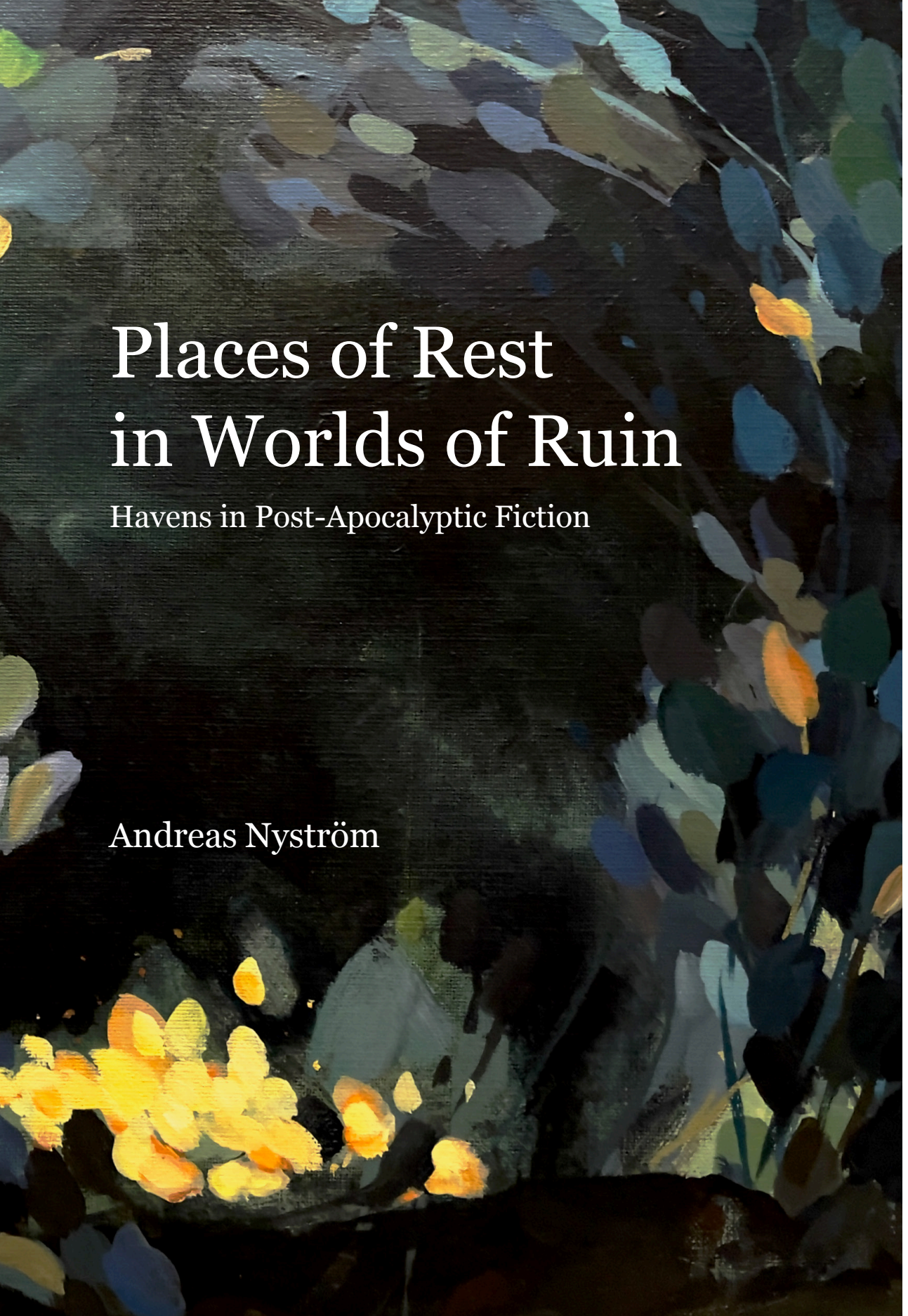

Places of Rest in Worlds of Ruin

Havens in Post-Apocalyptic Fiction

Andreas Nyström

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Abstract

In the inhospitable and ruined landscapes of post-apocalyptic fiction there are often found havens, places of rest that provide contrast to the desolation of the wasteland. This study explores the generic functions of such havens. As scholarly attention has mainly been towards the genre's main themes of survival and death, paying close attention to the haven offers an important addition to previous research. Although not comprehensive as there is room for further explorations, the study claims that the haven in post-apocalyptic fiction serves at least three different and overlapping functions: as a focal point for the genre's attempts to recover and represent a lost paradise, as a place for the exploration of tensions between mobility and immobility, and/or as a narrative endpoint for inquiries into spatiotemporal infinity and death. Supported by an eclectic mix of critical theories and a range of primary texts in English from literature, film, and computer games, the study comes to the conclusion that the haven in post-apocalyptic fiction is a rejoinder to cultural concerns about beginnings and endings, life and death, and how humans relate to nonhuman nature.

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From the start of this project to the last revisions of the final manuscript, it has been my great honor and privilege to have professors Åke Bergvall and Maria Holmgren Troy as my supervisors. They have guided me with confident expertise and have provided astute comments without ever constraining me in my explorations of the material. And when I have gone off on some tangent, as a PhD student is prone to do, they have kindly nudged me in more productive directions. Their experience as researchers together with their warm-hearted personalities have given me the best possible conditions for writing a dissertation. A sincere thank you, Åke and Maria! I am also honored to have had associate professor Jerry Määttä as reader of a preliminary draft at the final seminar. His mastery of the genre, his close reading of the manuscript, and his constructive comments greatly helped in finding segments of the text that were in much need of improvement. I would also like to thank Luke Bailey, Nicklas Hållén, Anna Linzie, Andrea Schalley, Fredrik Svensson, Marie Tåqvist, Elisabeth Wennö, Johan Wijkmark, and Peter Wikström for their help with proofreading. Whatever shortcomings there are in the final text, they are my own.

