopf argues that Mitchell's many worlds are riddled with recurrences, (re)mediations, and metaleptic episodes to discredit history as distinct from historiography (105-23). For O'Donnell, "Pacific Journals" resurfaces in "Sloosha's Crossin'" to expose the narrative of "Empire" as dependent on historical (re)mediation (70). For Schoene, "Sloosha's" placement within the novel generates an irreconcilable tension between total encapsulation and "the play of difference" that forestalls complete closure (100).[127] This chapter therefore contributes to extant scholarship by

[126] "Who can say where the cloud's blowed from or who the soul'll be 'morrow? Only Sonmi, the east an' the west an' the compass an' the atlas, yay, only the atlas o'clouds" (324).
[127] Winterson, too, notes in her assessment of *Cloud Atlas* that what the reader initially mistakes for an "enclosed world" is structurally revealed to be "self-exploding" ("Kids" 3).

foregrounding the historical dimensions of "Sloosha's Crossin'" to argue that *Cloud Atlas* is consistent with metamodernist cli-fi published in the early 2000s that champions an alternative narratological form to depict the present and anticipated conditions of the Anthropocene. Although Mitchell's novel makes no explicit mention of climate change, this chapter builds on Astrid Bracke's classification of *Cloud Atlas* as a text that lends itself to ecocritical interpretation ("A Sextet" 429). Indeed, this project posits that Mitchell's novel's epitomizes a climate-fictional subset of literary metamodernism that uses reconstructive metaxis to critique the transhistorical matrices of power implicated in the Anthropocene.

### 2.4 No "Smilesome Yarnie"[128]

Before analyzing how *Cloud Atlas'* metamodernist features problematize the "ruined island" central to Diamond's "controlled experiment" in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, this chapter proceeds with a synopsis of Mitchell's centremost section. "Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After'" unfolds on "Ha-Why" after rising seas and global nuclear war[129] have submerged and radiated much of the globe (249-325). The reader is introduced to the forty-nine-year-old goatherd "Zachry o'Bailey" who, from a campfire in Maui, recounts the seven-year period that saw the Kona seize Ha-Why after annihilating the "windward" communities of Big I's Nine Valleys (260). Mitchell then transports the reader from this campfire frame to the narrative proper, with the onset of the Kona invasion. On their return from Honokaʻa market, rising floodwater compels

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[128] *Cloud* 254.

[129] Although Mitchell encourages the reader to arrive at this conclusion, the events that culminate in civilizational collapse are mentioned only obliquely: Meronym, for example, suggests that the "Old uns'" insatiate need to "und'stand where ev'rythin' begins an' ev'rythin' ends" (286) tripped their own Fall (289).

Zachry's father to camp at Sloosha's Crossin' by the Waipi'o river – an area understood to be "friendsome ground" (249). "Old Georgie" (the embodiment of death and evil) entices nine-year-old Zachry to chase a "joocey" lardbird to Hiilawe Falls, where he encounters a dozen Kona watering their horses (250). In his panic, Zachry leads the Kona to his family's camp where they murder his father and abduct his brother (251). Once returned to his home valley (windward of the Kohala), Zachry alters his account of the incident to conceal both his error and his inaction (252).

The remainder of Mitchell's narrative is devoted to fifteen-year-old Zachry's misadventures with the fifty-year-old "Prescient" Meronym. Twice yearly, the Valleysfolk are visited by Prescients who barter exclusively with the Ha-Why-ans (259-60). Unbeknownst to the latter, an incurable plague has decimated Prescient I's population. In response, Prescient Chief Duophysite sends Meronym to assess which of Ha-Why's islands is best suited for Prescient colonization (310). Upon arriving in Flotilla Bay, Meronym requests permission to "live'n'work" amongst the Valleysfolk for half a year to "und'stand" their ways; in return, the Prescients reduce the price of their "nets, pots, pans, [and] ironware" by half (261). The Valleysfolk volunteer the o'Baileys to host Meronym, much to Zachry's chagrin (261). Meronym's steadfast refusal to meddle in the affairs of the Valleysfolk (264) leads Zachry to suspect that Meronym is a Prescient spy allied with the Kona to seize the Nine Valleys (269). In an attempt to supply the Abbess (wise-woman) with hard evidence of Meronym's treachery, Zachry discovers Meronym's "orison" (276) – a handheld holographic communications device that contains a recording of Sonmi's final "Declaration" (290).[130]

[130] The narrative that precedes and follows that of "Sloosha's Crossin'" (185-245; 327-65).

Zachry overcomes his initial distrust of Meronym (278) after the latter supplies his sister with the antidote to the sting of a venomous scorpionfish (282). To repay her, Zachry guides Meronym to the summit of Mauna Kea to map the mountain's "windward side" and catalogue the contents of its ancient "observ'trees" (282). Shortly after their return, the Kona raid the Honoka'a market and capture Zachry (303). Meronym frees Zachry from enslavement (309) and the pair flee to Ikat's Finger to await the arrival of Prescient rescue vessels (311). En route, Zachry passes through his home valley where, against his better judgement, he murders a sleeping vandal (316). The pair then narrowly escape Kona trackers by fording a river (316). Zachry is injured, falls unconscious, and reawakens to find himself aboard a Prescient kayak with Meronym. Glancing toward the vessel's stern, Zachry sees his "Hole World […] shrinked 'nuff to fit in the O o' my finger'n'thumb" (324). Mitchell concludes "Sloosha's Crossin'" with the revelation that Zachry resettled in Maui where he went on to father children and that the section the reader has just completed has been narrated not by Zachery but by Zachery's elderly son, who admits that while most of his father's yarns amount to "musey 'duck-fart[s]'" (260), he considers the "stuff 'bout Meronym" to be "truesome" (325). As evidence, Zachry's heir activates Sonmi's orison to the perplexed[131] delight of those gathered, before instructing them to "sit down a beat," "hold out" their hands, and "look" (325).

As numerous critics note,[132] the Kona's annihilation of the Valleysmen reprises the Maori massacre of the Moriori dramatized in Mitchell's "Pacific Journal" (3-39; 493-

[131] Sonmi's "orison" perplexes the Valleysmen because her "declaration" is delivered in an "Old-Un tongue" (324-25).
[132] For scholarship that examines the paralleled predation of "Sloosha's Crossin'" and "Pacific Journals," see: Berthold Schoene 114; Marie-Luise Kohlke and Celia Wallhead 244; Robert Killheffer 33.

529).[133] In this respect, the inaugural and hindmost sections of *Cloud Atlas* envision, in general terms, the selfsame massacre: one that culminates in the unprecedented alliance of a besieged local and visiting "outsider." As others note,[134] the manner in which Meronym frees Zachry from Kona capture reprises Ewing's efforts to secure Autua's emancipation in Hawai'i (22, 36-7, 64). As the sole members of their tribe to escape enslavement, Autua and Zachry embody the "A to Z of Mitchell's worlding" (Schoene 117). Thematically, the parallels that link Zachry's Ha-Why to Ewing's Rēkohu appear to affirm the eternal return of human predation as intermittently curbed by acts of altruism. This reading, however, is complicated by the semi-veiled referents that punctuate Mitchell's Ha-Why – allusions that predate Ewing's "Journals" by some sixty years. As such, the thematic reiterations that tie "Sloosha's Crossin'" to "Pacific Journals" function less to affirm human history as "eternal return" as to dramatize a "moving" now that reframes the future as an interval humans inherit rather than bequeath (Chabon, "Omega").

**2.5 "An Eyrie so Desolate"**[135]

The bulk of "Sloosha's Crossin'" dramatizes the eighteenth-century territorial wars that united the Hawaiian archipelago into a single "proto-state" (Diamond, *Guns* 278). The seven-year interval in which Mitchell's Kona enslave the windward communities of the Kohala's Nine Valleys is modelled after a four-year period (c. 1790-

[133] However, few critics note how Zachry's childhood ordeal reprises that of his father. The way in which the Kona oust the windward peoples from Big I's Nine Valleys echoes the Kona's annihilation of the Mookin'i, to which Zachry's father belongs (253).
[134] For scholarship that reads "Sloosha's Crossin'" and "Pacific Journals" as paralleled accounts of predation punctuated by acts of altruism, see: Tom Bissell 7; Louise Economides 617; George Gessert 425.
[135] *Cloud* 3.

94) in which "Kamehameha the Great" seized control of Hawai'i's Big Island.[136] Throughout the 1780s, the chiefs of Hawai'i's four largest islands (Big Island, Maui, O'ahu, and Kaua'i) jockeyed for control over its four smallest (Lana'i, Moloka'i, Kaho'olawe, and Ni'ihau) (Diamond, *Guns* 64). When the *HMS Resolution* anchored in Kealakelua Bay (c. 1779), inter-island "political fusion" was already underway (Diamond, *Guns* 64). "Sloosha's Crossin'" commences with Captain Cook's introduction to (and mistreatment of) locals on Hawai'i's Big Island (c. 1779), then proceeds with the return of Kona tropes to Waipi'o after the "Battle of Koapapa'a" (c. 1790) and "Battle of Kepuwaha'ula'ula" (c. 1791), before dramatizing the pivotal alliance of Captain Vancouver with Chief Kamehameha (c. 1793), in which the latter agreed to cede Big Island to Great Britain in exchange for advanced weaponry – an advantage that sealed Kamehameha's success in unifying Hawai'i's Big Island and seizing Maui shortly thereafter (c. 1794).

In the harrowing vignette that introduces "Sloosha's Crossin,'" Kona warriors kill Zachry's father near the Hiilawe Falls of the Waipi'o river (*Cloud* 251). Zachry's traumatic encounter corresponds with the regrouping of Kamehameha's consort following the "Battle of Koapapa'a." After attempting to seize Maui (in the "Battle of Ka'uwa'iau"),[137] Kamehameha returned to Big Island's Kawaihae district (c. 1790), where he was ambushed by his cousin[138] in the Pa'auahau forest (northeast of Honoka'a).

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[136] Kamahameha's capture of Hawai'i's Big Island was followed by his capture of Maui, Lana'i, Moloka'i, O'ahu, Kaua'i, and Ni'ihau, thus completing Hawai'i's "unification" c. 1810 (Diamond, *Guns* 64).

[137] While Maui's Chief was off island in O'ahu, Kamehameha seized territory in Maui with the assistance of Young and Davis, who operated cannons salvaged from the *Fair American* – a vessel captured c. 1790 after the Olowalu massacre (Bailey 42).

[138] After his uncle's death, Kamehameha became the religious guardian of Kūkā'ilimoku (the god of war), while his cousin inherited the Chiefship of Big Island (Bailey 27). With the support of

Kamehameha expelled his cousin with canons previously deployed in Maui[139] under the expertise of military advisors Isaac Davis ("Aikake")[140] and John Young ("Olohana") (Castle 34).[141] After retreating east (in the "Battle of Koapapa'a") to Kūka'iau, Kamehameha returned to the Kohala district through Waipi'o, while his cousin retreated south to Ka'ū (Kamakau 350). While recounting his harrowing encounter with Kona raiders, Zachry notes that his childhood recalls that of his father, who similarly outwitted Kona slavers in the district of Mo'okini as a boy (253). This fleeting intergenerational reference corresponds with the actions of Kamehameha's uncle, who relocated the royal court to Mo'okini (c. 1750) – a remote north Kohala district on Hawai'i's Big Island purported to be the birthplace of Kamehameha (James 143).[142]

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five Kona Chiefs, Kamehameha seized control of Waipi'o Valley (in the "Battle of Moku'ōhai") and expelled his cousin to the southeastern district of Ka'ū (c. 1782), thereby acquiring the northwestern districts of Kohala, Kona, and Hāmākua (Bailey 31).

[139] Captain William Brown brought two British sloops, the *Jackall* and the *Prince Lee Boo,* to Honolulu (c. 1792). Initially, Brown sold arms, gunpowder, and the formula for gunpowder indiscriminately to Kamehameha and his adversaries; however, in exchange for exclusive use of Honolulu's port and possession of four smaller islands off the windward coast, Brown allied with the Chief of O'ahu, Kalanikūpule, who sought control over Kaua'i, Maui, Lana'i, and Moloka'i (Kamakau). With Brown's assistance, Kalanikūpule captured this territory (c. 1794); yet disputes over the terms of Brown's compensation led Kalanikūpule to murder Brown and seize his ships and artillery (Stokes). Whilst preparing to attack Kamehameha, Brown's crew regained possession of their ships and informed Young and Davis of Kalanikūpule's plot. In exchange for provisions, the crew supplied Kamehameha with Kalanikūpule's artillery (Bloxam).

[140] American trader Captain Simon Metcalfe set out on the *Eleanora* and his son on the *Fair American* (c. 1789) with the intent to reunite a year later at Big Island's Kealakekua Bay (Bailey 40). Metcalfe arrived first on Big Island and ordered his crewman to flog Chief Kame'eiamoku for an unspecified slight before departing for Maui; overnight, locals from Olowalu murdered one of Metcalfe's crew to harvest his rowboat for nails (Castle 35). Under the ruse of trade, Metcalfe summoned locals to the shore then fired cannons at the crowd, killing roughly a hundred and injuring hundreds more (Bailey 40). Several weeks later, the *Fair American* arrived at Big Island's Ka'*ū*p*ū*lehu, where the recently flogged Chief killed all aboard, save Isaac Davis (Bailey 41).

[141] Captain Metcalfe sent John Young ashore to inquire after the whereabouts of his son's ship, the *Fair American* (Castle 35); Kamehameha took Young captive and, upon discovering Davis, employed both as military advisors (Bailey 41).

[142] Kamehameha was born in secrecy and ferried to the secluded Waipi'o Valley due to rumours that his biological father was the Chief of Maui. Though largely discredited, Kamahameha's birth was initially thought to coincide with the passing of Halley's Comet (c. 1758) (Bailey 21).

Just as Mitchell's speculative skirmishes correspond to Kamehameha's unification of Hawai'i's Big Island (c. 1793), this chapter argues that Mitchell models the incursion of "Prescient" seafarers onto Ha-Why's "Big I" (c. 2700) after the introduction of American and European seafarers to eighteenth-century Hawai'i – notably Captain James Cook (c. 1778-79), Captain Simon Metcalfe (c. 1789-90), Captain William Brown (c. 1792-94), and Captain George Vancouver (c. 1793). In his account of Zachry's "Ha-Why," Mitchell reimagines white American and European carriers of Eurasian diseases as "brewy-brown" Prescients immune to the "redscab sickness" that afflicts Mitchell's Ha-Why-ans (259-60). Archival evidence suggests that Cook's third expedition knowingly introduced syphilis, gonorrhea,[143] tuberculosis, and influenza to Hawai'i's Big Island with the long-term effect of decimating the local population (Diamond, *Guns* 214).[144] Mitchell's middle-aged Meronym offers a composite portrait of Captain James Cook, who first spied the "Sandwich Islands" (c. 1778) at fifty years of age. Just as Duophysite charges Meronym with surveying Ha-Why's Big I for the purpose of land and resource capture (310), the British Admiralty tasked Cook with reporting sites suitable for British colonization while charting the Northwest Passage (c. 1776) (Collingridge 327). The manner in which Mitchell's seafarers anchor at "Flotilla Bay" to trade ironware for provisions (259-61) recalls Cook's final expedition, which anchored in Kealakelua Bay twice in quick succession (c. 1779): first for a period of a month to gather provisions and record astronomical observations (Daws 8); then for less than a week to repair the broken foremast of the *HMS Resolution* (Daws 16). When asked the

[143] Although critics often attribute "red-scab sickness" to the long-term effects of thermonuclear radiation, syphilis and gonorrhea frequently present as rashes comprised of reddish-brown sores that are visually consistent with Mitchell's description (Brown).
[144] Hawai'i's total population fell from roughly half a million (c. 1779) to 84,000 (c. 1853) (Diamond, *Guns* 214) to 44,000 (c. 1890) to 24,000 (c. 1920) (Dator 498).

location of her "home valley" by locals, Meronym replies that she hails from an island absent from seafarers' maps (263) – the uncharted islet of "Prescient I" found "far-far in the northly blue," north of "Ank'ridge" and "Far Couver" (311-12). Meronym's description adheres to the route of Cook's third expedition, in which Hawaiians supplied the necessary provisions for Cook to traverse the "northly blue" past the Juan de Fuca Strait, through Nootka Sound, north of Vancouver, through the Bering Strait to Cook's Inlet, north of Anchorage (Hayes 42-3). In contrast to Zachry, who comes to worship Meronym as a "deity"[145] after a brief period of distrust and resentment, the Hawaiians initially revered Cook[146] but grew increasingly disenchanted after his crew abused their hospitality (Sahlins 384).[147] Even Zachry o'Bailey's inheritance of Meronym's "orison" (290) recalls astronomer William Bayly's attainment of a "magnifier" following Cook's death[148] – a device ensconced in a capstan case visually akin to Meronym's "silver egg" that similarly serves to collapse spatial distance (Daws 11). Perhaps most strikingly, Meronym's steadfast refusal to supply the Valleysmen with "smart gear" or "spesh weapons" (259-60) is in keeping with Cook's general ethos of non-interference, which ran counter to the unfettered opportunism of Brown and, to a lesser extent, Vancouver, who supplied Kamehameha with "European guns and ships" sufficient to conquer the largest islands in the archipelago (Diamond, *Guns* 64).

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[145] According to Zachry's son, in his "loonsome old age" Zachry came to believe Meronym was his "presh b'loved Sonmi" (260).

[146] Since Cook's arrival happened to coincide with *Makahiki* (festival to Lono), locals initially wondered if Cook might be an *akua* (supernatural entity) but quickly abandoned the notion (Chang 29).

[147] Dismayed by Cook's return (c. 1779), locals stole a cutter and, in retaliation, Cook made a bungled attempt to abduct Chief Kalani'ōpu'u as ransom for return of the craft. In the skirmish that ensued Cook was fatally stabbed near Ka'akaloa (Collingridge 410).

[148] Bayly accompanied Cook on his second (c. 1772) and third expeditions (c. 1776-80) (Daws 11).

By extension, this chapter goes on to posit that "Old Georgie" functions not only as a supernatural embodiment of evil and death but as a veiled allusion to Captain George Vancouver.[149] In the vignette that sees Zachry guide Meronym to the summit of Mauna Kea to explore its "observ'trees," Zachry briefly falls under the influence of Old Georgie, who unsuccessfully tries to tempt Zachry to doubt Meronym's good intentions anew (294-95). Zachry's victory over "Old Georgie" outside the "Old'un temple" corresponds with Kamehameha's construction of the Pu'ukoloā heiau (temple) (c. 1791) in the district of Kawaihae, northwest of Waimea (James 133). From a ranch house in the foothills of Pu'ukoloā heiau, Young served as an interpreter and negotiator for Kamehameha, most notably when Vancouver gifted Kamehameha with cattle[150] in exchange for permission to construct an astronomical observatory on the site (c. 1793) (Hopkins 83). The following winter (c. 1794), Vancouver's middle-aged midshipman – Scottish botanist and surgeon Archibald Menzies – became the first European to ascend to *Mokuaweoweo* (Mauna Loa's summit) after close consultation with Kamehameha while Vancouver negotiated Big Island's "accession" to Great Britain.[151] In exchange for ceding Kamehameha's holdings to the Union Jack, Vancouver directed the construction of a thirty-foot warship stocked with artillery and a man-o-war fitted with cannons – both of which proved pivotal in Kamehameha's capture of O'ahu (c. 1795) in the "Battle of Nu'uanu" (Cummins and Hackler 61).

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[149] Thirteen years earlier, Vancouver served as midshipman aboard the *HMS Discovery* during Cook's exploration of the Hawaiian Islands (Barrow 140).

[150] In the decade that followed, the cattle Vancouver introduced to Kealakekua Bay decimated the island's native vegetation (Castle 36).

[151] An agreement Kamehameha honored c. 1794. In exchange for ceding Big Island to Britain, Vancouver granted Kamehameha the right to use the Union Jack in the Hawaiian flag (Castle 36).

In the latter half of "Sloosha's Crossin,'" Meronym and Zachry are shown fleeing to Ikat's Finger (309-11) after Mitchell's Kona raid a central trading post in Honokaʻa (303). While passing through his home valley, Zachry slits the throat of a napping looter (316). This gruesome episode recalls the ravaging of villages in Waipiʻo following the arrival of Kamehameha's offshore rivals. When competing Chiefs learned of Kamehameha's ambition to unify not only Big Island but the entire archipelago (c. 1791), warriors from Oʻahu and Kauaʻi invaded Waipiʻo, where they raided, looted, vandalized, and destroyed entire villages near Zachry's home valley (Desha 296). In the conclusion to "Sloosha's Crossin,'" Zachry and Meronym are last seen fording a river to Ikat's Finger, where the pair secure safe passage to Maui aboard Prescient kayaks (324). Mitchell's final vignette obliquely refers to the decisive victory that brought Big Island under Kamehameha's control. Near the basin of the Waipiʻo Valley, off the coast of Pali Hulaʻana, Kamehameha staged the epic sea battle of "Kepuwahaʻulaʻula" (Desha 299). At this point, Kamehameha's army (totaling sixteen thousand warriors and twelve hundred war canoes) constituted the largest in Hawaiian history (Castle 34). Kamehameha swiftly seized Maui (c. 1794), Lanaʻi, Molokaʻi, and Oʻahu (c. 1795), then quashed an uprising on Big Island (c. 1796), before gaining control of Kauaʻi and Niʻihau (c. 1810), thereby unifying the Hawaiian archipelago into a single kingdom, which Kamehameha controlled from Oʻahu until shortly before his death (c. 1819) (Diamond, *Guns* 64). Strikingly, Diamond concludes his account of Hawaiʻi's "unification" by speculating that had Hawaiʻi enjoyed "a few more millennia" of cultural isolation, Kamehameha's proto-state might have emerged as "a full-fledged empire" powerful enough to control the rest of Polynesia (*Guns* 66).

**2.6 The "Holy Mist'ry o' the 'Civ'lized Days'"**[152]

Mitchell's treatment of Diamond's "controlled experiment" is consistent with the other case-study texts under consideration, which similarly project heterochronic spacetimes onto speculative topographies to generate an affective sense of historical depth through "depthiness" (Vermeulen, "Metamodern" 148). In patterning *Cloud Atlas'* recursive realms with inverted referents, Mitchell encourages both extratextual engagements with his prose as well as reconstructive approaches to reading. If undertaken, the reader profits from a more nuanced understanding of both the poignant parallels and points of departure that undergird Mitchell's Ha-Why and Diamond's "Owhyee." This chapter contends that Mitchell's decision to draw direct parallels between c. 1850 Rēkohu and a fabular c. 1790s Hawai'i is not random but registers the profound cultural impact of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997), in which Jared Diamond attributes human predation to agricultural excesses enabled by climatological and topographical variables. To support this claim, Diamond cites sweeping anthropological surveys to argue that foraging communities tend towards a decentred egalitarianism whereas advanced agricultural communities tend to produce "a political elite that [controls] food production whilst mounting wars of conquest elsewhere" (*Guns* 90). Although Diamond does not cast human predation as an innate biological drive, much of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* relies on the operative assumption that agricultural gluts enable a latent propensity. The inaugural and centermost sections of *Cloud Atlas* specifically engage with the second chapter of Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel,* entitled "A Natural Experiment of History: How Geography Molded Societies on Polynesian

[152] *Cloud* 257.