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I would further like to thank Karlstad University and the Department of Language, Literature, and Intercultural Studies for offering me the chance to pursue a PhD and Helge Ax:son Johnson Foundation for funding a research visit to the British Library in London.

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. To my three children, Alfred, Tyra, and Harald; here it is: the book daddy has been working on for so long. Some day you might read these lines and understand why I spent so many days and weekends in the office. But wherever I have been, you have always been with me. To Jessica I can only say that the quest is achieved, and now all is over, as Frodo says to Sam. And I am so glad you are with me, my dearest friend and beloved wife, here at the end of all things. Or is it the beginning?

Andreas Nyström
Mjölnartorpet, February 2021

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Introduction

The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons; cities were consum'd,
And men were gather'd round their blazing homes
To look once more into each other's face.
— Lord Byron, "Darkness"

Scattered throughout the great, cold, alien world there are warm little corners of human feeling and kindness.
— M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*

He's haunted by the memory of a lost paradise
In his youth or a dream, he can't be precise
He's chained forever to a world that's departed
It's not enough, it's not enough
— Pink Floyd, "Sorrow"

In many fictional stories of destroyed worlds there are places of rest where survivors have a chance to escape the dangers of the post-apocalyptic wasteland. Such places can take many forms, including hidden valleys, fallout shelters, or secluded islands. Quite often they are pastoral settings where the characters can repose among verdant trees by a creek of freshwater, a milieu in stark contrast to the often bleak and dreary scenery of a ruined world. In these paradisiacal forms, ancient and Western mythologies of pastoral gardens deeply embedded in the cultural imaginary are nostalgically invoked. But regardless of their specific physical nature, these places of rest are invariably small in comparison to the wastelands that surround them. As they are hidden from sight and not readily accessible, long journeys have to be undertaken, boundaries traversed, locked doors pried open, secret passageways found, and enemies killed to gain entrance. These places can provide narrative endpoints, the goals towards which the characters travel, or they can be brief but much needed midpoint stops on the way to some other plot resolution. In some cases, they can even