Islands" (53-66). Here, Diamond performs a comparative analysis of Polynesian populations descended from a common ancestor[153] to assess the extent to which environmental variables impact predation (*Guns* 55). Central to Diamond's theorization of Polynesian predation is the bifurcation of human communities into egalitarian foragers and grain-fed colonizers, in which the former inevitably fall prey to the latter (*Guns* 54).

Although readers not yet acquainted with Diamond's scholarship may still detect certain congruencies between "Pacific Journals" and "Sloosha's Crossin,'" those familiar with Diamond's Polynesian "experiment" would recognize Rēkohu and Hawai'i as sites pivotal to the line of argumentation Diamond establishes in the second chapter of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*.[154] Whereas Ewing's "Pacific Journals" stages Diamond's contention that environmental hardships curbed predation on Rēkohu but rendered the Moriori vulnerable to predation from without (53-56), "Sloosha's Crossin'" refutes Diamond's hypothesis that agricultural gluts and high density populations are prone to predation, in which Diamond isolates Hawai'i's Big Island as illustrative of this tendency (292). As Diamond explains, prior to Cook's initial contact with "Owhyee" (c. 1778), the Hawaiians enjoyed near complete cultural isolation for roughly two thousand years (64).[155] Climatological propensities gifted the Hawaiians with permanent streams and

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[153] The Maori, Moriori, and Hawaiians all descended from New Guinean potters who, between 700 A.D. and 1200 A.D., colonized every "habitable scrap" in the "watery triangle" between "Hawaii, New Zealand, and [Rapa Nui]" (Diamond, *Guns* 54).

[154] James A. Michener's *Hawaii* (1959) stands apart as a significant precursory text. Although Diamond and Mitchell make no mention of Michener's groundbreaking account, *Hawaii* is similarly comprised of polyvocal transhistorical vignettes that span several millennia to extract from historical events universal formulations. Contrastive to Diamond and Mitchell, however, Michener neglects to stage the unification of the archipelago under Kamehameha's rule.

[155] Although the Hawaiian archipelago was one of the last Polynesian islands to be colonized, certain scholars persists in perpetuating the myth that ancestral Hawaiians believed themselves to be "alone in a watery world." In reality, Hawaiian oral traditions preserved local knowledge of ancestral migration (Chang 5-6).

arable soil (Dator 498). Advanced agricultural techniques generated food surpluses[156] sufficient to sustain complex political hierarchies, advanced technologies, and the construction of ceremonial temples (Diamond, *Guns* 64) – demonstrations of power that, over time, came to exceed the bounds of the archipelago's resources (Bossen 254). To obtain the materials necessary for continued temple construction, Hawai'i's hereditary chiefs forcibly expanded their territorial holdings and controlled local populations from afar through "appointed bureaucrats" in a manner comparable to the "loyahs" and "hacks" of chapter one (Diamond, *Guns* 63). This practice gave rise to "a self-reinforcing dynamic" in which each territorial conquest increased access to resources subsequently invested in temple construction and the "warriors and weapons [required] for new conquests" (Bossen 254). Each Hawaiian chiefdom tended to last only a generation or two before succumbing to a rival chief, which resulted in short-lived stability continually undone by war (Bossen 249). Colonialist expansion motivated by resource capture thus generated cyclic territorial displacement, genocide, enslavement of indigenous groups, militarized occupation of ancestral land, internalization of cultural predation, environmental scarcity, and mass migration. As seen in Kamehameha's unification of Hawai'i's Big Island (c. 1794), the island's windward communities had "nowhere to flee," which enabled the Kona to strip them of "political autonomy" and compel the payment of "tribute" to the Kona chiefdom (Diamond, *Guns* 292). The grand narrative that Diamond extrapolates from Hawai'i's example is consistent with the bulk of popular

[156] Ancestral settlers cultivated banana, breadfruit, coconut, taro, sugarcane, and sweet-potato; they also raised pigs, chickens, dogs and cultivated fish farms (Dator 498).

science texts published in the late 1990s and early 2000s, which similarly sought to extract transhistorical patterns with predicative applications from global culture systems.

Not only do Mitchell's "Pacific Journals" and "Sloosha's Crossin'" directly engage with Diamond's Polynesian "experiment," Mitchell also peoples his novel's 1930s Belgium with a satiric avatar for Jared Diamond. In "Letters for Zedelghem," Mitchell introduces the reader to Morty Dhondt: a "multi-lingual" *diamond* merchant stationed in "Bruges and Antwerp" who delights in kicking "metaphysical football[s]" with Frobischer's calculating employer (61). Though Dhondt makes but a brief appearance in *Cloud Atlas*, his address to Frobischer upon their return from Zonnebeke cemetery encapsulates the premises that underpin *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. Here Dhondt maintains that the will to power is "the backbone to human nature," that the "nation-state is merely human nature inflated to monstrous proportion," that resource capture and war are "eternal companions" to humanity,[157] that diplomacy merely "mops up war's spillages [and] legitimizes its outcomes" and that, given the arsenal available to affect destruction, *Homo sapiens* will be "snuffed out" before the end of the century (462). Dhondt's account of Man and State as driven by the will to power recalls the "Law of Survival" proposed by Ewing's poisoner, "Doctor" Henry Goose. In the closing portion of "Pacific Journals," Goose refutes Preacher Horrox's comparison of human progress to a "Ladder" of racial ascension that casts Anglo-Saxons as second only to the "God-head" (*Cloud* 506-7). In contrast, Goose substitutes for Horrox's "Ladder" a "Law of Survival" (508) that exposes civilizational advance as a pretext used to justify the human and environmental costs of techno-predation. While Goose and Dhondt differ in terms of the

[157] A claim that ventriloquizes Diamond's contention that "wars, even between mere bands, [are] a constant fact of human history" (*Guns* 291).

degree to which they put this particular "Law" into practice, both consider historical progress and political diplomacy fictions that serve primarily to rationalize the will to power.

Although Dhondt's analysis grossly lacks Diamond's nuance, Dhondt's observations draw from claims Diamond posits in his comparative analysis of Rēkohu, Hawai'i, and Rapa Nui (the last to be discussed in chapter three). Here Diamond insists that predation necessitates an ethos resistant to ideological heterodoxy: that neither the ethical benefits of egalitarianism nor the economic sustainability of enviro-materialist stewardship are sufficient to "speak" to predation; that predation is curbed by environmental limitations or authoritarian decree alone (*Guns* 55). Conversely, Diamond suggests that environments conducive to egalitarianism (those that foreclose on agricultural surpluses) remain free of predation only through cultural isolation enabled by geographical obscurity and physical encapsulation (56). To illustrate the tenuousness of egalitarianism, Diamond cites Rēkohu's thriving communalism (c. 1400) prior to the arrival of the Union Jack (c. 1791) and subsequent Maori invasion (c. 1835) (*Guns* 53-57). While physical and ideological encapsulation inoculates communities against predation, Diamond insinuates that, once breeched, encapsulated environments provide the ideal medium for extreme predation to flourish until checked by auto-cannibalistic tendencies (*Guns* 59). To the extent that organized religion plays a part in the perpetuation of human predation, Diamond contends that religious orthodoxies primarily emerge after state formation to "buttress" the centralization of authority. Citing Hawai'i's example, Diamond posits that organized religions most often emerge to justify the "transfer of wealth" from commoners to the *ali'i* (chiefs) through *kahuna* (indigenous

priests) claiming "divine descent" (*Guns* 278). The mutually beneficial alliance of the *ali'i* and *kahuna* is particularly apparent, Diamond contends, in eighteenth-century Hawaiian chiefdoms, in which the latter collected "tribute" from each district to support the construction of ever-larger *heiau* (temples) purposed to sanctify the "official religion" and bolster the authority of the *ali'i* (*Guns* 278). In this respect, Diamond's thesis downplays the cultural significance of unorthodox or heterodox religious formations and the material impact of such on the potentiation of (kleptocratic) statehood – a theoretical shortcoming that does not escape Mitchell's notice.

**2.7 "The Hardest of Worlds"**[158]

Mitchell's speculative account of Hawai'i's recent past implicitly rejects Diamond's two-fold suggestion that predation is the inevitable consequence of "disease-dust and fire-arms" (*Cloud* 509) and that organized religion is but a by-product of statehood (278). Although Mitchell's Kona both outnumber and outperform Ha-Why's Valleysmen, Mitchell attributes the windwards' defeat to a perspectival deficit: windward communities are doomed to enslavement because they assume that the Kona are indomitable, as evidenced in Zachry's comment that the "Kona'd' o'done to the Valleys what happened sooner or later anyhow" (296). Conversely, Mitchell suggests that the Kona maintain the illusion of their suzerainship by taking for granted that the windwards are "freakbirths" (291) predestined to serve the Kona – the "true inheritors o'Big I" and one day, "Hole Ha-Why" (305). In this respect, Mitchell's Valleysmen and Kona are both complicit in creating a communal identity predicated on tribal purity and the "fiction of difference" (O'Donnell 87). In contrast to Diamond's efforts to formulate a universal

[158] *Cloud* 528.

theory of predation with predicative applications from historical outcomes, Ewing of "Pacific Journals" contends that "history admits no rules," only outcomes motivated by belief:

> Belief is both prize & battlefield, within the mind & in the mind's mirror, the world. If we believe humanity is a ladder of tribes, a colosseum of confrontation, exploitation & bestiality, such a humanity is surely brought into being […] If we *believe* that humanity [can] share this world as peaceably as the orphans share their candlenut tree,[159] such a world will come to pass. I am not deceived. It is the hardest of worlds to make real. (528)

Mitchell then goes on to explain that a universal theory of predation cannot be "divvied" in terms of "tribes or b'liefs or mountain ranges" alone (319). Rather predation is midwifed through the complex confluence of environmental and ideological variables. Tribal, colonial, and transnational manifestations of predation may be historically recursive but Mitchell's recursive worlds suggest that repetition alone is not sufficient to confirm human predation as an environmental given. The reiterative macronarrative that underpins *Cloud Atlas* portrays human predation as contingent on inculcated patterns of belief that are shaped, but not determined, by environmental propensities.

The metamodernist features of Mitchel's *Cloud Atlas* largely function to refute Diamond's suggestion that, once infected, cultural predation subsumes countervailing tendencies. Instead, Mitchell insists that humans are a protean species prone just as much to permutation as to reiteration; that human collectives are not monolithic but "hydra-

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[159] This reference recalls an earlier episode in which Ewing, from a hospital bed in Hawai'i, spies orphans scaling the branches of an "obliging" candlenut, each helping their playmate to ascend (527). The *kukui* or "candlenut" tree was introduced to Hawai'i by ancestral seafarers; the plant later became the State tree of Hawai'i (c. 1959) (Kepler 113). In eighteenth-century Hawai'i, *kukui* nuts were burnt to provide light and used in ceremonies as a symbol of wisdom and peace (Krauss 51). Customarily, Hawaiian children were tasked with keeping the *kukui* candles lit; each kernel tended to burn for only a minute or two, which led to the nut's subsequent use as a measurement of time (Kepler 111).

headed;" that "ev'ry [beautsome] heart" contains "the savagery o'jackals,"[160] and that every human is "Civ'lized and Savages both, yay" (319). In effect, Mitchell deconstructs the notion of "perpetrator" and "victim" as exclusive or essential designations by insisting that human "nature" is manifold, prone to flux, and characterized by internal contradiction – as Zachry observes when he comments that an individual will "b'lief in a mil'yun diff'rent b'liefin's" at once if "jus' one" may be of aid (279). In the vignette that concludes Zachry's tale, the injured goatherd looks at the sky from Duophysite's kayak to ponder the Abbess' contention that "souls cross the skies of time" like clouds cross "the skies o' the world" (318). Zachry modifies the Abbess' statement by adding that, just as the hue or shape of a cloud may shift over time but remain a cloud in kind, so too the contents of the human soul (324).[161] It is belief alone, Zachry reasons, that effects such shifts in the soul, for belief constitutes the "east'n'west," the "map," and even those uncharted regions "b'yonder" the map's edge (318). In taking stock of the expansive dimensions of the soul, Zachry offers this devastating blow to Diamond: "Who can say where the cloud's blowed from or who the soul'll be 'morrow," for belief is both the soul's "compass" and its "atlas" (324). Ultimately, Mitchell's refutation of Diamond takes aim at the notion that historical outcomes depend on enviro-materialist preconditions that enable or restrain a latent propensity for predation. Instead *Cloud Atlas* poignantly demonstrates through its kaleidoscopic array of recursive realms that the "essence" of the soul avails itself to human perception only as a set of transhistorical and

[160] A subtle allusion to the British sloop the *Jackall*, commanded by William Brown, that supplied arms to warring communities on O'ahu (c. 1792-94) (Stokes). Prior to this episode, Meronym posits that it was the "savagery o'jackals" that "tripped" the "Old Uns'" Fall (319).

[161] Cavendish subsequently modifies Zachry's statement after recalling the "Joyous Isles" of his youth: lamenting the loss of his youth to mere memory, Cavendish expresses his longing for a "never-changing map of the ever-constant ineffable" which, he admits, would amount to an "atlas of clouds" (389).

transnational "variations" that resist efforts to map a fixed and universal human "essence" (O'Donnell 70). Thus, when Zachry asks Meronym how the "true true" differs the "seemin' true" (287), Meronym replies that, when bestirred from the "swamp of dissent" (17), the "true true is presher'n'rarer'n *diamonds*" (288; italics mine).

### 2.8 When "How" Runs Deeper Than "What"[162]

Mitchell's speculative take on Hawai'i's unification appears, at first glance, to dramatize history's "default" trajectory as one in which peaceable communities are riven by acts of "genocide and enslavement" to sustain the illusion of Empire (Schoene 117). And yet Mitchell complicates this reading by casting Zachry's "Ha-Why" as the outermost frame within a series of nested frames of unequal ontological weight. As Mitchell's "most ambitious experiment in narrative form" to date (Hopf 108), critics often resort to spatializing the novel's chiastic structure by way of analogy. Thus far, critics have compared *Cloud Atlas'* complex structure to a "palindrome" (Dimovitz 87; Machinal 134), an "Ouroboros" (Ferguson 154), a "Chinese-box" (Bayer 345), and a "Matryroshka doll" (Barry; Ferguson 146; Hicks 27; Wood 69; Parker 201-2). When interviewed, Mitchell even likens his novel to "a row of ever-bigger fish eating the one in front'" (Ferguson 146). In keeping with *Cloud Atlas'* critique of human predation, Mitchell's "consumptive" structure points to the process by which "individuals prey on individuals, groups on groups, nations on nations, [and] tribes on tribes" (Leith).

Whereas the thematic contents of "Sloosha's Crossin'" serve to rebut Diamond's account of Hawai'i's eighteenth-century unification, Mitchell acknowledges patterning

[162] Modified from Grimaldi's address on the "subject of power," in which he argues that "What" runs deeper than "Why" (132).

his novel's structure after Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller* (1979)[163] – a text that "magnetized" Mitchell with its "giddying" intertextuality (Mitchell, "Enter"). Though initially enthralled with the stubborn irresolution of Calvino's "missing end frame," Mitchell pondered what the text might look like had Calvino chosen to place a mirror at its end (Kohlke and Wallhead 220). A decade later, Mitchell realized this formal experiment in *Cloud Atlas* – a novel that gratifies the reader's desire for narrative closure by inverting Calvino's Scheherazadian "frame" (Parker 205).[164] The reader progresses from the earliest embedded narrative through a series of successive futures before reversing course in pursuit of an increasingly distant past. "Sloosha's Crossin'" therefore serves as the "still point" (Childs and Green, *Aesthetics* 149) or "fulcrum" (Parker 201) around which the rest of the novel turns.[165] *Cloud Atlas'* schema is thus in keeping with Robert Frobischer's "sextet for overlapping soloists," which sees six musicians perform a solo, each in a different "key, scale, and color," that is interrupted then "recontinued in reverse" (463).[166]

*Cloud Atlas* also presents the reader with a "palimpsest" of competing genres that range from a sea-faring tale in the style of Melville, a decadent tragedy in the style of Waugh, a detective thriller in the style of Grisham, a tragicomedy in the style of Kesey, a

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[163] Calvino's novel consists of twenty-two multi-generic sections in which each odd-numbered chapter describes the reader's failed attempt to complete the even-numbered chapters that follow with the effect of gradually revealing an international book-fraud (Mullan 107).

[164] Significant linguistic and episodic discrepancies between the American and British editions of *Cloud Atlas,* caused by the three-month absence of Mitchell's editor, add an additional "layer" of narrative irresolution (Eve).

[165] Mitchell apparently composed each narrative in its entirety before selecting its "cliff-hanging" section break and devising which form the narrative should take in the succeeding section (Barry).

[166] The structure of *Cloud Atlas* recalls the "ventriloquism" of Mitchell's first novel, *Ghostwritten* (1999), which features multiple interlocking narratives relayed in the first person by nine narrators in as many locations (Childs and Green, *Aesthetics* 149).

sci-fi dystopia in the style of Huxley, and a post-apocalyptic tale in the idiom of Hoban (Economides 618).[167] The virtuosity with which Mitchell shifts between six literary genres continually reminds readers that they have entered a realm shaped by convention. Just as readers become acclimatized to the tenets of one genre, they are abruptly transported to a realm that operates according to different norms (Mullan 107). That is, Ewing's journal entries are later recounted in a series of letters addressed to an informant murdered in a poorly written detective novel that is subsequently disparaged by the publisher-protagonist of a film screened for an imprisoned fabricant whose holographic image astonishes the son of a goatherd, who recounts his father's misadventures to an unspecified audience. Mitchell's polygeneric dexterity is thus consistent with metamodernist cli-fi, which frequently calls the reader's attention to the text as medium and to its contents as an outmoded genre. The delayed reconfiguration of *Cloud Atlas'* narrative structure likewise coheres with British metamodernist cli-fi, which uses metalepsis to fuse the novel's metafictional frame to the novel proper.

With the notable exception of "Sloosha's Crossin,'" the protagonist of each section recovers, interprets, and completes the narrative of their predecessor – thus restoring coherence to a previously fragmented "text" whilst generating a soon-to-be fragmented "text" of their own (Abell 21). In this manner, *Cloud Atlas* dramatizes how historical events are (re)mediated through intergenerational acts of transmission.

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[167] Though Mitchell openly attributes Zachry's speech to the invented idiom Russell Hoban championed in *Riddley Walker* (1980), Zachry's speech inverts that spoken by eighteenth-century Hawaiians (Barry). In its elimination of both "e" and "gh," Mitchell's idiom inverts key conventions of eighteenth-century Hawaiian orthography, which is devoid of silent letters and sibilants, requires each syllable end in a vowel, and a vowel to follow each consonant (Hopkins 65; 86). Apart from these inversions, Mitchell's idiom is consonant with the Hawaiian alphabet (c. 1822), which consists of five vowels, twelve consonants, seven diphthongs, and an apostrophe to indicate a glottal stop between adjacent vowels (Walch 356).

Significantly, while Mitchell's protagonists often fail to grasp how predation operates within their own circumstances, they frequently discern how power operates within the recovered "text" of their precursor – as evidenced when Frobisher pities the glad-eyed idealism of "happy, dying Ewing" (392). "Sloosha's Crossin'" thus stands apart as the only section within the novel that does not generate a text subsequently recovered in some further future because there is no future beyond its own horizon (Begley).

In keeping with Mitchell's reader-protagonist, *Cloud Atlas* requires Mitchell's actual reader to reconstitute splintered worlds initially presented as "assemblages" (O'Donnell 185). This task is complicated by the fact that no less than two of the novel's six sections ("Half-Lives" and "Ghastly Ordeal") are revealed to be fictive, thereby retrospectively troubling the ontological status of those sections nested within. By "The Orison of Somni ~451" (Part V), the reader discovers that Ewing's account amounts to letters found in a poorly received thriller disparaged in an underrated film. Mitchell thus repeatedly destabilizes the "ontological plane" of the fictional realms he creates with the effect that certain characters and events are imbued with a greater ontological "reality" than others (Hopf 117). While Zachry and Zachry's son both occupy a realm untainted by the novel's virtual frames, Luisa Rey and Timothy Cavendish are rendered avatars. In addition to repositioning two of six central protagonists as virtual avatars, Mitchell reconfigures each section of the novel as a second- or third-hand transcription of a first-hand account – as when, for example, Zachry's son deems his father's "yarnin'" about Sonmi's orison "truesome" (324). Mitchell's structure thus continually draws the reader's attention to the palimpsestic accretion of narratological discourse, its reliance on

intergenerational acts of transmission, and its potential erasure from collective consciousness.

*Cloud Atlas*' ornate structure is frequently misinterpreted as democratizing the ontological "reality" of each section to produce an "equipollent" series of mutually dependent centres (Stephenson 231). This chapter contends that Mitchell's disparate worlds are *not* equally weighted. Indeed, Mitchell's structure requires that readers continually revise their understanding of the ontological weight of each section. It is only upon completing "Sloosha's Crossin'" that Mitchell affords his reader sufficient information to determine the ontological hierarchy that organizes the novel's many worlds (Hopf 118). In this respect, *Cloud Atlas* anticipates the weighted worlds of Winterson and Self, who similarly gift their readers with an aerial view of ontological hierarchies that remain largely obscure to characters within both novels. Mitchell's protagonists also lack the requisite distance to discern their participation in plotlines embedded within reiterative simulations. *Cloud Atlas'* nested structure thereby generates a paradoxical tension between the placement of "Sloosha's Crossin'" within the novel and its structural status: whilst occupying the novel's centremost position, "Sloosha's Crossin'" inverts how embedded narratives typically operate: as texts bracketed by and enclosed within successively "higher" diegetic frames (Hopf 116). Thus while *Cloud Atlas'* consumptive structure appears to bolster Diamond's account of predation as a universal propensity enabled by environmental precondition, the structural placement of "Sloosha's Crossin'" as the outmost container for a series of embedded (re)mediations draws the reader's attention to the timeliness of Diamond's popular science as a genre of thought. *Cloud Atlas* is, in this respect, consistent with recent metamodernist cli-fi, which

tends to set recursive realms unified by transhistorical tendencies within a larger structure that (re)inscribes the whole as the outdated fiction of such.

### 2.9 "No Man is an Island, Entire of Itself"[168]

*Cloud Atlas* is not only kaleidoscopic in the sense that the novel flits between vastly disparate spatiotemporal realms; each of Mitchell's "worlds" are structurally recursive to affirm global interconnectivities tempered by flux, variation, and nuance. Mitchell, like Self, deploys structural parallels, thematic synchronicities, episodic collisions, and recurrent characters to unveil metaleptic encounters that briefly draw dispersed worlds together (Childs and Green, "Novel" 31). Robert Frobischer (85), Luisa Rey (124), Somni~451 (193), Timothy Cavendish (373), and Meronym (319) all sport the same "wyrd" birthmark between their shoulder-blade and collarbone. In calling the reader's attention to this "comet-shaped" mark,[169] Mitchell casts the wastrel composer, investigative journalist, curmudgeonly publisher, and tech-savvy Prescient as a "cartography of selves" (McCulloch 142) that occasionally converge through spontaneous moments of access akin to the episodes of second-sightedness that punctuate *The Book of Dave*. In contrast to the total encapsulation of a Matryoshka doll, or the cyclicism of an "Ouroboros," each of Mitchell's worlds feature intermittent collisions that enable one realm to breach the diegetic boundary of another, thereby exposing both as porous and vulnerable to extradiegetic penetration (Childs and Green, "Novel" 41). These uncanny episodes enable characters to briefly intuit their affinity with a person or entity "lifted" from another section – a process that mirrors that of Mitchell's readers,

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[168] Excerpted from John Donne's "XVII Meditation" (1624).
[169] Mitchell's "comet-shaped" birthmark is arguably a winking reference to the transit of Halley's Comet thought to coincide with Kamehameha's birth (c. 1758) (Bailey 21).

who are encouraged to note affinities between Mitchell's fictive universe and their own (Hopf 111).