be both. However, even when such places are bountiful caches of supplies or Edenic oases, they are usually not a panacea for all that ails the characters of the story worlds but rather complex and unstable loci for the interrogation of the post-apocalyptic genre's major themes of survival, death, and new beginnings. They function as important plot devices questioning, altering, or revealing the motives of the characters; they are places where the rhythm of the narrative can come to a hiatus or a complete end, or where questions of temporality can be explored within a spatially closed setting. Such cornucopian pockets of tranquility in post-apocalyptic narratives I have chosen to call *havens*, and they are the focus of this study.

Contemporary examples of very different havens, from two of the most critically acclaimed and researched narratives of the post-apocalyptic genre, include the underground shelter in Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* (2006) and the green Citadel in director George Miller's film *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015). In *The Road*, the novel's two protagonists, the Father and the Son, stumble upon an abandoned fallout shelter half-way through the narrative. This midpoint haven offers safety, sustenance, and temporary rest as they hide from the cannibalistic marauders of the surrounding wasteland. The narrative hiatus ends as the dwindling resources of the haven impel the characters to move on. In *Mad Max: Fury Road*, the endpoint haven of the Citadel is a lush oasis in the middle of the desert wasteland, which provides the water and food needed to survive. The Citadel is also the starting point of the narrative, but the characters can only gain entrance to it by first going on a removal-and-return journey. This study examines the generic trope of such havens in post-apocalyptic fiction. It does so from different theoretical perspectives to seek answers to questions such as when, how, why, and to what effect they are used in the narratives.

Despite the long history and rising popularity over the last few decades of the post-apocalyptic genre, across a wide range of media, the haven has largely been left unexplored by researchers. While the genre's central motifs of survival and death have received a great deal of scholarly attention, the places of rest where these motifs are foregrounded, contrasted, and examined have not been part of the academic conversation on the genre to any great extent. Just as the

haven itself takes the form of a gap, a site hidden away and easily overlooked, research on the post-apocalyptic haven is difficult to find. The aim of this study is, therefore, to contribute to the ongoing scholarly discussion of the post-apocalyptic genre by drawing attention to one of its central tropes—the haven.

Research Question and Claims

The overall research question this study seeks to answer is seemingly uncomplicated: *What are the functions of the haven in post-apocalyptic narratives?* The many possible answers to this question are, however, far from simple. I can only hope to provide partial answers to the question as the study does not seek to present a comprehensive analysis of the haven trope. Instead, what the following chapters hope to achieve is to present what I consider to be the main ways in which the genre makes use of the haven. The three claims that articulate the study's answers to the research question are outlined below, and each claim corresponds to one of the three main chapters of the study. In each chapter, the claim is discussed and supported by theoretical discussions and exemplifications from primary texts. Ending each chapter is a longer reading of a contemporary post-apocalyptic text—a case study—in which the theoretical foundation of the chapter is put to use and the claim more fully explored. The tripartite separation of the claims belies the many overlaps and deep integration between them: It is not the intention to suggest that a haven only serves one particular function in a certain text or even all three. Rather, the three proposed functions of the haven presented here are operationalized to different degrees in each use of the haven in post-apocalyptic narratives: it is rarely the case that only one function is active in a particular work, nor are all functions always activated to the same extent. Moreover, apart from the functions presented in this study, it is not only possible but likely that further research would reveal more details regarding the complexities and functions of the haven trope. However, I propose that the functions outlined here are key to unpacking the main uses of the haven trope in post-apocalyptic fiction. As such, the following three functions could be seen as

providing an explanatory base from which to further explore the many uses of the haven in post-apocalyptic fiction as well as in other genres.