The novel's reiterative birthmark, combined with its "cross-hatched" plotlines and diegetic collisions, prompts the reader to reconceive of the aforementioned characters as reincarnations of their "predecessor" (Hopf 116), thereby troubling conventional self-world orientations sustained through pronominal difference (Gibbons, "Take" 32). Indeed, each character-avatar is "reborn" in the "figure of the reader" (Beville 8) and each interpolated text is authored to edify a future self – a structural hiccup that effectively renders the past inextricable from its representation by dissolving the ontological distinction between the narrator and the narrated. Each "marked" character constitutes a single transmigratory subject who recovers, reads, interprets, and disseminates a storied past that s/he creates while believing it to be the work of another. In this respect, *Cloud Atlas* evinces a metamodernist sense of historical agency as a transhistorical exercise contingent on happenstance. On the level of structure, *Cloud Atlas* literalizes the operative assumption that undergirds Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel*: that resonant histories gift their readers with access to a past that presents discernable affinities with the present and, in so doing, discloses universal propensities with predictive applications. Yet, in casting "second-sighted" characters as the unwitting avatars of reiterative simulations, Mitchell implies that Diamond's analysis relies on a transcendent notion of being-in-time that neglects both the storied reconstruction of the actual past and the virtual projection of futures still-to-come.

Though Mitchell admits to encouraging his readership to perceive his protagonists as "reincarnations of the same soul," the author does not personally ascribe to

reincarnation (Begley). Most of Mitchell's characters similarly reject the notion.[170] Only Zachry o'Bailey cleaves to the phantasmagoric belief that "souls cross the skies o' time [like] clouds crossin' the skies o' the world" (318). Indeed, just before the Kona invade Honoka'a market, a drug-addled Zachry glimpses "all the lifes [his] soul ever was till far-far back b'fore the Fall" (302). In contrast to those who treat Mitchell's transmigratory characters literally, as the same soul shuttled between centuries, this chapter builds on the position advanced by Caroline Edwards (191), Heather Hicks (16), and Patrick O'Donnell (88) that Mitchell uses the metaphor of transmigration to represent the multitude as a singularity hard-wired neither for predation nor altruism but continually reconstituted through intergenerational acts of reception and transmission. In this respect, *Cloud Atlas* is paradigmatic of metamodernist cli-fi that applies metafictional reversals to the recursive-worlds of cosmodernist subjects to underscore the text as medium and mode.

As a generically hybrid, temporally fractured, formally fragmented, and polyvocal text rife with viral extratextual infiltrations, *Cloud Atlas* incorporates many of the traits typically ascribed to literary postmodernism (Machinal 127). Although Mitchell devoted his Master's dissertation to "levels of reality in the postmodern novel," the author remains "uneasy" with the legacy of postmodernism and does not consider himself to be a postmodernist writer nor *Cloud Atlas* a postmodernist text (Bradford 64). In plunging the reader through a series of "fictional rabbit-holes" (Leith), Mitchell unveils the structural and thematic recurrences that link each section. From the "microscopic" repetition of phrases and tropes to the "macroscopic" twinning of characters performing

[170] Luisa Rey vehemently asserts that she does not "believe in this crap" (122) while Timothy Cavendish dismisses the supposition as "far too hippie-druggy-new age" (373).

reiterative acts of predation and altruism (Dillon 8), Mitchell's characters occasionally sense transhistorical affinities through brief metaleptic episodes that call the reader's attention to "consistent discontinuities" in the form of recursive acts executed by avatars situated in embedded simulations (Miller 8). In this respect, Mitchell's prose evinces a Nietzschean faith in "indelible truths" (490), as well as a metamodernist view of human agency as an intergenerational exercise. Mitchell's heterochronic topos encourage the reader to reconceive of the present as the juncture through which humans reconstruct the actual past in the service of power to influence the present projection of a virtual future. In so doing, Mitchell's novel coheres with recent metamodernist cli-fi, which structurally displaces the parameters of the present with that of a future-past to stress the future's status as a virtual field.

### 2.10 "Gravid with the Ancient Future"[171]

Although critics largely concur that Mitchell's many-worlds are primarily preoccupied with the "future," they differ as to whether *Cloud Atlas* serves to confirm the future as inevitable, provisional, or entirely unpredictable (O'Donnell 181). Critics often contend that *Cloud Atlas* adopts the literary tense of the future anterior, which renders the historical present predetermined in advance by transporting the reader to a speculative future where that present is recalled as if already a distant history (Dunlop 220). By extension, many[172] misread *Cloud Atlas'* structural and thematic recurrences as affirming human history as the eternal "return-of-the-same," in which technological advance culminates in ruination and ruination prompts technological advance anew. Still others

[171] *Cloud* 510.
[172] For scholarship that reads *Cloud Atlas* as affirmation of the eternal return of ecocidal techno-predation, see: Stephen Abell 21; Scott Dimovitz 72; Sonia Front 78-80; Heather Hicks 14; Hélène Machinal 135; Jennifer Rickel 159; Kristian Shaw 111.

contend that *Cloud Atlas* affirms history as the eternal "return-of-the-similar" (Front 77) or the historical propensity of humans for ecocidal techno-predation. And yet both interpretations of history as eternal return do not account for the nested structure of *Cloud Atlas*, in which the novel's distant-most future is an inverted precursor to the novel's distant-most past. Although *Cloud Atlas* flirts with quantum entanglement, the structure of the novel refutes the notion that all possible pasts, presents, and futures have *already* transpired (Front 86-7); that there is no meaningful distinction between the past, present, and future (Beville 10); or that actions undertaken in the future can modify those completed in the past (Parker 206). Instead, this chapter argues that Mitchell yokes the historical desecration of an actual island with the anticipated desecration of a speculative one to propose a metamodernist understanding of time as recursive and yet responsive to chance, propensity, and belief.

Just as Frobischer's sextet signals to the reader the structure that underwrites the novel, Mitchell unveils the temporal implications of the novel's design in Hush's "Luisa Rey" manuscript: here the soon-to-be-murdered whistle-blower Isaac Caspar Sachs proposes a "plastic" understanding of time that is metaphorically modelled on that of a Matryoshka doll (408-9). In contrast to how time is typically understood, Sachs reconceives of the past, present, and future as a series of nested shells. In so doing, Sachs bifurcates temporalities that are typically conflated and yokes temporalities commonly perceived as distinct. Sachs' model splits the future and past into four "fields:" the actual future, the virtual future, the actual past, and the virtual past to affect the collapse of the actual future and actual past into a single temporality (see figure 1). According to Sachs' model, the "actual" future occupies the position of the smallest Matryoshka doll: it is

encased within a "virtual future" that is comprised of "wishes, prophesies, [and] dreams," which is, in turn, encased within the present (409). Although the present contains within it both the actual and virtual future, or "nest of presents yet-to-be," the virtual future obscures the actual future from present perception: thus, in keeping with a Matryoshka set, each nested temporal field remains concealed by the field that encases it (408-9).

After spatializing the relation of the actual future and virtual future with respect to the present, Sachs goes on to explain that the present is, itself, encased within the virtual past (the story of the event), which is, in turn, encased within the actual past (the event itself). In contrast to the actual past, which is "brittle [and] ever-dimming," the virtual past is "malleable," "ever-brightening," and continually pressed into the service of power to legitimate the "imposition of will" (408-9). Akin to the "icons" of Mitchell's Valleysfolk, the virtual past functions to hold a particular version of the "past an' present t'gether" to legitimate the status quo (270). According to Sachs, acts of predation are justified in (or obscured from) the present through the reconstruction of a "useful" virtual past. It is for this reason that Mitchell contends elsewhere that what we call "History" is not what "happened;" it is what we "believe happened" ("On Historical" 560). Sachs' proposed temporality does not dismiss the actual occurrence of

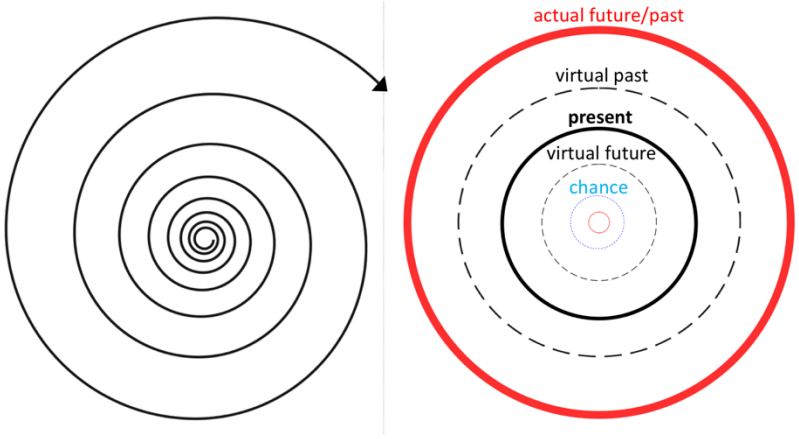


Figure 1: Sacks' Proposed Model of Time
(side view above; aerial view below)

events in the past; Sachs' model merely demonstrates how the virtual past blots the actual past from present perception. Thus, in recapitulation of the uneven ontological weight Mitchell affords *Cloud Atlas'* many worlds, only two of five temporal fields are accessible to the "hinge" of the present: a reconstruction of the past mediated by the mechanisms of power and a projected visualization predicated, in part, on that mediated reconstruction (Parker 207). One significant implication of Sachs' model is that it serves to redefine the present as the juncture through which the virtual past and virtual future issue. Given the unidirectional sequence that orders these "fields," the present continually installs a virtual past from which projected futures emanate. Whereas the virtual past does not recede because it remains tethered to the present, the growing gulf between the present and the actual past renders the virtual past "ever more difficult to circumvent [or] expose as fraudulent" (*Cloud* 408). Strikingly, Sachs implies that no meaningful distinction can be drawn between the virtual past and virtual future for, aside from their placement with respect to the present, both constitute a "simulacrum" of "smoke, mirrors + shadows" (409).

Beyond casting doubt on the conceptual differences that distinguish these virtual fields, Sachs' model also proposes a radical reconceptualization of time's actual fields. As spatialized in figure 1, Sachs suggests that the actual past and actual future are one and the same. It is not that the actual future remains "ensconced in the past" (Beville 10), nor does retrospection render the actual future virtual, as it does with the actual past. Sachs' model implies that the actual future does not exist *as such*. The only future that exists is that of a virtual future projected from the present. The actual future and actual past merely appear to be distinct because human consciousness insists upon the primacy

of the present; the splitting of the actual into an actual future/past is what permits human perception to privilege the present as pivotal. Through Sachs, Mitchell redefines the present as an "elastic" condition of latent potential from which the singularity of the actual future/past issues and accrues its virtual frames – that is, events either do or do not occur, and the story of why emerges only after the fact. At heart, Mitchell's model spatializes what critics call the "long" or "moving" now, which discredits the passage of time as "flow" by positing that human consciousness bifurcates the actual into two fields to map a perpetual present (Mezey 34). Sachs' temporal fields are nested, rather than arranged as points on a line, to spatialize how the virtual past and virtual future obscure the actual future/past from present perception. Mitchell's nested fields likewise function to illustrate the elliptical trajectory effected by the collapse of the actual future/past into a single temporality. Mitchell's decision to yoke the actual future and actual past into a single temporality does not, as some critics assert, reduce all to the "ineluctable present" to solidify being-in-time as the eternal return-of-the-same (Currie 363), nor does this conflation install the actual future-past within the present as "trace" (McCulloch 153), as Winterson does in *The Stone Gods*. Instead Mitchell's temporal model calls the reader's attention to the way in which potential becomes manifest through the intersection of belief, action, power, probability, and happenstance.

The non-existence of the actual future and inaccessible placement of the actual past implicitly refute Diamond's environmental determinism, which extrapolates from a virtual account of an actual past universal propensities applicable to the projection of an actual future. Not only is there no actual future in which to project human propensity, Sachs' model suggests that there is no unmediated past from which to formulate the

impact of material preconditions on human propensities. Moreover, the intervening presence of chance is not extemporaneous to, but inextricable from, the manifestation of any virtual future into an actual future/past. The way in which chance functions to install uncertainty between the virtual and the actual is further clarified by Cavendish, who comments that historical outcomes are not determined "during the course of play but when the cards are shuffled, before the game even begins" (384). In keeping with Cavendish's analogy, it follows that actions completed in the present may impact the future; however, several rounds of play are often required before that impact is made manifest. As if to demonstrate the intervening power of chance to redirect the future, immediately following the completion of this temporal model, the bomb planted beneath Sachs' airline seat detonates, engulfing the entire jet in a "fireball" (409) – an event that prompts the bifurcation of the actual and virtual past to begin anew.

Ultimately, this chapter suggests that Sachs' model is neither a quantum temporality, nor a case of anterior retrospection, nor a temporality predicated on the eternal return-of-the-same. If anything, Sachs' model partakes of the past perfect: a tense that unmoors the determinism of the actual by emphasizing the contingency of the actual on a simulation produced in the present. In contrast to linear time, in which cause precedes effect and is understood retrospectively, Mitchell's temporality repositions effect as anterior to cause,[173] thereby rendering the present explicable only in its relentless advance. In so doing, Mitchell challenges the reader to (re)conceive of the present not as "a story about the past to be relayed in the future" (Currie 356), but as the temporal juncture through which virtual pasts and futures issue, thereby surmounting

[173] As the reader progresses through Mitchell's novel, each narrative unveils the future through a "previous representation of the future" (Martin).

both the determinacy of the future anterior and the eternal return-of-the-same.

Not surprisingly, *Cloud Atlas* also consists of multiple temporal "fields" made to mimic the nested form of a Matryroshka: of the six "fields" that comprise Mitchell's novel, two are virtual. Just as Sachs' "middlemost doll of now" is bracketed by a virtual past and virtual future pressed into the service of power, "Sloosha's Crossin'" is flanked by a virtual revolution staged by a Korean corpocracy to quash future dissent (408). Moreover, in keeping with Sachs' compression of the actual future/past into a single temporal field, Mitchell codes "Sloosha's Crossin'" with textual clues that suggest the historical referents that underpin Zachry's Ha-Why predate Ewing's "Pacific Journals" by sixty years. In reimagining the actual past as a virtual future, *Cloud Atlas* draws attention to the ease with which humans erroneously entangle time's virtual and actual fields. Indeed, critics frequently misread the structure of *Cloud Atlas* as affirming the coterminous presence of the actual past or actual future *within* that of the present (Dillon 17; Hopf 106). The present does not, as Peter Childs and James Green insist, encase an actual past alongside "ever-accreting virtual pasts;" nor does the present encase a "multitude of possible futures, of which only one [comes] to pass" ("Novel" 44). Sachs' temporal model suggests that only the virtual past and virtual future remain coeval with the present (417-18).

Following Sachs' death, Luisa Rey ponders whether "trying to avoid" a given future triggers that future into being (417). Rey quickly discards this line of thinking as predicated on the idea that a given future exists as an entity that is always "already there;" instead, Rey posits that the future is a void that is continually negated through multitudinous actions completed in "a minute's time" (418). As to the question of

whether an individual can (re)direct the future, Rey concludes that the question remains a "great imponderable" because the answer lies not in "metaphysics" but in the mechanics of power (418). Ultimately, between Sachs' model and Rey's musings, Mitchell's novel counterbalances the capacity of the individual to revise the virtual projection that informs actions undertaken in a minute's time with the intergenerational matrices of power that ghostwrite the conventions through which virtual futures are articulated in the first place. In this respect, Mitchell's novel evinces the type of pragmatic idealism advanced in metamodernist cli-fi, which tends to laud individual efforts to "live right" despite the anticipated inefficacy of such.

Although Sachs' model makes no mention of "second-sightedness," each of Mitchell's many worlds are punctuated by sequences in which protagonists are unexpectedly gifted with unmediated glimpses of an actual future/past seemingly freed from their virtual counterparts – as when Luisa Rey's birthmark "throbs" in response to the sight of Ewing's aptly named *Prophetess* (448). Rey intuits, but cannot comprehend, the significance of a vessel that, in name, foretells the future. The reader, on the other hand, is given a transcendent perspective with which to perceive Ewing's *Prophetess* as counterpart to Meronym's future-most *Prescient I* – a vessel that, in name, augurs an event yet-to-occur (311). Both vessels, in turn, gesture toward a veiled referent: the Hawai'i-bound *Resolution* that, in name, determines a course of future action. Ultimately, the trinity of vessels evoked in this episode recall Sachs' bifurcation of time into actual and virtual "fields:" although Rey appears to have gained unmediated access to an actual future/past, the name given to this portal, and the lateral correspondences that name evokes, discredits Rey's ability to decouple the present from time's virtual fields. By

extension, Mitchell suggests that those who purport to deduce universal "resonances" from unmediated pasts do so from the vantage of a temporal model that reads the future as already writ. Ultimately, Sachs' bifurcation of time into actual and virtual fields suggests that intergenerational acts of predation recur because human "imposition of will" relies on the collective misidentification of time's virtual fields as actual – an error that obscures how the reconstruction of a given past and the projection of an anticipated future contribute to specific historical outcomes gaining primacy (528). In contrast to Diamond's enviro-materialist formulation of Empire, Sachs' temporal model contends that there is no "total history" accessible to human perception through which to formulate transhistorical propensities, nor any actual future with which to extend them. There is only a process of perpetual becoming that manifests in the present. And, in this respect, the "seemin' trues" proposed by Diamond amount to just-so stories built on belief (17).

### 2.11 "All Boundaries are Conventions"[174]

Mitchell's speculative treatment of eighteenth-century Hawai'i as thirtieth-century Ha-Why not only mirrors Will Self's treatment of historical Hiort as speculative Ham, it also gestures towards an emergent metamodernism that submerges and compresses historical referents to yoke the actual past and actual future into a single temporality to discredit the determinacy of being-in-time. This chapter contends that Mitchell's partially submerged referents have little to do with the author's alleged reticence to speak on behalf of colonized communities (Eve, "Conservatism"). Rather, Mitchell's semi-veiled allusions advance the position that the actual past is necessarily (re)mediated according to cultural norms that install the illusion of a future in which a

[174] *Cloud* 479.

"purely predatory world [consumes] itself" (*Cloud* 528). Mitchell suggests, both within "Sloosha's Crossin'" and elsewhere, that human predation is not merely a product of geopolitical circumscription, nor a specific "spatial organization," but a "genre" of thought that insists upon the inevitability of a virtual future (Selisker 456). The current conventions that encapsulated communities use to navigate being-in-time may be transcended, Mitchell posits, only once humans "can conceive of doing so" (479) – for just as condemned buildings are easily reduced to "rats' nests & rubble" (506), so too may outdated conventions of thought. Unlike "Nietzsche's gramophone record," which the "Old One" is said to replay "for an eternity of eternities" (490), Frobisher's "Cloud Atlas Sextet" concludes with a "misplayed" note intended to initiate the listener into a new "key" (463). Frobisher's errant note anticipates the novel's conclusion, which sees Ewing posit the discordant claim that, though an individual life amounts to "one drop in a limitless ocean," what is "any ocean but a multitude of drops?" (529). *Cloud Atlas'* final vignette thus articulates a performed belief in transformational change while, at the same time, recognizing the improbability of such on a scale necessary to achieve any substantial gain.

On several occasions, Mitchell publically expressed his concern with unchecked climate change and the advent of peak oil. Addressing an auditorium of bilingual teenagers enrolled in Madrid's British Council School, Mitchell compared global reliance on petroleum to a lethal addiction. Elsewhere, Mitchell disclosed to an interviewer that the prospect of petroleum depletion frightens him "as a writer and as a dad" (Stephenson 244). While Mitchell remains optimistic that humans might elect leaders with "integrity," he goes on to acknowledge the possibility that human civilization might end, as all things

end: “Civilizations do collapse. Sometimes they collapse in slow motion. Others collapse almost overnight” (as cited in Kidd). Although Mitchell does not consider himself an “explicitly political” author, he acknowledges that any attempt to “write about the world with integrity” necessitates that politics enter into prose; whereas some authors invite politics in “by the front door,” Mitchell prefers to let politics in through “the back” (Morère 287).

It is perhaps for this reason that *Cloud Atlas* makes no direct reference to fossil fuel dependency, nor to the cataclysmic threat posed by climate change, though both clearly weigh on Mitchell’s mind. *Cloud Atlas* takes its namesake from the pictograms meteorologists use to predict the weather (O’Donnell 79); Mitchell’s Ha-Why obliquely attributes civilizational collapse to territorial wars sparked by mass displacement resulting from rising seas (249-325); “Sloosha’s Crossin’” commences with floodwaters submerging Honoka‘a market (249) and the arrival of Prescient refugees (310); and, the narratological climax of “Sloosha’s Crossin’” occurs in the ancient “observ’tree” presently used to monitor global atmospheric $CO_2$ levels (Keeling 538). *Cloud Atlas* obliquely suggests that just as the windward communities of Ha-Why had nowhere to flee once conditions on Big I deteriorated, twenty-first-century humans may soon find themselves marooned on hostile terrain once climate change renders the Earth equally inhospitable. If climate change impacts predicted by the ICPP for c. 2100 are correct, Hawai‘i’s Big Island will suffer more frequent hurricanes, tsunamis, storm-surges, and extreme flooding[175] – not to mention prolonged periods of drought depleting both

[175] The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identifies Big Island’s Waipi‘o Valley as particularly susceptible to severe flooding caused by heavier rainfall and “marine overwash” (139). Ironically, this selfsame site features prominently as Earth’s last refuge in Kevin Reynold’s postdiluvial *Waterworld* (1995).

freshwater reserves and Big Island's taro and breadfruit production (Cave). Already Big Island is experiencing record-breaking "king tides" causing cliff collapse, wetland migration, the submersion of shoreline infrastructure, and the erosion of coastal heritage sites (LaFrance). Mitchell's decision to pepper *Cloud Atlas* with partially submerged referents is all the more striking given how climate-driven archipelgation leaves low-lying topographies partially or entirely obscured.

In its expansive portrait of human predation, Mitchell's novel suggests that the Anthropocene is attributable as much to geopolitical paralysis effected under global capitalism as to the seeming inability of humans to imagine what might be discoverable beyond this genre of thought. If our species survives the Anthropocene, Mitchell predicts it will be because humans at this juncture adopt a genre of being-in-time sufficient to overtake the recurrent fiction of Empire – a genre that registers a metamodernist subjectivity that is relational, responsive to flux, riven with contradiction, and situated in a temporal model that perceives the present as bracketed by and productive of virtual fictions that direct, but do not determine, the actual future/past. Although Mitchell suffers no illusion that such a genre of thought will require nothing less than realizing the "hardest possible world to make real" (528), Mitchell also contends that the non-inevitability of all futures furnishes humanity with a "flea o'hope" (319).

### 2.12 "Somewhere and Somewhen"[176]

On 26 October 2012, Wachowski and Tykwer[177] released a film adaptation of Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* to mixed reviews. While Mitchell recognized that it would be "no

[176] Mitchell's "On Historical" 558.
[177] It makes sense that Mitchell's metamodernist novel attracted the attention of the creators of such metaphysical thrillers as *The Matrix* (1999) and *Run Lola Run* (1999).

mean task" to adapt his novel to film, he was reassured to learn that Wachowski and Tykwer intended to "disassemble [his] book like Lego" (Waters). The finished product consequently earned the distinction of being one of the most "divisive films of 2012" (Robey). Some praised the film for proffering a consolatory "mysticism" comparable to Terrence Malick's recent output (Collin); others dismissed the film as no more than the "most elaborate join-the-dots game ever drafted" (French). Nearly all (Robey; French; Collin) expressed their amazement that Wachowski and Tykwer elected to adapt Mitchell's novel in the first place. While this cinematic "experiment" demonstrated that Mitchell's novel is not "[un]filmable after all" (French), many lamented its scattershot focus and visual melee of tired "clichés" (Robey).

Although the film adaptation is remarkably faithful to Mitchell's novel – it too consists of six interrelated tales told in as many genres relayed from the perspective of protagonists marked with comet-shaped birthmarks – certain crucial differences undermine many of the novel's core claims. Strikingly, the film revises the nested structure of Mitchell's novel: no longer are Mitchell's many-worlds interrupted, recovered, and then recontinued in reverse; instead, all six are introduced in quick succession then intercut through mirrored dialogue, movement, or image for the sake of momentum. In intersplicing Mitchell's temporalities, the film replaces Sachs' "past-perfect" with a synchronic model more in keeping with a quantum cosmogony. Moreover, whereas Mitchell peoples each temporality with unique characters transhistorically connected by a comet-shaped birthmark, the film adaptation requires each actor perform three to six roles apiece, presumably to avoid the cost of a larger ensemble. Apart from the distracting jolt that attends the viewer's recognition of an actor

transformed by prosthetics, the film's use of "yellow face" drew ire from the Media Action Network for Asian Americans for reinstalling a "racial pecking order" that undermines the film's aspiration to "transcend" race (Allen). Moreover, the reiterative appearance of a finite cast across disparate spatiotemporal settings visually reinforces the notion of human history as the eternal return-of-the-same.

Most damaging, the section literary critics once lauded as Mitchell's "triumphant centre-piece" (Abell 21) is deemed the film's "dullest" timescape (Robey). Here "Sloosha's" Prescients are no longer foreign seafarers seeking to colonize a speculative Ha-Why but intergalactic settlers seeking to forge a viable off-world colony. As such, the campfire frame for "Sloosha's Crossin'" unfolds not on Maui but on a distant planet that shares the Earth's sun – an alteration that displaces Zachry's survival not only offshore but off-world, thus offering a bleak prognosis for human survival of the Anthropocene. Although the film establishes thematic parallels between the accounts of Ewing and Zachry, "Sloosha's" otherworldliness obscures referents that might lead the film's viewer to discern Zachry's "Big I" as Kamehameha's Big Island. Instead, the film's cross-cut format evinces precisely the type of determinism that underpins the Polynesian chapter of Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. While Wachowski's and Tykwer's film adaptation of Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* affirms predation as dependent on the recursive installation of certain "useful" fictions, the film fails to reconfigure the viewer's understanding of being-in-time as a recursive convention that reinstates predation within a temporal model that too is chosen out of habit.

**2.13 "So the Story Goes"**[178]

As this chapter demonstrates, Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* dismantles the temporal determinism of the future anterior by presenting a climate-changed near future from the vantage of an inverted "futureless" past. In so doing, Mitchell obliquely critiques Diamond's enviro-materialism as a genre of thought that erroneously extends to an unspecified future a recursive history of techno-predation without sufficiently acknowledging either the (re)mediation of that history or its projection onto a non-existent temporal field. In effect, Mitchell's metamodernist structure refutes Diamond's theorizations for presuming to order human history according to discernable patterns divorced from time's virtual fields and the ordering presence of the pattern-seeker. Following Mitchell, the third chapter of this dissertation argues that Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* echoes *Cloud Atlas* in disputing the thesis Diamond advances in *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997). Akin to Self and Mitchell, Winterson veils a desecrated island as a speculative future to two-fold effect: as the singularity that concretizes the consequences of advanced climate change; and, as the novum through which being-in-time is discredited as recursive and total. Expanding upon Mitchell's refutation of Diamond, the metamodernist structure of *The Stone Gods* intimates that human civilizations fail because the story of Empire is predicated on endless expansion motivated by the recuperation of a pristine origin divorced from the imprint of the past. Winterson's novel thereby diverges from Mitchell in attributing ecocidal techno-predation to the promise of originary return, in which the anticipation of imminent salvation elsewhere ultimately deters humans from struggling against the immediate

[178] *Cloud* 81.

apparatus of their subjugation. Whereas Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* uses metamodernist methods to expose the "terminal point" of human history as an inverted origin, Winterson exposes the fiction of Empire as tethered to the projection of a near-future that presumes to regain the imagined plenitude of a purely mythic past.

## Chapter Three: Ecocide and Originary Return in Winterson's *The Stone Gods*

> "The parallels between Easter Island and the whole modern world are chillingly obvious […] When the Easter Islanders got into difficulties, there was nowhere to which they could flee, nor to which they could turn for help; nor shall we modern Earthlings have recourse elsewhere if our troubles increase. Those are the reasons why people see the collapse of Easter Island society as a metaphor, a worse-case scenario, for what may lie ahead of us in our own future."[179]

> "We are now at the stage when the Easter Islanders could still have halted the senseless cutting and carving, could have gathered the last trees' seeds to plant out of reach of the rats. We have the tools and the means to share resources, clean up pollution, dispense basic health care and birth control, set economic limits in line with natural ones. If we don't do these things now, while we prosper, we will never be able to do them when times get hard. Our fate will twist out of our hands."[180]

> "Easter Island is a poor example for a morality tale about environmental degradation. Easter Island's tragic experience is not a metaphor for the entire Earth […] The indigenous population chose to survive – and they did. They tackled the problems of a difficult and challenging environment which both geography and their own actions forced upon them. There is no reason to believe that its civilization could not have adapted and survived (in a modified form) to an environment devoid of large timber. What they could not endure, however, and what most of them did not survive, was something altogether different: the systematic destruction of their society, their people and their culture."[181]

### 3.1 "Everything is Imprinted Forever"[182]

In Jeanette Winterson's 2011 memoir *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* the author discloses that with each novel she writes "one sentence" forms in her mind "like a sandbar above the waterline" (157). In the case of her 2007 post-apocalyptic novel *The Stone Gods*, the sentence "Everything is imprinted forever with what it once was"

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[179] Diamond. *Collapse*. 2005, 119.
[180] Wright. *A Short History of Progress*. 2004, 131–2.
[181] Peiser "From Genocide to Ecocide." 2005, 535-36.
[182] *Stone* 86.

surfaced for Winterson as a foundational phrase – one that recurs no less than three times in the novel (86, 119, 207). That Winterson compares this phrase to a sandbar is apt given that *The Stone Gods* is riddled with marine metaphors: castaways unwittingly shipwrecked on hostile terrain (102), beached cargo deemed not worth salvaging (122), bottled messages doomed to endless drifting (127), and colonial expeditions buoyed by the prospect of uncharted islands and the allure of buried treasure (25). Indeed, this particular sentence operates as a *conceptual* sandbar within the novel in that the phrase encapsulates the recursive discourse that Winterson identifies as marooning humans in the story of a "repeating world" (49). Civilizations are prone to collapse, Winterson contends, not because human demand outstrips environmental capacity, but because humans remain "shipwrecked" in a story that disavows the persistence of the past in the present as a reiterative "imprint" with immense "gravitational pull" (*Weight* 98-99). This disavowal, in turn, leads humans to exhaust and abandon successive sites in a misguided effort to regain the imagined plenitude of a mythic past. To this end, *The Stone Gods* cautions readers against any story that purports to restore the purported abundance of a mythic past divorced from the past as trace.

In her critique of imminent salvation achieved through originary return, Winterson presents the reader with a post-apocalyptic love story comprised of four first-person narratives spanning sixty-five million years dispersed across three planets and one island: Planet Orbus (terraformed Mars), Planet White (boiled Earth), Planet Blue (biodiverse Venus), and eighteenth-century Easter Island (Rapa Nui).[183] Each realm, in

[183] This chapter refers to the archipelago by the Polynesian designation Rapa Nui as preferred to its colonial designations (Easter Island; Isla de Pascua). As such, this chapter also refers to the island's indigenous inhabitants as Rapanui and uses the designation "Easter Island" to refer to *The Stone Gods'* second section (*Stone* 97-116). The archipelago first acquired the name of Rapa Nui ("Big

turn, details the derailed attempts of humans to "leave everything behind" (4) and "begin again *differently*" elsewhere (46). The first section of Winterson's novel ("Planet Blue") transpires on Planet Orbus (Mars), where the aerospace startup MORE-Futures bungles its attempt to colonize Planet Blue (Venus) (3-93). The novel's second section ("Easter Island") unfolds on eighteenth-century Rapa Nui, where the *Ariki Mau* (establishment elites) botch their attempt to wrest political power from the militaristic *Matatoa* ("Bird Man" cult) (97-116). The third section ("Post-3 War") returns the reader to a distant-future Orbus (Mars), where State mismanagement of the planet's postwar power-vacuum enables MORE-Futures to found an Orwellian corpocracy (119-147). The novel's fourth and final section ("Wreck City") transpires in the same spacetime as the previous section to stage MORE-Future's violent suppression of an anti-establishment uprising (151-207). By the novel's end, the reader discerns that Planets Red, White, and Blue collectively illustrate the cosmic dimensions of human folly: although future humans manage to successfully colonize Mars after advanced climate change makes a boiled Venus of the Earth, in a still further-future humans proceed to destroy Mars, thereby compelling the Martian colonization of a biodiverse Venus – an objective ultimately thwarted by human overreach.

Having established a cosmic history that sees humans repeatedly botch their chance to start over anew, Winterson goes on to pepper the novel's final sections with metaleptic reversals that collectively reconfigure all three planets as a single celestial body topographically indistinguishable from twenty-first-century Earth. In effect,

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Rapa") after Tahitian sailors (c. 1860) noted the island's resemblance to Rapa Iti ("Little Rapa"). Shortly thereafter (c. 1863), repatriated slaves from Peru titled the island Mata kit e Rangi ("Eyes that Look at the Sky"). Prior to both designations (c. 900-1200 AD), the *Hotu Matu'a* (ancestral seafarers from the Bismarck Archipelago) called the island Te Pito o te Whenua ("Navel of the World") (Salmond 235).

Winterson's metaleptic episodes enable each planet to dramatize progressive "stages" in the Earth's decline: Planet Orbus depicts a desiccated near-future Earth after the total loss of polar ice; Planet White depicts a boiled far-future Earth after soaring temperatures evaporate what remains of the world's oceans; Planet Blue depicts a revitalized distant-future Earth after the reintroduction of water and biodiversity. Winterson's radiated Mars, boiled Venus, scorched Rapa Nui, and reinvigorated Venus function to illustrate the progressive "stages" of decline and posthuman renewal that await a climate-changed Earth. *The Stone Gods* then concludes with Winterson's addition of a metafictional frame that retrospectively repositions each of the novel's "like worlds" as fictive episodes within an unfinished "Stone Gods" manuscript (119). This metafictional frame is then complicated by a metaleptic episode (203) that fuses the frame narrative to the narrative proper with the effect of undermining the ontological distinction between the narrator and the narrated. Thus, akin to the dizzying array of worlds depicted in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, Winterson's reader is transported from a speculative near-future, to the apex of British colonialism, to a speculative further-future only to encounter, at the novel's end, a metafictional frame that structurally repositions each period as fictions nested within an all-encompassing manuscript rendered ontologically indistinguishable from its contents.

Winterson is far from the first author to conflate celestial bodies with islands. As Winterson herself notes in a 2009 piece penned for *The Times*, as early as the second century AD, Lucian the Greek posited that the moon was not a "barren rock" so much as a "shining island" ("The Moon"). What distinguishes *The Stone Gods* from previous planet-as-island narratives is Winterson's double-mapping of the historical collapses of

remote islands onto planets that, in turn, concretize the anticipated stages of the Earth's collapse extrapolated from the IPCC's Assessment Reports. In this respect, Winterson's novel takes up the central conceit of Paul Auster's *Moon Palace* (1978), which reimagines the moon as a "piece of parchment" that contains the totality of the human archive, even those books yet-to-be written ("The Moon"). *The Stone Gods* is thus consistent with other works of metamodernist cli-fi in that Winterson's novel collapses vast spatiotemporal distances through the double-mapped island to make legible the implosive tendencies of closed geopolitical and climatological networks. Just as Self maps eighteenth-century Hiort onto postdiluvial Hampstead and Mitchell maps eighteenth-century Hawai'i onto thirtieth-century "Ha-Why," Winterson maps progressive stages of the Earth's collapse and posthuman recovery onto nineteenth- and twentieth-century archipelagoes to warn against the cataclysmic consequences of unchecked climate change. Although Self and Mitchell use heterochronicity to render their respective islands synonymous with twenty-first-century Earth, Winterson is arguably the most ambitious in conflating Rapa Nui, Tahiti, and Antarctica with Planet Orbus (Mars), Planet Blue (Venus), and Planet White (Earth).

Congruent with the code-inversion undertaken by Self and Mitchell, Winterson enciphers *The Stone God's* "Easter Island" section with intratexual cues that encourage the reader to "unlock" the historicity of the novel's speculative sections through reconstructive approaches to reading. In yoking the speculative collapse of a climate-changed Mars with the historical collapse of Rapa Nui (c. 1868-1914), Winterson displaces the novel's narratological present with that of a "futureless" future-past to generate an otherworldly third that oscillates between and beyond the "dialectical

spectra" (Abramson, "Metamodernist"). The production of an affective metareality that is both/neither forces Winterson's reader to grapple with dispersed topographies rendered, simultaneously, "here, there, and nowhere" (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 12). Moreover, in keeping with the metamodernist prose of Self and Mitchell, Winterson denies the transmigratory characters that people *The Stone Gods* the requisite distance to discern their placement within a recursive simulation, yet supplies the reader with an aerial vantage from which to view the ontological hierarchies that undergird the whole. In this respect, Winterson's desecrated-planet-as-historical-island allows the reader to look "back" on the narratological present as if from a "future present that is futureless" – a distinctly metamodernist "tense" that structurally dismantles the temporal determinism of the future anterior. *The Stone Gods* thus epitomizes recent metamodernist cli-fi, which submerges and compresses double-mapped referents to discredit the perceived determinacy of "being-in-time." Akin to Will Self's *The Book of Dave* and David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, *The Stone Gods* simultaneously articulates the "embodied actualities" of a climate catastrophe (James and Seshagiri 96) while discrediting the notion that contemporary climate change constitutes a historically unprecedented crisis deserving of an equally unprecedented techno-escapist fix. Ultimately, Winterson's semi-veiled allusions to Rapa Nui's colonial past advance the position that the past is continually (re)mediated according to cultural norms that install the illusion of a future annulled in advance.

Though widely praised for its "inventiveness" (Le Guin 17) and "humor" (Holgate 47), *The Stone Gods* has garnered scant critical scholarship. Of the dozen scholarly articles devoted to the novel, most focus on whether Winterson's structural

reiteration of recursive worlds affirms human history as the eternal return-of-the-similar[184] or eternal return-of-the-same.[185] Of the latter, critics diverge in their diagnosis of what keeps humans stranded in the "story of a repeating world" (49). Thus far, critics have read *The Stone Gods* as a critique of heteropatriarchy (Bradway; Harzewski; McCulloch), "techno-futurism" (Adami; Jennings), neoliberalism (Bradway; Dolezal), colonialism (Machinal; Palitzsch), ecological contamination (Merola), and the displacement of value from the signified to the signifier (Antakyalioğlu; McCulloch; Palitzsch). For most,[186] Winterson's "repeating worlds" offer a bleak prognosis for the long-term viability of the human species: unwilling or unable to learn from historical error, humans contaminate no less than one island and three planets. Yet others maintain that *The Stone Gods* dismantles the eternal return-of-the-same by prefiguring an alternative "economy of relation" predicated on "queer exuberance" (Bradway 191) or the "radical alterity" of the cyborg (McCulloch 78).[187] By extension, several critics (Jennings; Pacheco Costa; Watkins) read *The Stone Gods* as continuing the quantum timescapes imagined in Winterson's previous novels.[188] As such, many misread *The Stone Gods* as a quantum novel that latches onto the theories of "Einstein, Heisenberg,

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[184] For a more fulsome discussion of *The Stone Gods* as a redemptive or reparative text, see: Tyler Bradway; Julie Ellam; Hope Jennings; Hélène Machinal; Fiona McCulloch; and Sonia Villegas-López.

[185] For a comprehensive analysis of *The Stone Gods* as a melancholic text, see: Valentina Adami; Nurten Birlik and Bengu Taskesen; Luna Dolezal; Andrew Holgate; Erica Jong; Justyna Kostkowska; Ursula Le Guin; Nicole Merola; Francesca Palitzsch; Susan Watkins; and Reina van der Wiel.

[186] For criticism that reads Winterson's recursive history as affirming the inevitability of human extinction, see: Valentina Adami; Andrew Holgate; Erica Jong; Ursula Le Guin; Hélène Machinal; Fiona McCulloch; and Nicole Merola.

[187] With the suggestion that Winterson's prose reflects the scholarly contributions of Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1984).

[188] Winterson's extant corpus frequently features narratives that transpire in unpredictable multiverses that exceed human perception: *The Passion* (1987) and *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) are two such novels.

Hawking, Newton, Oppenheimer, and Planck" to produce an affective sense of the past in the present as trace (Pacheco Costa 29).

Still others (Else and Harris; Machinal) classify the temporal discontinuity of *The Stone Gods* as consistent with literary postmodernism – a label Winterson repudiates given the sense of "rootlessness" the author associates with postmodernist prose (Fau 175). Indeed, when asked to comment on the relevance of literary postmodernism to the cultural *zeitgeist*, Winterson declares postmodernism "done" before insisting that a new approach is required – one that answers to twenty-first-century needs (Fau 174). To that end, Winterson comments that she aspires to produce prose that gives her readers "roots" again (Fau 175). In addition to those who read *The Stone Gods* as a postmodernist text, others classify the novel as a contemporary work of British sci-fi – a classification that leads some to disparage the novel's perceived "incoherence" (Lake) or "implausibility" given sci-fi conventions (Onega 290). Although Winterson acknowledges sci-fi as "uniquely configured" to advocate alternative spatiotemporal "structures" to that of the present (Dillon 17), this designation too sits uneasily with Winterson, presumably because the seemingly speculative elements of *The Stone Gods* gain their fabular aspect from the transposition of the historical archive onto predictive climatological assessment models. In contrast to the aforementioned interpretations of the novel, this dissertation argues that *The Stone Gods* epitomizes an emergent subgenre of metamodernist cli-fi, which aims to "create an imaginative reality sufficiently at odds" with that of the reader (Hutchison 359) to provoke an affective aesth-ethical ethos towards climate change (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 2).

Indeed, this chapter proceeds from the premise that Winterson's novel is paradigmatic of a greater constellation of climate-fictional texts published in the early 2000s that register the historical present as an epoch bracketed by climatological catastrophe and species extinction. As such, *The Stone Gods* adopts an experimental ecocosmopolitical form to articulate both the historical onset and anticipatory consequences of a climate-changed Earth. Akin to other authors of metamodernist cli-fi, Winterson uses structural heterochronicity and reconstructive metaxis to surmount the narratological obstacles inherent to depicting the transhistorical and supranational dimensions of the Anthropocene (Heise, *Sense*). Given the case-study texts under consideration, Winterson's novel stands apart for depicting the cataclysmic consequences of a warmed world in more explicit terms than either *The Book of Dave* or *Cloud Atlas*. To assess the literary contributions of Winterson's novel to the cli-fi subgenre, my research builds on Adam Trexler's assessment of *The Stone Gods* as an ecocritical novel that conflates the collapse of a climate-changed Earth with that of a ruined island and alien planet. More specifically, this chapter argues that Winterson's conflation of Earthly sites as alien topographies registers the collective distress produced by the climatological transformation of once familiar regions into uncanny substitutes. In this respect, *The Stone Gods* anticipates the thesis advanced by Bill McKibben in *Eaarth* (2011) that advanced climate change forces humans to endure conditions comparable to those encountered on "an alien planet that in some ways resembles Earth" (Heise, *Imagining* 8-9). When interviewed, Winterson characterizes *The Stone Gods* as a response to "where we are now," which Winterson goes on to define as a narrow interval in which humans must "face our environmental challenges [or] much of what we cherish [will] be

destroyed" (Onega 275). Winterson adds that while the Earth may in some far-future "find a way to recover," humans will not "get a second chance" ("How"). In keeping with recent metamodernist cli-fi, *The Stone Gods* yokes the historical collapse of a remote island community with the anticipated collapse of no less than three planets to compel the reader to resist the inevitability of a climate catastrophe.

Despite lauding Winterson's "Easter Island" as the "hinge-point" (LeGuin 17) or "title-piece" (Palitzsch 150) of *The Stone Gods*, few scholars devote adequate attention to the historical dimensions and fanciful departures at work in this section. To the extent that Winterson's "Easter Island" is mentioned at all, critics[189] tend to treat this section as the device through which Winterson reiterates, in miniature, the progressive stages of ecological decline witnessed on Planets Red, White, and Blue. As such, critics frequently read "Easter Island" as interchangeable with "Planet Orbus" as an extended metaphor Winterson deploys to illustrate the cataclysmic consequences of unchecked climate change (McCulloch 64). Alternatively, critics[190] read Winterson's vision of multiplanetary destruction as a hyperbolic metaphor for maternal estrangement – as evidenced by the advent of maternal loss that occurs in the novel's "Post-3 War" section (119-47) and the ambiguous suggestion of maternal return that concludes the novel (151-207). In this respect, Winterson's "Easter Island" is thought to envisage the loss of sanctuary associated with familial abandonment (Ellam 14; Wiel 212), or the power of familial reunification to disrupt the eternal return-of-the-same (Watkins 119-20). Although several critics comment on the "considerable similarity" of Winterson's *The*

[189] For criticism that reads the Earth's decline as Easter's, see: Valentina Adami; Luna Dolezal; Kristin Ewins; Nicole Merola; Sonia Villegas-López; and Reina van der Wiel.
[190] For criticism that reads multiplanetary estrangement as maternal loss, see: Tim Adams; Julie Ellam; Susana Onega; Susan Watkins; and Reina van der Wiel.

*Stone Gods* to David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (Lindner 368), scholars have yet to note Winterson's application of defamiliarizing devices to Rapa Nui's colonial past to lend that past the appearance of a distant-future.