(1) *The post-apocalyptic haven draws on paradise mythology and can function as a locus for an interrogation of pastoral imaginings and human relationships with nonhuman nature*. Basing this claim on a combination of the long Western history of idyllic thinking and the ecocritical theories of the last few decades, the first chapter of this dissertation argues that the post-apocalyptic haven activates a longing for the hidden garden—the hoped-for return to an Edenic place of rest and abundance. It does so by drawing on the city/countryside tension usually present in the literary pastoral. However, the haven in post-apocalyptic fiction seems to express more a longing for a pastoral place of rest than an eagerness to escape from the commotion of the city. The chapter also discusses the uncertain nature of the pastoral haven as a place of sustainable rest as well as the difficulties inherent in trying to reach it; a return to some mythological, paradisiacal garden seems all but impossible as it recedes into the distance. The chapter ends with a case study of Peter Heller's novel *The Dog Stars* (2012), which analyzes the function of a pastoral midpoint haven in the form of a hidden box canyon in the American Midwest.

(2) *The post-apocalyptic haven can function as a place where the tension between mobility and immobility is explored*. In the second chapter, my explorations of the haven use conceptualizations of space and place as the theoretical vantage point. The chapter describes the function of the haven as a nexus for interrogations into mobility and immobility: how a sedentary relaxation in a place of rest is contrasted in post-apocalyptic narratives with an often forced migration through the wasteland. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's post-structuralist theories on what they call smooth and striated spaces, the chapter also investigates the failure of the post-apocalyptic haven to address the needs for multiple forms of being in the world. This theoretical framework is put to use in the chapter's case study of the film *Oblivion* (2013), where a verdant valley hidden in the wasteland functions as a liminal space central to the identity formation of the protagonist.

(3) *The post-apocalyptic haven can function as a preferred narrative endpoint where fears of spatiotemporal limitlessness and death can be contained and interrogated*. The human mind is ill-

equipped to deal with eternity and the immensity of the cosmos, and fiction can operate as a cultural instrument through which the human mind reacts to fears of the eternal. The post-apocalyptic haven, the chapter argues, is very well suited to carry the weight of this cultural response and to function as the focal point for interrogations into beginnings, endings, and the segmentation of space and time. That is, the haven can function as a place where time and space are contained and made more manageable. Death and mortality are intimately related to the notion of endings, and the chapter also argues that the endpoint haven is used as a final resting place where death is explored. The third and final case study examines Jeff Lemire's graphic novel *Sweet Tooth* (2009–2013), in which the main haven in the form of a wilderness sanctuary appears both at the beginning and at the end of the narrative.

Delimitations

Placing the Post-Apocalypse

Stories of apocalyptic end times have been part of the Judeo-Christian imaginary for millennia, but the idea that the world will eventually come to a catastrophic and revelatory end can be traced even further back to the foundational eschatological mythologies of Zoroastrianism (around the seventh century BCE) in what is now Iran.[1] The most influential of the Western eschatological stories today is undoubtedly the *Book of Revelation*, the final book of the Bible's New Testament.[2] In Revelation, God's wrath descends on humanity in the form of "thunders and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake," which is followed by a description of how "the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell" and "every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (Rev. 16:18-20, KJ21).

The secular response to these eschatological imaginings, which is the focus of this study, can be said to have originated with such works as those of French author Jean-Baptiste Cousin de Grainville's novel *Le Dernier Homme* (1805), Lord Byron's short poem "Darkness" (1816),

[1] See for example Sibylle Machat's *In the Ruins of Civilizations* (2013).
[2] The Biblical Greek word ἀποκάλυψις (*apocalypsis*) means revelation or unveiling.