Without engaging in the reconstructive reading necessary to discern the semi-veiled referents that inform *The Stone Gods'* speculative sections, contemporary scholars tend not to deduce the structural congruencies that link Jean-Baptiste Onésime Dutrou-Bornier's "resettlement" program to Elon Musk's multiplanetary aspirations. Nor are critics likely to surmise the structural congruencies that link the human and environmental costs of Rapa Nui's monumental *mo'ai* to Musk's reusable rockets. Moreover, critics are less likely to note the poignant affinities that link Captain Cook's quest to colonize a non-existent *Terra Australis Incognita* (c. 1773-74) to Stephen Hawking's call to colonize an Earth-like planet in the so-called "Goldilocks Zone" of our galaxy; finally critics may be less inclined to note how the defeat of the *Ariki Mau* (establishment elites) by the *Matatoa* (populist cult) parallels the naïveté of twenty-first-century efforts to affect geopolitical reform through good faith participation in a rigged "Race."

Counter to those who contend that *The Stone Gods* evinces a postmodernist "rejection of referentiality" (Heise 559), this chapter argues that Winterson's "Easter Island" dramatizes a ninety-year interval[191] in Rapa Nui's distant past (c. 1680-1774), which saw the onset of acute famine, the emergence of populist cults, the scapegoating of rival moieties, and the advent of island-wide civil unrest, all of which came to a head during Cook's aborted attempt to claim Rapa Nui for the Crown (97-116). Having

[191] An interval that contains anachronistic features lifted from an earlier period (c. 1450-1680) to reframe Rapa Nui's civil war as a direct by-product of the island's ecological crisis.

established this claim, this chapter argues that the novel's speculative sections project onto a terraformed Mars a forty-year interval in Rapa Nui's subsequent colonization (c. 1868-1914). More specifically, Winterson's inaugural section ("Planet Blue") stages colonial efforts to convert Rapa Nui into a depopulated sheep ranch (c. 1868-88). Here the speculative resettlement of Orbus climate refugees on Planet Blue (Venus) alludes to the deportation of Rapanui labourers to Tahitian plantations (c. 1871), the emergence of Rapanui-owned Tahitian cooperatives (c. 1887), the cataclysmic impact of leprosy on those cooperatives (c. 1888), and the eventual depopulation of a once thriving enclave community (c. 1898).

Accepting that the novel's speculative sections defamiliarize Rapa Nui's nineteenth-century colonial entanglements with Tahiti, this chapter argues that section three ("Post-3 War") dramatizes a subsequent interval in Rapa Nui's recent past marred by colonial predation. Here, MORE-Futures' founding of an Orwellian corpocracy alludes to Rapa Nui's cession to Chile and the island's subsequent bifurcation (c. 1888-1903) into a penal labour camp and leper colony. Finally, this chapter posits that MORE-Enforcement's suppression of a "mutant rebellion" in the final section of the novel ("Wreck City") reprises the Chilean Navy's suppression of local resistance to the Scottish-Chilean ranching firm Williamson & Balfour (c. 1914), whose exploitation of the Rapanui eerily recalls that of the Hiortans (discussed in chapter one). Following from the premise that Winterson's speculative Orbus reenacts Rapa Nui's Tahitian "resettlement program" (c. 1871-72), the island's annexation to Scottish-Chilean "proprietors" (c. 1888-1903), and the islanders' defeated bid for indigenous sovereignty (c. 1914), this chapter contends that Winterson codes Planet White (boiled Earth) with

semi-veiled references to Cook's eighteenth-century search for (a non-existent) *Terra Australis* and that, considered collectively, Planets Red, White, and Blue trace Britain's aborted attempts to "begin again, *differently*" (*Stone* 46), commencing with Cook's retreat from Antarctica ("Planet White") (c. 1773-74), withdrawal from Rapa Nui ("Planet Red") (c. 1774), and eventual abandonment of Tahiti ("Planet Blue") (c. 1774) as potential satellite colonies for the Union Jack. Ultimately, this chapter suggests that Winterson's speculative sections submerge, compress, and invert Rapa Nui's colonial entanglements with Tahiti and Antarctica to generate an affective sense of the eternal-return-of-the-same as coextensive with the fiction of Empire.

Having established that *The Stone Gods* double-maps Rapa Nui's colonial entanglements with Tahiti and Antarctica onto celestial bodies that approximate the anticipated decline and posthuman recovery of a climate-changed Earth, this chapter argues that Winterson's novel also speaks to the spate of texts published in the late 1990s and early 2000s that seized on the case of Rapa Nui's collapse as an "instructive microcosm" for the contemporary climate crisis (McNeill 174). In the decade prior to the publication of *The Stone Gods*, Rapa Nui entered the Western imagination as a harrowing ecological case study through the proliferation of popular science books and even a full-length film[192] dedicated to the island's pre-colonial past. A few years prior to the publication of *The Stone Gods*, cultural anthropologist Jared Diamond and historiographer Ronald Wright seized on Rapa Nui's decline as a cautionary correlate for contemporary climate change (as the first two epigraphs to this chapter attest). Although Winterson does not credit the second chapter of Diamond's *Collapse* (2005) with

[192] Ironically, the filming of *Rapa Nui* (1993) saw rare palm species felled to facilitate the re-enactment of *mo'ai* transport (Fischer 239-40).

inspiring her depiction of "Easter Island," elsewhere Winterson acknowledges the impact of Diamond's scholarship on popular culture, though Winterson is much less effusive in her evaluation of Diamond than Mitchell or Self ("How"). In a review penned for *The Times* (2011), Winterson discloses that she finds Diamond's popular science "dispiriting" because his theorizations so often advance a "reductive" view of humans as "selfish savage creatures whose fight for survival include[s] destroying the resources of others" at their own expense ("How" 8). Elsewhere, Winterson admits that she prefers the pragmatic optimism of Tim Flannery to Diamond's "grim" enviro-materialism ("How"). This chapter therefore proceeds on the operative assumption that Winterson elected to set *The Stone Gods* on Rapa Nui because Diamond's analysis of human predation resonated with Winterson,[193] even if his characterization of Rapa Nui's collapse as a self-inflicted "ecocide" born of intergenerational amnesia did not (*Collapse* 82). In keeping with the metamodernist prose of Self and Mitchell, Winterson veils her island's colonial past as a climate-changed future to indirectly critique Diamond for downplaying the genocidal impact of nineteenth- and twentieth-century explorers, raiders, slavers, missionaries, colonizers, and kleptocrats on indigenous Rapanui (Peiser 515). While Diamond devotes forty pages to the island's collapse as an "ecocide" (79-119), he spares a paragraph to the successive colonial genocides that annihilated nineteenth-century Rapanui. In this paragraph (112), Diamond acknowledges the genocidal impact of Peruvian abductions (c. 1862-63) but, weirdly, makes no mention of Dutrou-Bornier's Tahitian deportations (c. 1871), nor the devastating impact of leprosy on the island's indigenous population

[193] Indeed, readers familiar with Diamond's bestselling *Guns, Germs, and Steel* may recognize oblique references to Diamond scattered throughout *The Stone Gods*, as when Winterson locates Billy's boyhood "dockside" in Rēkohu (107), or declares dinosaurs "the most effective killing machine" to predate "gunpowder" (4).

(c. 1888-1953). In anticipation of potential scholarly objections, Diamond argues in the paragraph that follows that it is largely due to Rapa Nui's "history of exploitation" that "both islanders and scholars [resist] acknowledging the reality of self-inflicted environmental damage before Roggeveen's arrival in 1722, despite all the detailed evidence that I have summarized" (113). At least indirectly, the semi-veiled referents that undergird Winterson's speculative Orbus suggest that Diamond's "detailed evidence" is not nearly detailed enough.

In this respect, Winterson's implied critique of Diamond is consistent with metamodernist cli-fi, which frequently contests enviro-materialist approaches to the study of human history that purport to extrapolate from topographical variables predicative formulations regarding the long-term viability of human civilizations. To achieve her circuitous critique of Diamond, Winterson sets the recent past of "Easter" in parallactic relation to Orbus' distant future to generate a productive tension between those who cite Rapa Nui as a cautionary history that epitomizes the environmental cost of "human folly" (Diamond; Wright), and those for whom Rapa Nui epitomizes indigenous resistance to colonial predation.[194] In effect, Winterson pierces Rapa Nui's colonial past with its precolonial counterpart so that the latter supplements the former to produce a fuller picture of the archival evidence in question. In so doing, Winterson's novel affirms ecocidal collapse as both a catalyst to and consequence of techno-predation in order to bring to the fore transhistorical resonances that render Rapa Nui's pre- and postcolonial pasts cautionary correlates for a climate-changed Earth. This chapter concludes by contending that the metamodernist structure of *The Stone Gods* critiques Diamond's

[194] For a more comprehensive account of Rapa Nui's collapse as seeded by colonial predation, see: Steven Fischer; Lorenz Gonschor; Diego Muñoz; Benny Peiser; Pablo Seward; and Forrest Young.

enviro-materialist approach to the study of human history to refute the techno-escapist solutions to climate change advanced by famed theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking. Although the scholarly interests of Diamond and Hawking share admittedly little common ground, Winterson's novel repudiates both scholars for their tendency to discount the imprint of the past in the present and the reiterative material consequences of such. More specifically, Winterson sets Rapa Nui's pre- and postcolonial histories within a metamodernist "structure of feeling" to refute the premise shared by Diamond and Hawking that techno-predation is an autocatalytic process impervious to indigenous resistance that requires continuous territorial expansion.[195]

### 3.2 "The Universe in a Nutshell"[196]

Although this chapter maintains that Diamond's *Collapse* (2005) is a foundational text for understanding Winterson's critique of originary return in *The Stone Gods*, Winterson does not acknowledge a literary debt to Diamond in her comments on the novel nor in her comments on the novel's composition. Akin to Mitchell and Self, Winterson's suppression of Diamond's influence means that the reader must directly engage with Diamond's *Collapse* to arrive at the epiphany that *The Stone Gods'* distant-most future dramatizes a veiled past. Rather, when interviewed, Winterson characterizes *The Stone Gods* as a response to Stephen Hawking's hypothesis that the future of humankind depends on the "ongoing scientific search for an Earth-like planet in the so-called Goldilocks zone" (McCulloch 61). Winterson's comments allude to an interview Hawking gave to *The Telegraph* (2001) in which Hawking predicted that an artificial

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[195] In a 2001 article for *The Guardian*, Winterson takes specific issue with Hawking's acceptance of the premise that "aggression [constitutes] the superior principle of [human] survival" ("Out").
[196] Adapted from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* 2.2.249-51; *Stone* 93; Hawking's *Universe* (2001).

"doomsday virus" would likely annihilate the human species c. 3000 "unless [humans] spread into space" (Highfield). From this premise, Hawking proposed that genetic engineers should reconfigure the human body to better withstand lengthy space travel and couple interplanetary colonists with intelligent cyborgs to prevent "computers from taking over" (Highfield). In a subsequent interview, Hawking told *BBC News* that, if left unchecked, $CO_2$ emissions would likely warm the Earth until its atmosphere resembled that of a "boiled" Venus (Walker).[197] Prominent scientists promptly dismissed Hawking's "apocalypticism" as "hype" for his forthcoming book, *The Universe in a Nutshell* (2001) (Walker). Even sci-fi author Arthur C. Clarke weighed in by contending that an asteroid was far more likely to depopulate the Earth than a man-made "virus" (Whitehouse). Winterson joined Clarke in deriding Hawking's comments by quipping that the "wipe-out virus that Hawking fears will destroy the human race will not be an accident, any more than nuclear weapons are an accident" ("Out").

Although Hawking's comments incited wide-ranging criticism, the renowned theoretical physicist was not alone in advocating for human multiplanetary expansion. At the turn of the twenty-first century, President George W. Bush announced plans to launch a manned mission to Mars while billionaire business magnates Richard Branson (Virgin), John Carmack (Doom; Quake), Jeff Bezos (Amazon), and Elon Musk (Paypal; Telsa) founded aerospace startups. Branson's Virgin Galactica (2004) and Carmack's Armadillo Aerospace (2000) aspired to shuttle affluent tourists into suborbital space on reusable rockets ("The Sky's" 79; "One Small" 126). Bezos' Blue Origin (2004) and Musk's

[197] Shortly before his death (14 Mar. 2018), Hawking went on to caution that President Donald Trump's wholesale rejection of climate science would accelerate the Earth's transformation into "a Venus-like planet" (Eleftheriou-Smith). Elsewhere, Hawking quipped that he would "pay to send climate change deniers to Venus" (Matyszczyk).

SpaceX (2002) likewise jockeyed to launch private and government satellites into orbit on low-cost rockets (Stone 50; Henricks 24). Although Bezos and Musk both aspired for their aerospace startups to penetrate orbital space (Stone 50), Bezos' Blue Moon program (2017) aimed to convert lunar ice into drinkable water (Boyle, "Blue Origin targets"), whereas Musk's SpaceX program aimed to facilitate human multiplanetary expansion through the construction of a "self-sustaining" Martian "propellant plant" by 2024 (Musk 1-9).[198] Although Winterson does not openly credit Musk's SpaceX venture with inspiring the contents of *The Stone Gods*, Wreck City's doomed ChicX enclave harkens to Musk's SpaceX program (175). For Winterson, the multiplanetary aspirations of Hawking and others amount to "a boy's fantasy" along the lines of "not tidying your bedroom because your mother will do it" (Else and Harris 50). Elsewhere, Winterson suggests that those rhapsodizing about space colonies should go "into space and look back at this diamond cut planet, polar capped, white whirled" to remind themselves that the Earth is a "wining number" ("Polar;" "Out"). Indeed, Winterson discloses that she wrote *The Stone Gods* to challenge the efficacy of simply evacuating the Earth after "trash[ing] the place" (Else and Harris 50).

In this respect, Winterson intended for *The Stone Gods* to serve as a "manifesto of sorts" to critique multiplanetary solutions to "the heartbreak" of what humans are doing to the Earth (Else and Harris 51). As the contents of *The Stone Gods* illustrate, Winterson objects to a multiplanetary remedy to advanced climate change because it takes for granted the inevitability of a climate catastrophe, circumvents collective culpability for the crisis, places unwarranted faith in the feasibility of a technological fix, leverages the

[198] This plant would combine atmospheric $CO_2$ with water to produce methane and oxygen through the "Sabatier process" (Musk 8).

achievement of that "solution" at the expense of the majority, and erroneously presumes that humans can "begin again *differently*" (48) with the "clean emptiness of another chance" (46) without, first, acknowledging how actual and mythic pasts "imprint" the present as trace. Ultimately, this chapter proposes that Winterson projects Rapa Nui's recorded history onto a climate-changed Mars to critique Diamond's theorization of techno-predation as an impenetrable propensity that culminates in ecocidal collapse. Having done this, this project contends that Winterson extends her critique of Diamond to the multiplanetary aspirations of Hawking and Musk, who similarly frame the long-term viability of the human species in terms of a techno-escapist fix. Winterson then couches this two-fold critique of enviro-materialism and techno-escapism within a metamodernist "structure of feeling" that is designed to provoke an affective awareness of the historical present accelerating towards a condition of future obsolescence (Gibbons, "Take" 32).

To explain how the metamodernist structure of Winterson's novel problematizes Diamond to refute Hawking, this chapter will first summarize the factors that contributed to Rapa Nui's seventeenth-century ecological crisis before identifying how Winterson's "Easter Island" section departs from Diamond's account of Rapa Nui's demise in *Collapse.* As previously noted, Rapa Nui is both remarkably small (966 square kilometres) and strikingly remote (*Guns* 53; *Collapse* 83). Aside from the island's scant size and geophysical isolation, Rapa Nui sits at a latitude that induces a cold and arid climate, which renders the island's geologically porous strata particularly prone to desiccation and erosion (*Collapse* 83). As Diamond observes, the climatological and geological attributes specific to Rapa Nui forced its earliest inhabitants (Lapita potters from the Bismarck Archipelago of New Guinea) to adapt quickly or starve. When the

*Hotu Matu'a* (ancestral seafarers) first colonized Rapa Nui (c. 900-1200 AD), they cleared large swaths of land for intensive agriculture, only to discover that their tropical seeds would not germinate in the island's subtropical climate (*Collapse* 92). In response, the *Hotu Matu'a* devised stone mulching techniques (c. 1300 AD) to reduce top soil evaporation – an approach that required the transportation of "millions of rocks" from Rano Raraku (the central quarry) to the island's terraced plantations (*Collapse* 92). By 1400, the Rapanui succeeded in stockpiling sufficient "banana, taro, sweet potato, sugarcane, and paper mulberry" to sustain not only the *Ariki Mau* (priestly ruling class)[199] but a stratified hierarchy of warriors, craftsmen, labourers, and *Ivi Atua* (supreme priests) (*Collapse* 93-4). As Diamond explains, the accumulation of food surpluses on Rapa Nui allowed the *Ariki Mau* to redirect the quarrying of rock to the fulfillment of a secondary "need:" the construction of commemorative *mo'ai,* or stone monuments thought to manifest the *aringa ora* (living face) of clan gods (*Collapse* 101-2).[200]

Initially (c. 1000-1450 AD), labourers carved relatively small icons devoted to specific deities (*Collapse* 95); however, within several generations, the *Ariki Mau* commissioned increasingly large *mo'ai* to demonstrate their *mana* (theocratic power) (*Collapse* 109). To sate the demands of *mo'ai* production, labourers gradually stripped Rapa Nui of its giant palms, treelets, and shrubs to generate the sledges and bark rope necessary to transport the ten-ton icons from Rano Raraku to the coast (*Collapse* 107).

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[199] Ruling elites known as the "White Man" clan because white feathers adorned their attire (*Collapse* 98). The *Ariki Mau* belonged to the *Miru mata* clan believed to descend from the *Hotu Matu'a* (ancestral seafarers). As such, locals revered the *Ariki Mau* for distributing *mana* (divine power) through *tapu* (the sanctification of objects) (van Tilburg).

[200] Each *mata* (clan) fell under the protection of a god thought to control soil fertility, seafowl migration, fish populations, and human reproduction (van Tilburg).

By 1450, not one giant palm remained;[201] by 1650 "not a single tree over ten feet tall" (*Collapse* 107); and, as Winterson depicts, by the arrival of Cook's *Resolution* (c. 1774) "not a piece of wood" could be found to repair "a deep-sea canoe" (*Stone* 111).[202] Within 650 years of settling Rapa Nui, locals obliterated forty-eight species of tree (*Collapse* 102) and twenty-one species of shrub (104), making Rapa Nui among the most "extreme" cases of deforestation "in the world" (107). To make matters worse, the Little Ice Age triggered by the Orbis Spike (c. 1650s-1700s)[203] further reduced Rapa Nui's total agricultural output (Lewis and Maslin 170). By 1650, inoperative plantations forced locals to consume rat – the only species unaffected by the island's deforestation and climatological downturn (*Collapse* 108).

Although Winterson's depiction of Rapa Nui's pre-colonial past largely agrees with Diamond's account, Winterson rejects Diamond's claim that the depletion of Rapa Nui's rat population (c. 1680) forced locals to resort to cannibalism (*Collapse* 111). In "Easter Island," Winterson's protagonist confirms the island as overrun with rats yet, when presented with evidence of charred human remains, determines the site to be a crematorium, not the table of cannibals (100). Winterson's account thus concurs with that of Rapa Nui scholar Benny Peiser, who rejects Diamond's history for mistaking allegations of cannibalism fabricated by European whalers and missionaries as evidence of such (531). Of greater import, whereas Diamond's *Collapse* argues that fifteenth-

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[201] Strikingly, Peiser (and others) suggest that the "climatic downturn caused by the Little Ice Age" (c.1650-1700s) likely "contributed to the disappearance" of Rapa Nui's giant palm (517).
[202] Cook's crew counted only four canoes on Rapa Nui, all in disrepair (Forster 17).
[203] The colonial occupation (c. 1492-1600s) and subsequent extermination of fifty million indigenous inhabitants of the "New World" caused fallow fields to absorb roughly seven-parts-per-million $CO_2$ from the Earth's atmosphere, which triggered a mini Ice Age c. 1650-1700s (as captured in ice-core records). Certain climate scientists (Simon Lewis; Mark Maslin) date the onset of the Anthropocene to the Orbis Spike, as this event presumably marked the first time humans wielded as much "Earth-changing" power as a "meteorite strike" (171).

century Rapanui could not remember their island's former plenitude and therefore lacked the ability to gauge the environmental consequences of continued deforestation (426), Winterson's embedded account of Rapa Nui's former abundance suggests that the island's deforestation occurred rapidly enough for the Rapanui to memorialize its loss in their collective lore:

> [In back-time] the god MakeMake had filled the island with forest and springs and fishes and birds so that no man could want who could stretch out his hand […] The palms that were so tight together that a man must walk sideways to pass through them were felled, one by one by one, [until] the seabirds no longer visited the island, and the rain no longer fell, and the ground crumbled and burned, and the soil turned to red dust that grew nothing. (109-10)

Winterson's embedded lore thus directly contradicts Diamond's supposition of intergenerational eco-amnesia to posit the novel's central counterclaim that "[e]verything is imprinted forever with what it once was" (86, 119, 207). In contrast to Diamond, Winterson's Rapanui recognize the seriousness of their island's ecological crisis but do little to thwart the autocatalytic processes that feed it. Akin to Self's Hiortans (discussed in chapter one), Winterson's Rapanui are gripped by a passive religiosity that presumes the imminent intervention of "unseen powers" sympathetic to their plight (99). As such, rituals designed to spare the Rapanui from want inadvertently exacerbate scarcity by heightening a perspectival disconnect between the "thing" itself and its purpose (102). In this respect, Winterson's "Easter" may be fruitfully read as a cautionary history for twenty-first-century Earthlings who, despite collective awareness of the catastrophic consequences of unchecked climate change, do little to mitigate the crisis and, instead, turn their sights to an imminent corpocratic or geopolitical intervention, often in the form of a techno-escapist fix.

As the first half of Winterson's "Easter Island" illustrates, at the height of Rapa Nui's ecological crisis, locals flocked to the *Matatoa* cult (an anti-establishment religious militia), which later (c. 1724-1840) sparked an internecine civil war (*Collapse* 109-11). To outperform their political rival, the *Matatoa* and *Ariki Mau* crowned their *mo'ai* with twelve-ton *pukao* (topknots)[204] before hoisting the whole onto *ahu* (plinths) that weighed between three-hundred to nine-thousand tons (*Collapse* 96-7).[205] With the eventual exhaustion of materials required to transport the *mo'ai* from Rano Raraku to the coast (c. 1770), the *Matatoa* and *Ariki Mau* redirected their efforts towards *huri mo'ai* or toppling the *mo'ai* of their political rival (c. 1724-1840s) (*Collapse* 110).[206] As Winterson dramatizes in "Easter Island," the apex of Rapa Nui's *huri mo'ai* period coincided with the landfall of Cook's *Resolution* (c. 1774). As the marooned protagonist of this section relates to the reader, whilst waiting for divine intervention to come from on high, the Rapanui redirected their efforts towards annihilating the "purpose" of their rival, thereby sacrificing "all" to a meaning made "meaningless" (108-9). Arguably, Winterson's "Easter Island" commences at this interval to dramatize Diamond's dispiriting premise that humans are "selfish savage creatures" ("How" 8) before dismantling aspects of that premise from within. Here, Winterson cites the apex of Rapa Nui's civil war for much the same purpose as Diamond: to warn against a near-future in which ecological instability born of advanced climate change provokes religious populism, communal scapegoating,

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[204] Designed to mimic the feather headdress reserved for chiefs, thus confirming a radical shift in function away from the representation of ancestral gods towards that of a historical chief (*Collapse* 98).

[205] Prior to the civil war, the average *mo'ai* weighed ten tons; the last completed *mo'ai* ("Paro") (c. 1620) weighed seventy-five tons (*Collapse* 96). By 1877, four hundred unfinished icons filled the quarry and another four hundred lined the roadside (*Collapse* 96).

[206] Roughly a half-century after Cook's departure (c. 1825), warring factions destroyed roughly four-hundred *mo'ai* (*Collapse* 110). The last ("Paro") was toppled c. 1840 (Fischer 81).

and political polarization culminating in violent social upheavals that leave the planet vulnerable to predation.

### 3.3 Shadow of the Valley of Death[207]

Although Winterson's "Easter Island" section is predominantly concerned with the arrival and departure of Cook's second expedition (12-16 March 1774), Winterson folds into this pivotal encounter crucial events from two centuries prior. In keeping with Will Self's distillation of over two hundred years of Hiortan history into a period of fourteen, Winterson's "Easter Island" condenses over two hundred and fifty years of Rapa Nui history into a single afternoon to reframe Rapa Nui's civil war (c. 1724-1840) as temporally concurrent with the island's ecological crisis (c. 1450-1680).[208] Moreover, Winterson's historical compressions reposition the onset of the island's civil war in the fifty-year window between the arrival of the Dutch (c. 1722) and the arrival of the British (c. 1774), thus implicitly undermining Diamond's characterization of Rapa Nui's collapse as a culturally isolated case of indigenous "ecocide" (*Collapse* 82). As such, Winterson structurally repositions Rapa Nui's ecocide as issuing not from indigenous intergenerational eco-amnesia, as Diamond claims, but from climatological and geophysical restrictions, topographical circumscription, colonial encroachment, political upheaval, ideological fanaticism, and the bifurcation of society into warring moieties.

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[207] Winterson alludes to Cook's citation of Psalm 23:4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou [art] with me" (*King James Bible; Stone* 97).
[208] Whereas Winterson's novel moves the extinction of the giant palm forward by two hundred and fifty years, Winterson confirms Rapa Nui's civil war as predating Cook's arrival (100) – a timeline that is consistent with that of Diamond, who cites carbon-dated charcoal deposits found in Pōike Ditch as proof that the "great and prolonged burning" of the civil war occurred c. 1680-1724 (107).

Historically, when the *HMS Resolution* anchored in Haŋa Roa (c. 1774), Rapa Nui appeared to Cook's crew the likeness of the "Shadow of the Valley of Death" (Forster 7-8).[209] Cook dispatched Lieutenant Richard Pickersgill, astronomer William Wales, and twenty-seven others ashore to trade with locals spike nails for provisions (Forster 14).[210] To the surprise of Cook's crew, ironworks entirely disinterested the Rapanui who, instead, attempted to rob their vessel of wood.[211] The Rapanui expelled the *Resolution* four days later, after Marine John Edgecombe murdered a local for stealing botanist Johann Forster's plant bag (Salmond 237-38). Winterson's "Easter Island" section thus commences with the fabricated abandonment of midshipman Billy Crusoe (98-9) – a composite character Winterson models after Daniel Defoe's famed castaway Robinson Crusoe[212] and Cook's disgruntled astronomer William Wales.[213] Through Billy's observations the reader learns that, in contrast to Tahiti,[214] Rapa Nui is a "scorched" site bereft of clean water, "wild fowl, good fish, [and] plant-life" (97-98).[215] From an encampment "slope-side," Billy watches the *Matatoa* fell the island's last giant

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[209] Cook's Tahitian interpreter deemed Rapa Nui "*Ta'ata maitai, fenua cino"* ("Good people, bad land") (Salmond 297).

[210] Cook was too weak with "bilious collick" to venture far inland (*Stone* 97). Instead, Cook based his account on the observations of Pickersgill and Wales (Salmond 238).

[211] In the novel's inaugural section ("Planet Blue"), Winterson insinuates that the Rapanui had no use for iron because their island was rich in iron ore (56) – an observation that is consistent with Cook's log, which twice notes the presence of iron deposits (*Journals of Cook* 337-60).

[212] In this respect, Winterson's novel contributes to the "Robinsonade" subgenre. For other retellings of Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719), see: Rex Gordon's No Man Friday (1956), Muriel Spark's Robinson (1958), Michel Tournier's Friday, or, The Other Island (1967), Jane Gardam's Crusoe's Daughter (1985), J.M. Coetzee's Foe (1986), and, more recently, Lutz Seilier's Kruso (2014).

[213] An astronomer tasked by the Board of Longitude with testing the reliability of a Kendall chronometer aboard Cook's Resolution (c. 1772) (Fernie 222).

[214] Billy frequently notes differences between Rapa Nui and "Taheitee," a comparison that likewise recurs in Cook's account (*Stone* 101, 110; Forster 9, 15-16).

[215] In confirming the availability of "modest fish" for local consumption (*Stone* 103), Winterson contests both Diamond's claim of acute famine (*Collapse* 105-6) and Peiser's claim of marine abundance (521).

palm (97) before toppling the *mo'ai* of the *Ariki Mau* (101) – historical events separated by several centuries.[216] Winterson underscores the implied correlation between the eradication of the giant palm and the desecration of the *mo'ai* when Billy mistakes the palm for an "obelisk" (100) then compares the "crack" of the toppled *mo'ai* to a "splitting-axe at a rotten tree" (104).[217] Winterson's radical distillation of Rapa Nui's distant past is significant because it suggests that the *Matatoa* eradicated the giant palm not because they required wood to perpetuate *mo'ai* production but because the palm's singularity offered an occasion for the *Matatoa* to display their suzerainship. Winterson's repositioning of the palms' extinction as coeval with the *mo'ai's* desecration not only casts doubt on Diamond's sequencing of the palm's loss as prior to colonial encroachment (c. 1450) – it also refutes those (Anderson; Finney; Nunn; Orliac; Peiser) who attribute the palm's extinction to the climatological cooling of Little Ice Age (c. 1650-1700s). Ultimately, the temporal compressions that inform Winterson's "Easter Island" section draw out causal links between events separated by centuries while disputing certain theories pertaining to the period in question. As such, Winterson's reconfiguration of Rapa Nui's recent past implies that the arrival of Dutch seafarers on Rapa Nui (c.1722) fifty years prior to the British (c.1774) compounded extant political instabilities, which prompted the *Matatoa* to eradicate the palm to assert their political dominance.

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[216] Carbon dating confirms the extinction of the giant palm c. 1450 (*Collapse* 107) – more than two centuries before seafarer's logs report warring moieties toppling the *mo'ai* (c. 1724-1840) (*Collapse* 110).

[217] Respected Rapa Nui scholars also conflate the extinction of the giant palm with the toppling of the *mo'ai ,* as evidenced in the following excerpt: "Paro [Rapa Nui's largest standing *mo'ai*] thundered to the earth. It was like the last palm to be felled on the island. With the deafening thud, an entire way of life suddenly came to an end" (Fischer 81).

In addition to radically reconfiguring Diamond's projected timeline, Winterson's "Easter" reimagines Rapa Nui's giant *mo'ai* facing outwards, as if surveying the ocean's horizon, rather than turned inland (103). While this error might appear insignificant, this chapter suggests that this is a deliberate departure on Winterson's part intended to satirize the shared aspirations of Cook and Hawking to penetrate a still-further "horizon" on behalf of humankind. Of greater import, this modification also serves to (metaphorically) register the sense of intergenerational betrayal provoked by the existential threat of contemporary climate change. Historically, Rapa Nui's *mo'ai* faced inland to guard the inland dwellings of ancestral clan members. To reposition the island's *mo'ai* outwards, as Winterson does, literalizes Rapanui forefathers turning their backs on their progeny. Thus, akin to the compulsory moto oil anointments that starve Self's islanders of a viable future (discussed in chapter one), Winterson's repositioning of Rapa Nui's *mo'ai* seawards literalizes a congruent act of intergenerational betrayal.

Given the prospect of persisting on such a bleak and isolated site beset by war, Billy resolves to drown himself but is rescued by the half-native half-Dutch man Spikkers (105).[218] The pair embark on a romantic partnership and Spikkers discloses to Billy his plan to participate in the *Tangata Manu* ("Egg Race") (112) – a semi-annual competition introduced by the *Matatoa* which saw each political party enlist a competitor to swim rough seas to the neighbouring sea stack of Motu Nui to scale its cliffs to retrieve the first egg laid by the *manutara* (sooty tern). The first to transport the egg back to a ceremonial site in *'*Orongo won the sacred office of the *Tangata Manu* ("Birdman") and thereby secured for his party year-long control over the distribution of the island's resources

[218] Winterson suggests that Spikkers' seafaring father abandoned Jacob Roggeweins' Expedition (c. 1722) to court a Rapanui woman (106). No such historical figure is known to exist.

(Fischer 59).[219] Just as Spikkers appears poised to win the competition for the *Ariki Mau*, he is thrown from Motu Nui by a *Matatoa paoa* (*Matatoa* "thug") (115). Winterson's "Easter Island" section thus concludes with a dying Spikkers envisioning his return to a "thick-forested" Amsterdam (115-16). As the speculative sections of *The Stone Gods* demonstrate, Spikkers' death-bed desire to transcend the horror of his historical circumstances through the imagined recuperation of a purely mythic past anticipates Winterson's speculative treatment of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Rapanui, who similarly sought to transcend the genocidal consequences of Rapa Nui's colonial occupation through the imagined plenitude of Pamata'i. Those aspiring to reform geopolitical systems from within through good faith political participation, Winterson suggests, partake of a "rigged Egg Race" that is devoid of both winner and winnings, despite promises of such.

### 3.4 A Floating Mirror[220]

Whereas Winterson's portrait of "Easter Island" concludes with the balance of power tipping decisively to favour a ruthless theocracy, historically the *Matatoa*'s victory over the *Ariki Mau* proved short-lived. After Cook added Rapa Nui's coordinates to seafarers' maps (c. 1800), the island suffered a succession of encounters with *tangata hiva* ("men from beyond"), including European whalers and traders (c. 1805-56), Peruvian slavers (c. 1862-63), and Catholic missionaries (c. 1864-70) (Peiser 523-24). As this next section demonstrates, Winterson's speculative Orbus (Mars) presents the reader

[219] Although Cook's log neglects to mention the *Tangata Manu*, the competition persisted until suppressed by Catholic missionaries (c. 1867) (*Collapse* 111). The Rapanui briefly resuscitated the competition (c. 1878) prior to their island's cession to Chile (c. 1888); however, during that interval, the winner gained a purely symbolic victory as mariner Dutrou-Bornier monopolized the distribution of Rapa Nui's resources (Fischer 119).

[220] Winterson as cited in Machinal 172.

with a veiled account of Rapa Nui's colonial occupation under Jean-Baptiste Onésime Dutrou-Bornier (c. 1868-76), Policarpo Toro Hurtado (c. 1888-92), Enrique Merlet (c. 1895-1903), and Scottish-Chilean *Compañía* Williamson & Balfour (c. 1903-53). The novel's first section ("Planet Blue") details Dutrou-Bornier's efforts to convert Rapa Nui into a depopulated sheep ranch (c. 1868-76), Dutrou-Bornier's death (c. 1876), and the cataclysmic impact of Rapa Nui's transfer to the Chilean Republic through Hurtado (c. 1888). The novel's third section ("Post-3 War") depicts Rapa Nui's bifurcation into a penal labour camp and leper colony under Merlet (c. 1895) and the subsequent transfer of Merlet's lease to Williamson & Balfour (c. 1903). The novel's fourth and final section ("Wreck City") dramatizes the Chilean Navy's suppression of an indigenous uprising at Balfour's request (c. 1914).

When the reader first encounters Planet Orbus in section one, carbon-dioxide levels are "five-hundred-fifty-parts-per-million,"[221] leaving the "plundered" planet a projected lifespan of less than fifty years (31). In desperation, Orbus residents enlist in a State-run "resettlement lottery" sponsored by MORE-Futures (34). The latter agrees to transport Orbus refugees to the newly "discovered" Planet Blue (biodiverse Venus) in exchange for exclusive control over the fledgling colony (59). This section commences with the return of the Starship *Resolution*[222] to Orbus (Mars) following its inaugural expedition to Planet Blue (Venus). Here the reader is introduced to the "space privateer"

[221] To give some context, as of April 2019, climatologists measured 413.2 parts per million – 3.0 parts per million higher than April 2018, marking the highest global atmospheric $CO_2$ average recorded (U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration).

[222] In keeping with the fact that no less than two space-shuttles are named for vessels commanded by Cook (the *HMS Discovery* and the *HMS Endeavor*) (NASA).

Captain Handsome and his Robo *sapien*[223] Spike (46) – composite characters modelled after historical figures. In this section, Handsome yokes the colonial aspirations of Cook (c. 1773-74) with those of Dutrou-Bornier (c. 1868-76). In a particularly striking passage, Handsome informs his crew that they need only look to a "battered 18th century edition" of Cook's *Journals* to understand MORE-Future's motives for colonizing Planet Blue (49). Spike's hybridity invokes Defoe's Friday, Cook's Lieutenant Clerke,[224] and the advent of the Orbus Spike thought by some to mark the onset of the Anthropocene. Billie Crusoe also recurs in this section as a disillusioned employee of MORE forced to enlist in Handsome's second expedition as punishment for suspected collusion with terrorist dissidents (59).[225] In keeping with the structural parallels, thematic synchronicities, episodic collisions, and transmigratory subjects[226] seen in *The Book of Dave* and *Cloud Atlas*, Winterson's recursive cast dramatizes the "multitude" as an interdependent "singularity" prone to transhistorical variation. En route to Planet Blue, Billie learns that "Plan B" is host to carnivorous "dinosaurs" that MORE-Futures aims to exterminate through the controlled impact of an asteroid (50). Although MORE-Futures intends for the asteroid to disrupt Planet Blue's climate for the duration of a few months, Spike's technological miscalculations trigger a Little Ice Age that persists for "decades," thereby

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[223] A "solar-powered, self-repairing, intelligent, and non-aggressive" human-robot hybrid (*Stone* 64) that strongly resembles the fabricant Sonmi~451 in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (185-245; 327-65).

[224] A midshipman who rose to the rank of Lieutenant on Cook's second expedition as a counterpart to Pickersgill (Beaglehole).

[225] Billie assisted "The Resistance" in bombing MORE-Futures to stop the latter from absorbing the authority of Central Power (58-9). The twenty-five Xcits that comprise Orbus' "Resistance" refers to the delegation of twenty-five Rapanui who (unsuccessfully) petitioned French-Tahitian authorities to make Rapa Nui a protectorate of France (c. 1881) (Fischer 125-26).

[226] When the reader first encounters Billie Crusoe, she is a disgruntled MORE-Enhancement consultant (4). In the section that follows, Billy recurs as Cook's marooned crew-hand (98), and returns as a disaffected MORE-Future's scientist before resurfacing as the author-protagonist of the "Stone Gods" manuscript (203).

rendering Planet Blue less hospitable than Orbus (74-5). Thus, in keeping with the ice-aged Earths imagined in Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* (1998) and Doris Lessing's *Mara and Dann* (1999), Winterson's Planet Blue section establishes an oblique correlation between the genocidal impact of expansionist techno-predation and climatological precarity culminating in civilizational collapse. Winterson's "Planet Blue" section concludes with Orbus' Eastern Caliphate launching a nuclear attack on Central Power's "Mission Base," prompting the latter to retaliate in kind (91).

Winterson's depiction of the "resettlement lottery" championed by Handsome recalls the entrepreneurial aspirations of French mariner Dutrou-Bornier to convert Rapa Nui into a sheep ranch to sate Tahitian demand for wool and mutton (Fischer 114). Prior to his attempt to make Rapa Nui a protectorate of France, authorities jailed Dutrou-Bornier for arms-dealing in Peru (c. 1865). Upon his release, Dutrou-Bornier sailed to Tahiti where he established a trade partnership with Maison-Brander. He then visited Rapa Nui twice (c. 1866 and 1867) before taking up permanent residence on the island (Fischer 110). Upon seizing Rapa Nui (c. 1868), Dutrou-Bornier expelled local missionaries (c. 1870)[227] and incinerated agricultural settlements (c. 1871) to force indigenous Rapanui to relocate to Tahiti to labour as indentured servants on Maison-Brander's coconut plantations (Peiser 524).[228] In keeping with MORE-Futures' two-part resettlement of Orbus "lottery-winners" to Planet Blue (Venus), Dutrou-Bornier transported a third of the island's total population to Tahiti in two "waves" (c. 1871-72).

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[227] The missionaries Dutrou-Bornier expelled went on to lobby Chilean authorities to seize Rapa Nui as a naval garrison (Fischer 116-17).

[228] Given the recent collapse of the whale oil industry (c. 1850), as discussed in chapter one, Maison-Brander sought to export coconut oil as an alternative (Fischer 84).

Of those who survived the journey, more than a quarter died in Tahiti from "poor nutrition" and "ill-treatment" (Fischer 114-16).[229]

Those who managed to complete their five-year "contract" with Maison-Brander pooled their savings to purchase land in Pamataʻi from the Catholic Church (c. 1887) (Fischer 130; Muñoz 5-8).[230] Yet, within a few years of establishing an agricultural collective in Pamataʻi (c. 1898), most Rapanui contracted leprosy (Fischer 128; Muñoz 8). Given the semi-veiled referents that undergird this section of the novel, the wayward "asteroid" Winterson envisions as inadvertently triggering "chilly" conditions on Planet Blue may be fruitfully read as inverting Arthur C. Clarke's response to Hawking that an asteroid, not a virus, is more likely to annihilate the human species (Whitehouse). Of greater import, though, Winterson's defamiliarized account of Rapa Nui's colonial entanglements with Tahiti reframes this cataclysmic "collision" as a premediated plot, with the implicit (though far-fetched) suggestion that Maison-Brander intentionally infected newly emancipated Rapanui in Pamataʻi with leprosy to deter other Rapanui labourers from following their example.

The bulk of Winterson's third section transpires long after territorial skirmishes over Orbus' dwindling resources prompt the global nuclear war alluded to in "Planet Blue." Here Winterson details Central Power's postwar bifurcation of Planet Orbus into a walled-in surveillance State ("Tech City") and radioactive outpost ("Wreck City") – conditions that in turn refer to Haŋa Roa's nineteenth-century division into a penal labour camp and walled-in leper colony under Merlet's direction with the financial backing of

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[229] By 1877, only eighty-three men and twenty-seven women remained, plunging Rapa Nui's total population to numbers not seen since the island's settlement some "1300 years" prior (Fischer 120).
[230] Akin to the Hiortans, who elected to name their settlement in Melbourne "St. Kilda" (c. 1852), many Rapanui named their Tahitian plots after Rapa Nui landmarks (Muñoz 8).

Williamson & Balfour. In the aftermath of the nuclear war that devastates Orbus' "eastern seaboard" (131), Central Power passes emergency war measures (130) that unwittingly enable MORE-Futures to dismantle democratic norms and install an Orwellian corpocracy enriched by the rationing of private consumption through virtual currency (138-39). This chapter argues that the Eastern Caliphate's attack on Central Power alludes to the transfer of Rapa Nui's lease from Dutrou-Bornier to Chilean navigator Policarpo Toro Hurtado. When the Chilean Republic dispatched Hurtado to negotiate the terms of Rapa Nui's annexation (c. 1887),[231] the repatriation of labourers from Tahiti back to Rapa Nui (c. 1888) introduced leprosy to the cloistered island,[232] thus dealing yet another blow to the island's indigenous population in an eerie reprisal of the decimation wrought by Peruvian slavers less than a decade earlier (Fischer 100; Muñoz 8).[233] The nuclear attack described by Winterson thus reimagines the spread of leprosy from Tahiti to Rapa Nui as biological warfare perpetrated by Maison-Brander on the "mission base" of Hurtado (91). As such, Winterson sets up an implicit parallel between Maison-Brander's speculative use of germ warfare to sabotage Hurtado's purchase of Dutrou-Bornier's lease and the *Matatoa's* toppling of rival *mo'ai* as dispiriting acts similarly designed to destroy the purpose of another.

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[231] Indigenous leader Atamu Tekena "signed" the "deed of cession" with the understanding that Rapa Nui would remain an independent protectorate of Chile not its colonial property (Fischer 138-39).

[232] The Rapanui dubbed the disease *Reva hiva* ("Chilean Flag") (Seward 239).

[233] Due to the labour shortage that resulted from Peru's abolition of indigenous slavery, Peruvian slavers transported 1,408 Rapanui to labour in Peruvian guano mines (c. 1862-63). Those repatriated infected the remaining Rapanui with smallpox and tuberculosis, which caused the island's total population to plummet to roughly seven hundred (Fischer 105). Given the annihilation of the Rapanui (c. 1862-88), Peiser posits that indigenous accounts of the island's pre-colonial past are likely "retrospective inventions" fabricated to supply a "mythical explanation of the present" (524) – a claim Winterson implicitly rejects given that actual and mythic pasts "imprint" the present as trace.

MORE-Future's subsequent ascent in the third section of *The Stone Gods* alludes to the transfer of Merlet's lease to Williamson & Balfour (c. 1903).[234] After Hurtado's withdrawal from Rapa Nui (c. 1892), Chilean authorities issued a twenty-year lease (c. 1896) to Chilean merchant Enrique Merlet – a "strawman" hired by Williamson & Balfour to transform Rapa Nui into a cattle ranch (c. 1898) by confining locals to a detention centre in Haŋa Roa and those infected with leprosy three kilometres north (Fischer 163). Akin to the "laser gates" that ring "Tech City" (5) and the mandatory wrist-chips worn by Orbus civilians (146), Merlet encircled Haŋa Roa in a three-metre-high-wall fitted with two gates guarded by Chilean snipers (Peiser 534).[235] The Rapanui built Merlet's wall with the understanding that the latter intended the enclosure to pen livestock; however, upon completion, Merlet forced the remaining two-hundred Rapanui to reside in an area of less than four square miles. In reimagining the physical dimensions of Rapa Nui's circumscription in terms of digital surveillance, Winterson insinuates that twenty-first-century humans risk facilitating their own imprisonment through uncritical acceptance of intrusive technologies. Shortly after Rapa Nui's partition, Merlet sold his lease to Williamson & Balfour (c. 1903) and the latter used the pretext of leprosy to confine locals to the island where the company paid for their labour in virtual credits (Fischer 135), prompting several respected Rapa Nui scholars to dub the island "a tropical version of the 18th-century Scottish Highlands" (Fischer cxlii; Porteous 145-56). In reimagining Williamson & Balfour's credit system as an "economy of purpose"

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[234] Williamson & Balfour built their Empire on "triangular trade" between Britain, Chile, and America (Fischer 135).