and Mary Shelley's second novel *The Last Man* (1826). Shelley's novel is, furthermore, regarded as the first post-apocalyptic novel in English. [3] Whereas religious eschatology sees the end times precipitated by God or Gods, secular stories of wide-ranging catastrophes describe how the end comes about without supernatural agency. The many ways in which the catastrophe is brought about have varied during the two-hundred-year history of the genre's secular version, and quite often the historical context of apocalyptic fiction has been reflected in how the world ends. The Cold War era, for example, saw a prolific array of apocalyptic writing in which nuclear war leads to total destruction. With the advent of nuclear technology, humanity came to the realization that it could bring about its own destruction—an existential threat that has found expression in novels like Neville Chute's fantastically bleak *On the Beach* (1957) or Walter M. Miller's slightly more positive *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959). The destruction following a global thermonuclear war continues to be a setting explored in much more recent works of post-apocalyptic fiction, like the CBS TV series *Jericho* (2006) and the series of *Mad Max* films. A similar trend that can be identified in the twenty-first century is that of end-time narratives tapping into cultural anxieties about global warming and ecological disaster as the more probable explanation for civilization's demise, of which Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy of novels (2003–2013) is a prime example.

However, even though the anxieties of a certain moment in time produce its *zeitgeist*-specific versions of post-apocalyptic fiction, such associations should not be exaggerated. There are several causes for humanity's demise that reoccur frequently throughout the history of the genre. One of the more common reasons for the apocalypse is the spread of a deadly disease—either one occurring naturally or engineered by humans. Examples of novels range from Shelley's *The Last Man*, Jack London's *The Scarlet Plague* (1912), Stephen King's *The Stand* (1978), to the more recent *Station Eleven* (2014) by Emily St. John Mandel. An invasion of aliens has been described in H. G.

[3] The advent of a post-apocalyptic genre is thus contemporaneous with the much more well-known genre of science fiction, for which the modern point of origin is commonly seen as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) (see for example Adam Roberts's *Science Fiction*, chapter 2). Clearly, Mary Shelley's enormous influence on the speculative genres cannot be overstated.

Wells's seminal novel *The War of the Worlds* (1898), and in John Krasinki's film *A Quiet Place* (2018), as well as many other works of post-apocalyptic fiction in-between. From the perspective of this study, Wells's novel stands out as it includes one of the earliest descriptions of a haven-like place in post-apocalyptic fiction. While escaping the terrors of the invading alien forces, the protagonists find a well-stocked house in which to hide: "Here stood a white house within a walled garden, and in the pantry of this domicile we found a store of food" (Wells Pt 2, Ch 1). A list of the ample store of foods and drinks follows and the protagonists remain hidden in the house for two weeks.[4]

Despite the religious underpinnings of apocalyptic thinking, as Andrew Tate asserts, today "apocalypse is widely understood in the shared, popular imagination as a kind of classy synonym for spectacular destruction, death on a vast scale and the collapse of all that society might hold dear (families, cars, the comforts of home)" (11–12). Through the destruction of large-scale society, apocalyptic fiction examines the particularity and individuality of the human condition. With no collective humanity to be a small part of, there is nowhere in the wasteland to hide, no large-scale society to disappear into—circumstances that push individual choices and agency to the forefront of the investigations of the genre. And for the reader, according to Mathias Clasen, post-apocalyptic narratives could be said to "function as a mental testing-ground where readers can cognitively and emotionally model the experience of living through the worst" (64).

There are numerous studies that debate where to place post-apocalyptic fiction vis-à-vis related genres like science fiction and dystopian fiction, whether it is its own genre or should be categorized under the wider heading of a broader genre, and what to actually call it. Historically, the post-apocalyptic genre has been positioned by many scholars as a sub-genre of science fiction. The 'post-holocaust' entry in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, for example, talks about it as a "giant cluster of themes which has always played a central role in sf" (Nicholls et al). Andrew Milner suggests that Shute's *On the Beach* belongs to "the [SF] subgenre of the doomsday dystopia" (5), and Gary

[4] For longer and much more comprehensive outlines of the historical development of apocalyptic fiction, see Sibylle Machat's *In the Ruins of Civilizations* (2013), Tate's *Apocalyptic Fiction* (2017), or Joe Trotta et al's *Broken Mirrors: Representations of Apocalypses and Dystopias in Popular Culture* (2020).

K. Wolfe argues that "end-of-the-world stories provide a convenient means of exploring at least two of [science fiction's] favorite themes—the impact of technology on human behavior, and the relationship of humanity to its environment . . ." (4). Other critics, like Tom Moylan and Raffaella Baccolini, prefer to call post-apocalyptic texts *dystopian*, while ecocritics Andrew Ross and Frederick Buell label many of them *ecodystopian* to emphasize the environmental concerns often addressed in more contemporary post-apocalyptic narratives.[5] When the post-apocalyptic genre is discussed on its own terms, writes Sibylle Machat, it is done so "only in passing, generally subsumed beneath apocalyptic/catastrophe fiction, and then usually so that it can be analyzed and located at an intersection of 'wider' generic traditions, in the triangle between utopia, dystopia and science fiction" (27).

Dystopia is defined by Lyman T. Sargent as "a non-existing society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived" (9). Darko Suvin expresses a similar idea when he says that dystopia is "a community where sociopolitical institutions, norms, and relationships between its individuals are organized in a *significantly less perfect way* than in the author's community" (170; emphasis in original). According to these critics, one of the defining features of dystopia is thus its description of a society that is worse than the one in which the dystopian narrative was produced. Even though the destroyed society of a typical post-apocalyptic narrative could be said to be a place organized in a 'less perfect way' than that of the author, I would argue that the destruction of large-scale society found in post-apocalyptic fiction is an altogether different way to investigate the human condition.

It is problematic, therefore, to use the same theoretical framework when investigating, for example, Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)—the quintessential dystopian novel describing a totalitarian state—and McCarthy's *The Road*, perhaps the most read of all contemporary post-apocalyptic novels, or placing movies like Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) and Paul Verhoeven's *Robocop* (1987),

[5] See Raffaella Baccolini's "Gender and Genre…" in *Future Females, the Next Generation* (2000), Frederick Buell's *From Apocalypse to Way of Life* (2003), Tom Moylan's *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (2000), and Andrew Ross's *Strange Weather* (1991).

both set in futuristic and decidedly dystopian cityscapes, under the same (eco)dystopian umbrella term as the barren wastelands depicted in George Miller's *Mad Max* (1979) and Richard Stanley's *Hardware* (1990), which Andrew Ross does in *Strange Weather*. There are of course shared features between the different genres and works of fiction that bridge several genres, but by saying that post-apocalyptic fiction is yet another sub-genre to science fiction or positioning it as a version of dystopian literature we risk losing track of important aspects unique to the post-apocalyptic genre.[6]

To complicate matters even more, genres change and evolve, merge and disappear, making them elusive targets for prescriptive definitions. In the words of influential genre theorist Alastair Fowler, "the changing and interpenetrating nature of the genres is such as to make their definition impossible" (25). Despite the many problems inherent in attempts to define a genre, some scholars have worked towards definitions that strive for, but never reach, unambiguous clarity. Claire Curtis, for example, defines post-apocalyptic fiction rather bluntly "as any account that takes up how humans start over after the end of life on earth as we understand it" (5). Although this straightforward definition would work for the purposes of this study, Curtis continues by further delimiting how she understands the genre by discussing features she believes are central to works in the genre. However, Curtis's discussion is too detailed and exclusionary, and it leads her to conclude that McCarthy's *The Road*, one of the most critically acclaimed additions to the genre in recent years, is an "outlier" that does not take full advantage of the genre (18).

The hope when trying to define a genre, it seems, is to find common ground for scholarly discussions. But as all genres are transformed with every new work of art that finds creative impetus in drawing on or reacting to their tropes, themes, and forms, rigid definitions will fail or quickly become obsolete. Because genre is difficult to pinpoint as it shifts and changes along so many axes, we could feel inclined to admit defeat and proclaim "the demon of relativism" the winner, as literary scholar Warren Wagar calls much of

[6] If there is meaning to be found in omissions, the glaring exclusion of anything related to post-apocalyptic fiction in *Science Fiction* (2006), Adam Roberts's introduction to the science fiction genre, could be seen as an argument for treating post-apocalyptic fiction as a separate genre.

the achievements of post-structuralist thought (xiii), or we could try to articulate a theoretical standpoint where we instead embrace the inherent fluidity of genre.