[235] Thus lending a chilling undercurrent to the novel's final vignette, in which Billie "awakens" within sight of the prelapsarian "farm" introduced in section one but must cross through a gated threshold to enter. Billie hesitates before "lifting the latch" because she understands the threshold to mark a point of no return (206-7).

comprised of virtual "jetons" (138), Winterson cautions readers against a near-future in which geophysical circumscription restricts consumer "choice" to the short-term rental of products monopolized by transnational corporations. Less than a decade after Williamson & Balfour assumed Merlet's tack (c. 1913), conditions deteriorated on the island to such an extent that the Rapanui petitioned the Chilean Republic to permit their emigration *en masse* to Pamata'i (Fischer 164).[236] Despite the devastating effects of leprosy (c. 1898), Pamata'i persisted in the Rapanui imagination as a speculative site of refuge (Muñoz 5). Thus akin to Mitchell's rebranding of Hawai'i as a slaughterhouse-turned-sanctuary in *Cloud Atlas* (189-90), Winterson maps the mythic plenitude of Pamata'i onto a climate-changed Planet Blue to discredit the notion that humans can start over with the "clean emptiness" of a new beginning (46).

In the fourth and final section of the novel ("Wreck City"), Winterson reimagines Rapa Nui's leprosarium as a "wrecked city" comprised of radioactive "mutants" (151-207). The bulk of this section details MORE-Enforcement's brutal suppression of the "mutant rebellion" (158) – an episode that registers the Chilean Navy's quashing of an indigenous uprising (c. 1914) shortly after Chilean authorities rejected the islanders' bid to reclaim their agricultural holdings in Pamata'i.[237] While Winterson's novel ends with MORE-Futures regaining control over Orbus' "mutant" population, historically the Chilean government terminated Balfour's lease (c. 1953) under the pretext that the *Compañía* mishandled leprosy prevention and treatment (Fischer 197). With the global

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[236] Throughout the 1920s, 40s, and 50s, the Rapanui devised ingenious means to flee the *Compañía:* In 1926, fifteen Rapanui sought to reclaim their plots in Pamata'i, of which fourteen returned empty-handed (Muñoz 6). From 1947-58, thirty-nine Rapanui fled for Pamata'i in makeshift crafts; eighteen survived the crossing (Muñoz 6-7, 16-8).

[237] Unbeknownst to the repatriated Rapanui, the Catholic mission sold their holdings to Tahitian farmers, prompting their descendants to file land-claim petitions with limited success (Muñoz 5).

collapse of wool prices (c. 1960s), the Chilean Republic rebranded Rapa Nui as a "historical theme park" (Fisher 228).[238] In a 2016 report on world heritage sites impacted by global warming, scientists warned that rising seas had already begun to erode the basalt *ahu* on which the monumental *mo'ai* at Tongariki, Haŋa Roa, Tahai, and Anakena are balanced, thus setting the restored *mo'ai* at risk of being toppled a second time (Quilliam et al.) – a prospect Winterson alludes to when "Easter's" marooned Billy observes waves already "washing at the ruin" of a toppled statue (104). This poignant closing image suggests that the dispiriting displays of hubris that punctuate the novel's imagined timescapes pale in comparison to the sublime and indifferent capacity of nature to topple human achievement.

### 3.5 *Terra Australis Incognita*

Taking into account the double-mapped allusions that undergird *The Stone Gods'* speculative sections, this chapter contends that Winterson achieves her critique of Hawking's multiplanetary solution to climate change through projecting the colonial histories of Rapa Nui and Tahiti onto celestial topographies (Mars and Venus) to demonstrate that Rapa Nui's collapse was not a "self-inflicted' ecocide born of intergenerational eco-amnesia but an environmental crisis exacerbated by climate change, colonial encroachment, forced territorial displacement, genocide, and corpocratic encapsulation. What Winterson's veiled account of Rapa Nui's harrowing history underscores is that the Rapanui sought to regain former states of plenitude though monuments to appease ancestral gods or through petitions to expedite resettlement on

[238] The Chilean government leased Rapa Nui to the American military (c. 1966) to use as a covert satellite tracking station, thus recalling The Scottish National Trust's repurposing of Hiort into a missile-tracking station (Fischer 215).

Pamata'i rather than remedy the root cause of their plight: geophysical circumscription and techno-predation. Indeed, nowhere does Winterson's double-mapped critique work to greater effect than in her novel's depiction of Planet White in *The Stone Gods'* inaugural section. En route to Planet Blue (Venus), Handsome recounts a "traveller's tale" about the "bleached and boiled" Planet White: a "cruel" greenhouse planet said to "shelter nothing" but its "own death" (51-3). Handsome speculates that Planet White had once been "a world like [Orbus]" but that human-induced climate change necessitated resettlement (56). Handsome then goes on to posit that humans likely evacuated some *other* planet prior to colonizing Planet White (Earth), all prior to evacuating Planet Orbus (Mars) for Planet Blue (Venus) (56). Given the submerged referents that underpin the speculative sections of *The Stone Gods*, Handsome's supposition is consistent with the looped navigational route of Cook's second voyage (c. 1773-74), which saw the *HMS Resolution* cross the Antarctic circle, refuel in Tahiti, return to Antarctic waters, survey Rapa Nui, then return to Tahiti – thus literalizing Winterson's contention that human history is the story of a "repeating world" (49).

Although critics frequently deem Winterson's White Planet a scorched future-Earth projected onto a near-future Venus, this chapter argues that Planet White alludes to Cook's covert mission (c. 1772) to claim *Terra Australis* for the Crown (Siskind 11).[239] Although Cook failed to locate the non-existent landmass, the *Resolution* did make navigational history on 30 January 1774 by penetrating waters less than seventy-five

[239] Winterson's metafictional framing of a topographically altered Antarctica thereby harkens to the "lost world" subgenre epitomized by Edgar Allan Poe's "Ms. Found in a Bottle" (1833) and James De Mille's *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* (1888). In contrast to twentieth-century "lost world" fictions set on a frozen, temperate, or semi-tropical Antarctica, the digitized terrains of Google Earth coupled with the climatological uncertainties of the twenty-first century prompted contemporary authors to displace their lost worlds onto neighbouring planets (Becker).

miles from the Antarctic coast (71°10S and 106°54W). On 6 February 1775, perilous conditions compelled Cook to reverse course. Much to the delight of his crew, Cook conceded that he could not "risk all" merely to chart with greater precision the "reality" that served to dispel a long-held myth (Simpson-Housley 113). Whereas the "White Continent" appeared to Cook comprised of towering "ice islands" twisted into sublime formations by the extreme cold, Winterson's White Planet appears to Captain Handsome littered with technological remnants melted into bizarre formations by the intense heat (52). What Handsome misclassifies as "winged cars" and "compressed" aeroplanes the reader is encouraged to identify as remnants of rockets built to ferry affluent climate refugees to Mars from the launch site of a once temperate Antarctica. Poignantly, in describing Planet White's towering scrapheap of defunct rockets as a "sacrificial offering" to appease an "eyeless god" (52), Winterson conflates Hawking's multiplanetary solution to climate change with the production of monumental *mo'ai* to suggest that both objectives deepen and accelerate the crisis they aim to remedy.

### 3.6 "A Net to Catch the World"[240]

In addition to transposing the recorded histories of Rapa Nui, Tahiti, and Antarctica onto a desiccated Mars, a boiled Earth, and a revitalized Venus, Winterson overlays this "doubled-map" with metafictional reversals that re-inscribe the whole as topographically indistinguishable from twenty-first-century Earth as, for example, when the asteroid that triggers a Little Ice Age on Planet Blue morphs into an asteroid that impacts "Chicxulub Mexico" (174) or else when the signal dispatched from Planet Blue to Orbus morphs into a signal volleyed between the Earth and moon (199). Winterson

[240] Adapted from *Stone* 127.

then further complicates the ontological arrangement of the novel's diegetic realms through the late addition of a metafictional frame that reconfigures the whole as a circulating manuscript authored by its own protagonist – a revelation that then retrospectively repositions three of the novel's four sections as fictions embedded within a larger work-in-progress. This "metafictional turn" first occurs in the opening vignette to Winterson's "Post3-War" section, in which Billie finds *The Stone Gods* manuscript on a subway car (119) then recounts her abandonment as an infant (122-23) before crossing diegetic levels back to the narrative proper (127).[241] A similar shift recurs in the novel's "Wreck City" section, when Winterson's narrative abruptly cuts from MORE-Futures' suppression of the "mutant rebellion" (193) to a conversation between Billie and Spike (203), in which Winterson reframes all of the events that transpired since Billie disembarked from the subway car as fictive episodes in the "Stone Gods" manuscript. In the ensuing conversation, Billie confesses to Spike that she authored and abandoned the manuscript on the "Circle Line" so that it might act as a "message in a bottle" for a "repeating world" (203).[242] Then, in quick succession, Winterson supplies the reader with snapshots of the losses that punctuate sections one through three, leading the reader to infer that Billie is flipping through sections of the manuscript at random before turning to the final vignette of the fourth section, which sees Billie fatally shot during the "mutant rebellion" (203-4). The novel then concludes with Spike asking Billie if their conversation (in real time) is how the "Stone Gods" will end, to which Billie expresses

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[241] Winterson's editor apparently left a manuscript copy of *The Stone Gods* in Balham Tube Station in 2007 which, for Palitzsch, amounts to a clever media stunt to promote Winterson's novel (157-58).

[242] Thus, in keeping with Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, Winterson's metafictional "pivot" repositions the narrator as the author/consumer of the texts s/he inhabits.

her hope that others will read, rewrite, and pass on the "loose" pages of the unfinished work (203).

One outcome of Winterson's metafictional "turn" is that post-rebellion Orbus ("Wreck City") accrues the greatest ontological weight as the outermost diegetic "world" through which the novel's other "worlds" are accessed. In structurally repositioning "Wreck City" as the outermost of a series of nested fictions, Winterson's frame narrative destabilizes the equipollent status of the fictions it contains. Akin to the retrospectively altered "ontological hierarchies" that structure *The Book of Dave* and *Cloud Atlas*, Winterson's revelation also renders the characters that people the novel's innermost sections virtual "avatars" embedded in recursive fictions. While most of Winterson's characters remain unaware of their placement within a reiterative simulacrum, Billie of part four simultaneously resides in and (re)writes Orbus' storied past for the edification of her future self. The manner in which Winterson fuses the novel's metafictional frame with the narrative proper has the disorienting effect of rendering the failure of the "mutant rebellion" (as an event transpiring in real-time) coeval with its reconstruction (as a narrated recollection) and virtual projection (as a prophetic fiction). Winterson's concluding sequence thus presents the reader with a failed rebellion, the memory of a failed rebellion, and the fictive projection of one, with the result that Winterson's imagined timescapes are rendered, to borrow Billie's words, at once "real and imaginary. Actual and about to be" (39). In reframing the cosmos of the novel as a vast book awaiting human revision, Winterson's metafictional "turn" suggests that the story of Rapa Nui, like that of twenty-first-century Earth, remains "open at the border" (87), even as it affirms human history as the story of a "repeating world" (49).

In terms of the broader temporal model proposed by the novel, although the speculative sections of *The Stone Gods* are relayed sequentially to the reader, each section is separated from the next by vast temporal gaps. Winterson's "Planet Blue" section, for example, transpires on an Orbus sixty-five million years prior to the distant-future imagined in the novel's "Post-3 War" and "Wreck City" sections. The semi-veiled histories that inform each of the novel's speculative sections, however, are separated by such slight caesuras as to comprise a nearly uninterrupted sequence: the historical period that undergirds section one (c. 1868-88) is divorced from sections three and four by only a decade (c. 1898-1914), with the implicit suggestion that the changes that took place on historical Rapa Nui in the decade between Hurtado's assumption of Dutrou-Bornier's lease (c. 1888) and Merlet's bifurcation of Rapa Nui into a penal labour camp and leper colony (c. 1898) were so profound as to render the two periods eons apart metaphorically. Furthermore, Winterson's sequential defamiliarization of Rapa Nui colonial history is disrupted by the introduction of the novel's "Easter Island" section, which stands apart not just for unfolding on a different topography (Earth rather than Mars) and alluding to a different time-period (eighteenth rather than nineteenth century), but also for partaking of a different literary genre (historical fiction rather than science fiction). Akin to the sudden temporal, spatial, and generic shifts that punctuate Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, Winterson's "Easter Island" section disrupts the spatiotemporal and stylistic cohesion of an otherwise unified text to remind readers that each realm remains a product of convention predicated on different norms. In so doing, Winterson encourages the reader to reconceive of their own spacetime as a similarly scripted construct.

Since the historical referents that inform Winterson's first section ("Planet Blue") and third ("Post-3 War") postdate the novel's second section ("Easter") by roughly a century, Winterson's speculative near-future is made to advance towards a recent past before reversing course in sections three and four to recontinue the spacetime introduced in section one. This temporal "hiccup" is thematically consistent with Winterson's broader efforts to affirm the coterminous presence of the past in the present as trace and to reposition the historical present as both responsive to and productive of a reiterative imprint. Given the structural arrangement of the novel, this chapter argues that *The Stone Gods*' engages the tension between Diamond's account of Rapa Nui's demise as self-inflicted "ecocide" and competing accounts[243] of Rapa Nui's collapse as a colonial genocide to underscore human history as both the Thing itself and "the [distorting screen] that prevents direct access" (Žižek 26).

Rather than pitting Diamond's history against that of his detractors, Winterson encourages the reader to discern the submerged historical referents that undergird Orbus through "Easter" with the effect that "Easter" both infiltrates and supplements the historical omissions of Orbus. As such, the reader is encouraged to recontextualize Orbus' circumscribed techno-predation as seeded by ideological rigidity and ecological precarity. Since Orbus is afforded the greatest ontological weight within the novel (as the outermost future fused to the novel's metafictional frame and as the diegetic realm that comprises seventy-five percent of the novel), an interventionary "Easter" pierces the novel's dominant diegesis through anamorphic distortion to unveil a twenty-first-century Earth similarly afflicted by the myth of originary return born of historical disavowal.

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[243] For accounts that attribute Rapa Nui's demise to colonial predation see: Fischer (2005), Peiser (2005), Gonschor (2008), Young (2012), Seward (2014), and Muñoz (2015).

While *The Stone Gods* dramatizes no less than three planets and one island marooned in the story of a "repeating world" (49), the piercing of Orbus by "Easter" structurally exposes both realms as vulnerable to extradiegetic penetration, which discredits the premise of total circumscription on which the eternal-return-of-the-same depends. Akin to Mitchell, Winterson refutes Diamond's account of Rapa Nui (specifically) and human predation (more generally) as predicated on deterministic claims to being-in-time that presume to access a "total history" through which to formulate and extend human propensity.

Ultimately, Winterson filters Rapa Nui's historical collapse through the speculative lens of Planet Orbus to generate three levels of meaning: that which is depicted, that which is veiled, and that which is conveyed in composite through the overlay of the two. Postwar Orbus maps Rapa Nui's colonial past (c. 1868-1914) onto a near-future Mars (c. 3000) to produce a cautionary future Earth; Planet White transposes Cook's Antarctica (c. 1773-74) onto a near-future Earth to concretize the conditions of a posthuman planet; lastly, a revitalized Venus harkens to an ice-aged Tahiti (c. 1871-72) to suggest a rejuvenated future Earth devoid of human life. In this respect, Winterson's novel is in keeping with other works of metamodernist cli-fi, which use heterochronic topos, metafictional reversals, and reconstructive metaxy to generate an affective sense of the novel's recursive realms as simultaneously "here, there, and nowhere" through the production of an "otherworldly third" that is "both/neither" (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 12). The overarching effect is thematically consistent with Winterson's assessment of eighteenth-century Rapa Nui as a site in which "everything signifies some other thing":

> [T]he Bird, the Egg, the flag, the writing, the winning, the winner, the Stone Gods, even the island, even the world are symbols for what they are not [and] so the simplest things come to impart the greatest significance. (*Stone* 112-13)

That every "thing" on Rapa Nui should signify something other is an irony not lost on the reader for whom the defamiliarized collapse of Rapa Nui supplies the vantage through which to view the contemporary climate crisis aslant.

Indeed, Winterson suggests that contemporary readers need look no further than nineteenth-century Rapa Nui to see humans beset by environmental crises petitioning the powers-that-be for a "ticket out," rather than tackling the autocatalytic processes at fault. In addition to inviting the reader to imagine the collapse of a climate-changed Earth as the ruination of a remote island, Winterson encourages the reader to view Hawking's bid to relocate contemporary Earthlings to Mars as akin to Rapanui efforts to petition the Chilean government to permit their relocation to Pamata'i. Moreover, Winterson invites the reader to re-envision Musk's Martian resettlement program as structurally equivalent to Dutrou-Bornier's resettlement of the Rapanui on Tahiti. Winterson's submerged referents suggest that Musk's efforts to make an Earth of Mars are as likely to succeed as colonial efforts to make a *Terra Australis* of Antarctica. For Winterson, multiplanetary solutions to climate change are as ill-conceived as indigenous petitions to reclaim the mythic plenitude of Pamata'i or Anglo-European expeditions to chart a non-existent landmass. In this respect, Winterson implies that the monumental rockets Musk constructs to whisk Earthly evacuees to a Martian biodome are consonant with the monumental *mo'ai* of the Rapanui (c. 1724-70), in that both constitute hubristic displays predicated on the flawed pretext of salvation through transcendence. Ultimately,

Winterson's novel suggests that the myth of imminent salvation elsewhere only deters present day resistance to structural subjugation.

As Winterson's "Tech" and "Wreck" Cities demonstrate, the copious resources and technological acumen required to shepherd affluent refugees to a Martian oasis necessitates a stratified division of labour akin to that found on nineteenth-century Rapa Nui. As it stands, twenty-first-century "Tech Cities" rely on their "wrecked" counterparts to absorb the environmental damages and human casualties that come with unlimited technological advance. Ultimately, Winterson's critique of Hawking through Diamond reveals the ambitions of Dutrou-Bornier and Musk to be of-a-piece: whereas Dutrou-Bornier redirected the remaining resources of a "wrecked" Rapa Nui to the maintenance of an indentured Tahiti, Musk aspires to redirect the dwindling resources of a climate-changed Earth to the founding of a Martian colony. Winterson's novel thus warns that limiting climate change "solutions" to imminent escape and future transcendence amounts to crowning monumental *mo'ai* with *pukao* (top-knots) rather than halting *mo'ai* production, in that both actions double-down on technological dependencies as an irremediable given. Such "visionaries," Winterson suggests, would benefit from taking their cue from Cook who, having appraised the Antarctic hazards of staying-the-course, elected not to "risk all" merely to chart with greater precision the lethal consequences of an attractive fiction (Simpson-Housley 113). Ultimately, Winterson suggests that humans *can* intervene in the story of a "repeating world" (49) by using reconstructive means to identify the transhistorical matrices of power that benefit from certain genres of thought and by contesting the "logic" of originary return that underwrites the whole.

### 3.7 "This is one story. There will be another"[244]

In presenting the reader with the storied collapse of Rapa Nui filtered through the lens of a climate-changed Earth, Winterson suggests that our predicament is not unique but a repeating story that can be revised. Although the compulsion to move on and begin again is recursive, it nevertheless remains vulnerable to narratological "interventions" that invite a more "exuberant" history (Bradway 191). For, despite casting humans as prone to historical error, the metafictional frame of Winterson's novel affirms the author's tentative "optimism" that humanity has "every chance" to avert planetary ecocide (Else and Harris 50). Indeed, Winterson describes herself as an "optimist by nature" who believes that there are "solutions to the absolute failure of the neoliberal project" and contemporary climate change ("We"). Throughout the novel, Winterson reminds her readers that humans have "survived wars and terrorism and scarcity and global famine" by pulling their communities from "the brink, not once but many times" (*Stone* 39). As such, Winterson predicts that a crucial factor in humans surviving advanced climate change will be how humans give purpose to their existence (Else and Harris 51). Counter to Diamond's contention that human civilizations collapse because grain-fed predation requires unlimited territorial expansion incompatible with circumscribed topographies, Winterson proposes that inculcated patterns of belief remain responsive to environmental variables and contingency. In contrast to a will to power that takes the form of total closure and the policing of "final frontiers," Winterson proposes that humans need to "change the way we [tell] the story of our world" ("We") by drawing

[244] *Stone* 93.

on the "power of fact and symbol" to reconstruct a more "exuberant" genre of thought ("How").

As Diamond notes in his account of the ecocidal collapse of eighteenth-century Rapa Nui, coeval with indigenous efforts to crown and elevate monumental *mo'ai* to decrease the perceived *mana* of political rivals (c. 1680), Rapanui carvers produced *mo'ai kavakava* (ribbed *mo'ai*) or small idols with "hollow cheeks, protruding ribs" and pronounced spinal cords to mimic the famished condition of the islanders' bodies; strikingly many of the idols' heads featured abstract symbols set in bas relief (*Collapse* 109). While the cultural significance of the *mo'ai kavakava* is contested among Rapa Nui scholars, this chapter posits that their co-existence with the production of monumental *mo'ai* exemplifies an interventionary counter-narrative of the kind advocated in *The Stone Gods*. For numerous critics (Bradway 193; Lake; Merola 130), Winterson's proposed antidote to the recursive collapse of human civilization relies on too solipsistic a solution to spur the type of largescale socioecological transformation needed to avert a climate catastrophe. This is an assessment Winterson anticipates within the novel by conceding that her intervention may prove "utopian, flaky, [and] unreal" but that, so far, "realistic, hard-headed, [and] practical" approaches have yet to stop the "melt-down" (175). For the Winterson writing from the temporal juncture of 2007, humans had all and nothing to lose.

### 3.8 "Loose-Tied Sack of Folly"[245]

As this chapter demonstrates, the speculative sections of *The Stone Gods* submerge, compress, and invert Rapa Nui's colonial entanglements with Tahiti and

[245] *Stone* 100.

Antarctica to generate an affective sense of eternal return as coextensive with the fiction of Empire. Akin to the double-mapped islands of Self and Mitchell, Winterson patterns "Easter" with intratexual cues that unveil the collapse of a terraformed Mars as congruent with Rapa Nui's historical ruination (c. 1868-1914). Ultimately, Winterson sets "Easter" in parallactic relation to Orbus to warn readers against a near-future Earth in which advanced climate change sparks social upheavals, religious populism, political polarization, cultural predation, and the siphoning of resources to ill-advised techno-escapist interventions. In keeping with Self and Mitchell, Winterson repositions each of her novel's recursive realms as fictive episodes within an all-encompassing manuscript to encourage readers to (re)conceive of their historical present as a reiterative imprint that is just as responsive to the expansionary "logic" of originary return as to more "exuberant" genres of thought.

Having established Winterson's contribution to this emergent subgenre, this dissertation concludes with an overview of the literary achievements and political shortcomings of *The Book of Dave*, *Cloud Atlas*, and *The Stone Gods* within the wider context of British metamodernist cli-fi. After outlining the strengths and limitations of the texts under review, this conclusion seeks to historicize the primary factors that contributed to the subgenre's more recent loss of cultural traction (c. 2007-present). To account for metatmodernist cli-fi's current lack of cultural currency, this conclusion argues that the reconstructive labour required of the reader, coupled with the genre's increasingly speculative bent, undermined the modality's main aesth-ethical objective: to prod the reader into performative belief in action as a historical agent. Given the more recent erosion of cli-fi's historical ground, this conclusion contends that British

metamodernist cli-fi published in the early 2000s proved politically ineffective in its main ideational aims largely because the "structure of feeling" so central to the modality served to contain rather than resolve the cognitive dissonance that currently underwrites both geopolitical paralysis and personal inertia.

## Conclusion: The Future of British Metamodernist Cli-Fi

> "Writing from today's perspective, we appear to have been too rapidly moving along the neoliberal path leading—in twenty, thirty years or so—to a clusterfuck of world-historical proportions […] in which wealth is concentrated at the top 1 per cent of the pyramid, while rising sea levels and super storms crumble its base, where the rest of us reside in highly precarious conditions."[246]

> "Dreaming of islands – whether with joy or in fear [is] dreaming of pulling away, of being already separate, [of] starting from scratch, recreating, beginning anew"[247]

### 4.1 Sooner or Later

At 11am on 15 April 2019, a dozen Extinction Rebellion activists marooned *Berta Cáceres*[248] in the bustling commercial centre of Oxford Circus. Thousands followed in the ship's wake, bringing commuter traffic to a standstill before proceeding to overtake Marble Arch, Waterloo Bridge, Piccadilly Circus, Parliament Square, Hyde Park, the London Stock Exchange, and Canary Wharf (Taylor and Gayle). Eleven days and 1,130 arrests later, the Extinction Rebellion held a "closing ceremony" for the largest act of non-violent civil disobedience in recent British history (Taylor). Five days after the Rebellion's dispersal, the British Parliament followed the example of Scotland and Wales by fulfilling the first of the Rebellion's four-fold demands: to "tell the truth" by declaring a "climate emergency;" to work with the media to communicate scientific consensus to the British public; to enact legally binding policies to reduce $CO_2$ emissions to net zero by

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[246] van den Akker and Vermeulen, "Periodizing" 17.
[247] Deleuze's "Desert Islands" 9-10.
[248] A pink sailboat named for a Honduran environmental activist assassinated on 2 March 2016 by armed militia hired by Desarrollos Energéticos S.A. (DESA) to stop indigenous resistance to the construction of the Agua Zarca dam (Lakhani). Organizers of the Extinction Rebellion likely latched onto the *Berta Cáceres* as a noteworthy centrepiece because of the affective "structure of feeling" provoked by the image of a shore-locked ship marooned in London's commercial epicenter.

2025; and to create a Citizens' Assembly to steer climate and ecological justice policies (Harvey). Not surprisingly, conservative commentators dismissed the Rebellion as the tantrum of entitled millennials (Chakrabortty). Although generally appreciative of the Rebellion's call for action, climate scientists and policy-makers deemed the group's demands unrealistic, vague, narrow, and misguided (McGrath). The majority of the British public,[249] however, welcomed this energizing act of civil disobedience as much needed respite from three dispiriting years of Brexit uncertainty and paralysis.

The Extinction Rebellion erupted six months after the release of the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report (7 October 2019), which warned that the long-term viability of the human species requires urgent and unprecedented actions to ensure global temperatures do not exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius within the next decade (Leahy). Significantly, the bulk of the IPCC's Fifth Assessment focused on the irreversible consequences[250] of a 2.0 degree versus 1.5 degree Celsius increase (Watts). The Assessment predicted that, even if humans cut total $CO_2$ emissions instantly, current $CO_2$ levels[251] would continue to trap atmospheric heat for another century. As such, the report clarified that immediate global reductions in $CO_2$ emissions would only delay, rather than prevent, a 1.5 Celsius rise in global temperatures (Leahy). The report concluded by acknowledging that if humans act now[252] to cut global $CO_2$ emissions in half by 2030, and implement policies to reduce total emissions to net zero by 2050, global temperatures might stabilize at the 1.5 degree

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[249] A *Times* YouGov poll found that most respondents supported the Extinction Rebellion (Darby).

[250] Including the total loss of permafrost that would prompt autocatalytic warming (Watts).

[251] As of April 2019, 413.2 parts per million (U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration).

[252] As it stands, Paris Accord targets to keep global temperatures below 2.0 degrees Celsius are likely to push global temperatures to 3.0 degrees Celsius c. 2100 (Leahy). The UK is currently on track to fall short of its legally binding $CO_2$ emission targets for 2027 and 2032 (Stern).

Celsius threshold required to avoid planetary extinction (Watts). In short, the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report confirmed that it is both too late for humans to prevent a 1.5 degree Celsius rise in global temperatures within the next century and that it is *likely* too late for humans to prevent an irreversible 2.0 degree Celsius rise. Strikingly, the Report concluded with detailed governmental recommendations for preventing a 2.0 degree Celsius increase. In this respect, both the actions of the Extinction Rebellion activists and the policy recommendations of the IPCC's Fifth Assessment are consonant with the broader ideational ethos espoused by British metamodernist cli-fi, in that the Assessment Report and the Rebellion's demands advocate a performative belief in historical agency, despite the probable futility of such, because to do otherwise is unconscionable.

The paradoxical now-or-never *and* sooner-or-later implications of the IPCC's findings would suggest the salience of metamodernist cli-fi to a post-Brexit Britain. On the contrary, metamodernist cli-fi waned in the interim between Britain's entrance into the "war-on-terror" (2003) and the onset of Brexit (2016). This chapter tentatively argues that metamodernist cli-fi lost momentum over the past decade because the politicization of climate change as a partisan issue rendered the subgenre culturally inadequate. To better grasp metamodernist cli-fi's more recent decline, this conclusion must first delineate oscillating cultural attitudes towards climate change from Tony Blair's inauguration to the onset of Brexit. After Blair's electoral victory in 1997, his New Labour proposed to cut $CO_2$ emissions by "20 per cent from 1990s levels by 2010" (Garrard, "Climate 55). Throughout the 2000s, Blair branded himself as a climate advocate – a move that prompted the politicization of climate change as a partisan issue. The early 2000s witnessed growing public concern for the climate crisis as well as

expressions of skeptical ambivalence and staunch denialism. In general, 1990s British skeptics expressed only mild derision towards the "alarmist hype" of climate "zealots" (Garrard, "Climate" 65). Throughout the late 1990s, climate skeptics and politicians alike latched onto claims of scientific uncertainty to dismiss policies aimed at climate reform (Trexler). Successive IPCC Assessment Reports (1990-2007), however, succeeded in mobilizing public acceptance of anthropogenic warming, subsequently prompting the European Council to adopt unilateral reduction targets and the British Parliament to pass the "Climate Change Act" with bipartisan support (Garrard, "Climate" 54).[253]

A profound shift thus occurred in the wake of the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report (2007), in which public acceptance of anthropogenic climate change outpaced climate denialism. The mid-2000s saw climate skeptics respond by embracing their heretical status to form close-knit communities online. In contrast to their moderate precursors, "second wave" skeptics framed climate change as a fundamentalist orthodoxy enforced by politico-scientific-journalistic "fanatics" (Garrard, "Climate" 43).[254] Throughout the early 2000s, conservative broadsheets (*The Independent*, *The Times*, and the *Daily Telegraph*) amplified the sentiments of this "second wave" by comparing climate scientists to religious "zealots" or "extremists" in an effort to invoke lateral associations with Islamic fundamentalists during Britain's "war-on-terror" (Woods et al. 332). British tabloids (*Daily Express* and *Daily Mail*) showcased climate opinion pieces of which just under half articulated a skeptical position to an estimated readership of roughly 2.7 million (Garrard, "Climate" 57). Meanwhile, the paltry gains of the

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[253] Britain's ambitious attempt to make legally binding an eighty per cent reduction in $CO_2$ emissions below 1990 levels by 2050 (Farstad 291).

[254] An outlook bolstered by televised debates between climate scientists and skeptics in the guise of journalistic balance (Saunders et al. 95).

Copenhagen Climate Conference (2009) coupled with advent of the "Climategate" scandal (2009)[255] had the overarching effect of eroding public trust in British political institutions, scientific expertise, and climate assessment reporting.[256] In the decade since "Climategate" (2009), disinformation campaigns launched on social media (*Facebook*; *Twitter*) further exacerbated public distrust of climate science, resulting in the popular valorization of individual affect over the empiricism of scientific consensus (Sayer 92-3). What this cursory overview suggests is that mid-2000s Britain witnessed increased doubt and rigidity in public perceptions of climate change. As it stands, post-Brexit Britain remains deeply riven by xenophobic nativism and social conservatism fuelled by thirty years of neoliberal roll-backs compounded by fiscal austerity (Sayer 94). Ultimately, this conclusion surmises that metamodernist cli-fi's more recent loss of cultural currency is at least partially attributable to the conditions that contributed to and culminated in an acutely polarized post-Brexit Britain.

### 4.2 This Scepter'd Isle[257]

Prior to undertaking this project, scholarship on metamodernist literature had yet to theorize the emergence of a climate-fictional strain. Although extant scholarship noted a metamodernist "structure of feeling" in contemporary visual arts (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 1-14), photography (Eshelman 183-200), film (MacDowell 24-40), performance art (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 1-14), television sitcoms (Rustad and Schwind 131-46), and autofiction (Gibbons, "Contemporary" 117-31),

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[255] The hacked release of roughly a thousand private emails between climate scientists at the University of East Anglia in November of 2009 that demonstrated unethical collusion between researchers contributing to the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report (Adams).
[256] A 2009 governmental survey conducted in the wake of Climategate registered a three-fold increase in climate skepticism (Garrard, "Climate" 60).
[257] Excerpt from Shakespeare's "Richard II." 2.1.40.

theorists of metamodernism had yet to turn their sights towards British cli-fi, though a few (Bentley, Bradford, and O'Donnell) had classified *Cloud Atlas* as a metamodernist novel, while others (Bradford, Lavery, James and Seshagiri) had deemed Self, Mitchell, and Winterson authors of metamodernist prose. With the exception of *Cloud Atlas*, then, this dissertation has examined British cli-fi that contemporary critics had yet to consider in terms of literary metamodernism. In supplying metamodernist scholars with a provisional perspective on the shared attributes that give definition to metamodernist cli-fi as a distinctive subgenre, this research has sought to offer a productive angle for metamodernist and ecocritical theorists alike to view the subgenre's oscillating engagement with the enviro-materialist grand narratives of popular science. This dissertation has also aimed to enhance both climate fictional and metamodernist literary studies by resituating the former in terms of the latter to articulate twenty-first-century cultural conceptions of historical agency and finitude, given the existential threat of a warmed world.

To parse the literary attributes that distinguish metamodernist cli-fi as an emergent subgenre of post-apocalyptic prose, this dissertation has built on the scholarship of Heffernan and Calder-Williams to argue that the perspectival shift that occurred between the IPCC's First Assessment Report (1990) and its Third (2001) inaugurated a period in which the present no longer marked a static condition of perpetual crises but an epoch situated between catastrophe and extinction. As such, twenty-first-century British authors sought a literary form capable of depicting the prospect of historical finitude as actual and totalizing while refuting the temporal determinism of the future anterior. In theorizing an overlooked subgenre, the previous chapters have sought to bring to light

correspondences between enviro-materialist efforts to (re)situate the historical present in measurable relation to transhistorical phenomena and metamodernist efforts to restore collective belief in futurity through the spatialization of deep time. Indeed, the "double-mapped" islands central to metamodernist cli-fi primarily register a reiterative history deduced from historical and futural precarity to concretize the physical archipelagation of the Earth's lowest lying landmasses.

For scholars preoccupied with climate fictions, or for those interested in the recent literary output of Self, Mitchell, or Winterson, this dissertation contributes to extant scholarship by calling attention to lesser known texts within the post-apocalyptic canon while noting parallels in works of prose-fiction that literary scholars seldom study in tandem.[258] More importantly, this research unveils submerged historical referents that unify texts which critics all too commonly perceive as irreconcilably fractured. Additionally, in clarifying the satiric targets of novels often seen to lack a unified mark, this dissertation reconciles oft-noted inconsistencies of genre, character, and plot as deliberate tactics deployed to affect the metaleptic collapse of worlds within an all-encompassing manuscript. Indeed, as the findings of this project show, the fusion of the metafictional frame to the narrative proper in metamodernist cli-fi functions to destabilize the ontological hierarchy of the realms presented therein, thereby exposing the dependence of techno-predation on virtual (re)mediations. Crucially, the contents of this dissertation offer an original analysis of how the novels under consideration take seriously enviro-materialist appraisals of material trace as beneficial to historical understanding while structurally contesting the implied origin and end that underwrites

[258] With the notable exception of Fiona McCulloch, who cites both Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (141-63) and Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (45-74) to theorize contemporary British cosmopolitanism.

that genre of thought. By embedding the collapse of feudal kleptocracies within a metamodernist structure that undermines the ontological hierarchies on which eternal return depends, metamodernist cli-fi contests enviro-materialist formulations that purport to extrapolate from historical outcomes universal principles with predictive properties.

In attending to a critically neglected subgenre, this research seeks to dispel the common misperception that these novels imagine a distant post-apocalyptic future that gains its uncanny aspect from distorting contemporary conditions, as is the case with most science fiction. Instead, the body chapters of this dissertation demonstrate that each case-study text projects the failures of a submerged past onto a near-future drawn from present precarity to undermine the present as unique, the future as determined, and the past as inaccessible and, therefore, of little use to either the present or future. As mentioned in the abstract to this research, metamodernist cli-fi's resulting "structure of feeling" serves to destabilize the moment of completion that would mark history's end as well as the givenness of any future through which to anchor an irreversible tipping-point. Indeed, this project argues that metamodernist cli-fi counterbalances the non-inevitability of any given future with the impossibility of utopian closure and the improbability of large-scale transformational change. Ultimately, this research intervenes in extant scholarship by arguing that metamodernist cli-fi yokes incompatible spacetimes to advance an aesth-ethical attitude towards global warming that oscillates between and beyond hope and despair (Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes" 2). As such, the case-study texts selected complicate conventional readings of contemporary climate fiction as: cautionary tales that warn against (in)action; manifestos that call for ameliorative

measures; melancholic laments that enable catharsis; or, perverse fantasies that delight in destruction.

For critics undertaking scholarly research on the prose of Self, Mitchell, or Winterson, the metamodernist attributes theorized here lay bare possible methods of literary composition predicated on the digitization of the codex into a bi-directional medium suited to reconstructive readings. The findings of this research also serve to correct the common misperception of literary metamodernism as synonymous with (or reducible to) prose that evinces a "New Sincerity" by, instead, suggesting that questions of (in)sincerity are of secondary importance to metamodernist cli-fi's oscillating engagement with historicity and futurity. Moreover, in transposing metamodernist theorizations onto post-apocalyptic cli-fi, the body chapters of this project underscore the degree to which the subgenre hinges on topographical heterochronicity and the patterning of extratextual cues to generate the affective "third" needed to prompt an ideational stance in the reader. Due to the subgenre's preoccupation with climatological precarity and historical finitude, metamodernist cli-fi stands apart for depicting in literal terms what metamodernist texts tend to treat metaphorically: the increasing archipelagation of human communities by the anticipated loss of polar icecaps and permafrost. As such, this dissertation contributes to a more nuanced understanding of British cli-fi as a metamodernist category of response to contemporary climate change. Each case-study text under consideration imparts a metamodernist awareness of the Earth as an encapsulated island beset by collusive alliances, technological dependencies, and diminishing resources. Each underscores the vulnerability of circumscribed populations destabilized by precursory crises to conspiratorial manipulation and technological

dependence. Each generates an affective "third" to startle the reader into viewing climate change, peak oil, global neoliberalism, and geopolitical stasis as "different aspects of a single phenomenon" (Dator 498). Moreover, each suggests that humans remain "shipwrecked" in a repeating story characterized by geophysical restriction, colonial encroachment, environmental scarcity, territorial displacement, indigenous genocide, mass migration, corpocratic encapsulation, and internalized predation because ideological rigidity prevents humans from imagining an alternative genre of thought. Lastly, all of the novels under review offer a pointed critique of the fatalism thought to deter meaningful intervention by reconceiving of the transmigratory subject as an "indebted" relationality responsive to flux and embedded within a moving present bracketed by virtual (re)mediations (Gibbons, "Take" 31).

In an effort to theorize the recent emergence of metamodernist cli-fi in twenty-first-century Britain, this project has sought to synthesize and apply the scholarship of respected metamodernist theorists to a new subgenre. To explain how British cli-fi engages literary metamodernism – or, conversely, to explain how metamodernist sensibilities surface in contemporary climate fiction – this dissertation has principally built on the metamodernist scholarship of Robin van den Akker, Alison Gibbons, and Timotheus Vermeulen. To better situate the subgenre with respect to the historical and cultural zeitgeist of the early 2000s, this research has expanded on Vermeulen's and van den Akker's efforts to periodize the modality ("Periodizing" 1-20) and its "neo-historical" turn ("Historicity" 21-4). Moreover, this project has combined Vermeulen's concept of "depthiness" ("Metamodern" 147-50) with Jöog Heiser's concept of "super-hybridity" (55-68) to theorize the reconstructive realism that undergirds this subgenre. To

position metamodernist cli-fi with respect to literary modernism and postmodernism, this dissertation has weighed Nick Bentley's analysis of metamodernism as an extension of postmodernism (723-43; "Thomas" 7-25) against David James and Urmila Seshagiri's analysis of metamodernism as a recuperation of literary modernism (87-100). To analyze how the double-mapped islands of metamodernist cli-fi refute the environmental determinism of popular science, this research has built on the cosmodernist subject theorized by Theo D'haen, Christian Moraru, Patrick O'Donnell, and Berhold Schoene. Finally, the body chapters of this dissertation have combined Eshelman's notion of "performatism" (183-200) with Abramson's theorization of metamodernist grand narratives to explain the creation of an affective metareality that oscillates between and beyond that of the dialectical spectra ("Metamodern").

To offer an anticipatory account of the future of British metamodernist cli-fi, this chapter concludes by synthesizing some of the more recent critiques of metamodernism undertaken by James Brunton (60-76), Brent Cooper ("Metamodern"), Paul Martin Eve ("Thomas" 7-25), Sam Ha, and Josh Petty with an eye to clarifying the literary achievements and potential shortcomings of the modality more broadly. Whereas metamodernism initially emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a response to the financial crises of global capitalism, the onset of global warming, the emergence of "fourth-wave" terrorism, and the connectionist logic of the Internet, this conclusion provisionally posits that metamodernist cli-fi subsided less than a decade later because the subgenre proved ill-suited to articulate the aforementioned conditions that gave rise to a post-Brexit Britain. Despite the spate of metamodernist cli-fi published in the early 2000s, most generated a "structure of feeling" that readers either did not feel, or did not

*want* to feel (Cooper, "Metamodern"). With the noted exception of *Cloud Atlas*, metamodernist cli-fi received largely lukewarm reviews from literary critics who tolerated, rather than enjoyed, their initiation into the subgenre.

In addition to the relative obscurity, impenetrability, and aesth-ethical shortcomings of metamodernist-cli-fi, recent scholarship on literary metamodernism has taken aim at the modality's perceived WASPyness.[259] Although this perspective is undercut by the literary contributions of Brian Castro, Teju Cole, Harryette Mullen, Orhan Pamuk, Taiye Selasi, Evie Shockley, and Zadie Smith, to name but a few, James Brunton and Brent Cooper correctly observe that metamodernism's dominant voice remains male, Caucasian, and heterosexual – though this observation also holds true for British post-apocalyptic prose more broadly. As such, further research might address this discrepancy by devoting greater scholarly attention to those authors left out of the metamodernist canon or by theorizing further why this literary modality might appeal to specific demographics over others, as post-apocalyptic scholars have done.

Given that van den Akker and Vermeulen characterize the metamodernist modality as "*neither* a manifesto, *nor* a social movement, stylistic register or philosophy" ("Periodizing" 5), metamodernist scholars continue to debate whether the modality serves to diagnose or remedy a perceived social failing. Over the past decade, metamodernism has been deployed, in name, to advocate anti-globalization activism, xenophobic populism, and, more often than not, semi-conspiratorial self-help guides.[260] Whereas earlier manifestations of the modality tended to hold in check a performed belief in grand

[259] Although Abramson attributes the "origins" of metamodernism to non-white activist-scholars writing for "obscure American literary publications in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s," he neglects to name the scholars or the journals that published their prose ("On Metamodernism").
[260] A cursory Internet search produces Hanzi Freinacht's *The Listening Society* (2017) and James Surwillo's *Metamodernist Leadership* (2017), for example.

narrative with conscientious incredulity, the patterned code-inversion and extratextual embedding of cues used to activate reconstructive approaches to reading has, arguably, tipped the balance in favour of increasingly conspiratorial (mis)applications. As Cooper and Petty caution, the historical and "philosophical lineage" of the metamodernism risks potential cultural appropriation by "NRx, Alt-right, 4chan, and Red Pill" adherents intent on (re)directing reactionary resentment towards a misunderstood postmodernism ("Metamodern"). As such, another potential direction for expanding this research might be to address the internal contradictions that might render literary metamodernism vulnerable to conservative, (neo)fascist, or populist distortion.

For many, the metamodernist modality remained frustratingly opaque due to the labour of reconstructive reading. To detect historical referents semi-veiled by compression, inversion, and displacement, the subgenre requires that contemporary readers connect transhistorical patterns within the novel to extratextual cues provided from without. Few readers have the time, means, or inclination to scrutinize digitized texts for references half-hidden. As such, metamodernist cli-fi frequently falls short of its aesth-esthical aim to prompt readers to reconceive of historical agency and finitude aslant. Both the ambiguity of the modality's ideational aims and the subgenre's generalized avoidance of overt prescription prevented contemporary readers from being galvanized into the performance of defiant acts (Ha). For many, the individualistic nature of the aims espoused supplied too solipsistic a solution to meaningfully instrumentalize the reader. Although metamodernist cli-fi is, in many respects, uniquely configured to persuade the reader that it is both too late and not too late to act as if humans can mitigate specific impacts, that premise does not offer the reader adequate motivation to convert

that knowledge into the actual performance of defiant acts. For many, the prospect of advanced climate change elicits a mixture of bewilderment, fear, despair, dread, and denial. Indeed, twenty-first-century humans are frequently beset by oscillating states of acceptance/doubt and hope/despair that run counter to inducing the type of individual and collective transformational change required.

As a modality predicated on structural oscillation, metamodernist cli-fi contains rather than counteracts the type of fatalism that results from the limited scope of individual agency given the scale of the crisis at hand. As new nature writer Robert Macfarlane once mused, hope, beauty, wonder, and love motivate transformational change more than "menace," fear, or despair (167). Problematically, metamodernist cli-fi has yet to champion a means to acknowledge the inevitability of specific climatological impacts without extinguishing the motivation for belief in the performance of ideational acts. While a substantial proportion of the Earth's population recognizes the catastrophic threat posed by climate change and the multitude of correctives that could be enacted (individually; collectively; institutionally; geopolitically), humans are on track to do as we have done historically: cleave to a "scene of fantasy" for consolation (Berlant, "Affect" 2). For these reasons, and perhaps others, metamodernist cli-fi waned in the interval between the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report (2007) and the onset of Brexit because the "structure of feeling" central to the modality's ideational ethos accommodates the cognitive dissonance at the heart of contemporary climate change complacency.

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