In order to explore the different functions of the post-apocalyptic haven in this study, I understand genre as a set of varying and changing features that together constitute the genre. For any genre one can in Fowler's words "specify features that are often present and felt to be characteristic, but not features that are always present" (40).[7] These generic features make up the *repertoire* of a genre, which "is the whole range of potential points of resemblance that a genre may exhibit," and "[e]very genre has a unique repertoire, from which its representatives select characteristics" (Fowler 50). What features belong to a genre is subject to change, as are the features themselves, and different genres can share features.

While Fowler's generic features are understood as characteristics in and of the text itself, science fiction scholar Damien Broderick's notion of the 'mega-text' should be mentioned as an important addition to the discussion on genre. According to Broderick, "sf is written in a kind of code (on top of—and sometimes replacing—all the other codes of writing) which must be learned by apprenticeship" (xiii). Even though Broderick admits that the same is true "to some extent" of all genres, he argues that science fiction draws on "an unusually concentrated 'encyclopaedia'—a mega-text of imaginary worlds, tropes, tools, lexicons, even grammatical innovations borrowed from other textualities" (xiii). Broderick seems to say, in other words, that not only does a writer of science fiction need to have read a wide range of texts, both narrative and non-narrative (e.g., mathematics and physics), but the reader needs to have done the same: "a lively interest in diverse kinds of information seems to feed heavily into an enjoyment of sf" (xiii). The large expanse of the 'mega-text' reaches outside of the more conventional notion of intertextuality, as it takes other textualities and skills into consideration. Although Broderick's 'mega-text' points to a more nuanced and complex appreciation of genre, not only of science fiction, it is not very productive here in trying to better place the post-apocalyptic genre.

[7] Ursula Le Guin at one point calls generic features "a common fund of imagery" (n.p.).

Works of art articulate and activate features shared by several genres to various extents.[8] Science fiction critic Carl Freedman, who refers to generic 'elements' or 'tendencies' instead of Fowler's 'features,' suggests something similar when he states that "a text is not filed under a generic category; instead, a generic tendency is something that happens within a text" (20). Freedman also suggests it might be valid to speak of a "dominant generic tendency within the overdetermined textual whole"—a feature that all texts of a genre seem to share (20).[9] Similarly, fantasy scholar Brian Attebery writes that "we often think of genres, like other categories, as territories on a map, with definitional limits" and addresses the problem by talking about genre as a 'fuzzy set,' which means that a genre is "defined not by boundaries but by a center" (12). Despite Fowler's assertion that there are no "features that are always present" (40), I align my understanding of genre more with Freedman's notion of a 'dominant generic tendency' and Attebery's notion of the 'center' in a fuzzy set. Without the possibility of at least one dominant feature shared between the texts in a genre, delimiting the number of texts available for analysis becomes very difficult. This is not to say that a narrative has to belong to only one genre: several dominant generic tendencies can be activated in a text. The 'dominant generic tendency,' then, of post-apocalyptic fiction is here understood as the genre's description of a situation after a large-scale destruction of economic, physical, and sociocultural infrastructures—a feature that seems to be shared by all scholarly definitions of the post-apocalyptic genre.[10]

The Boundaries of the Post-Apocalyptic Haven

In this study, the haven is seen as a generic feature that may be activated to a greater or lesser extent in post-apocalyptic works of

[8] Or in the words of Jacques Derrida: "Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging" (65).

[9] Freedman's example is that of 'cognitive estrangement'—Darko Suvin's formulation of the unique character of science fiction—which is suggested by Freedman as the dominant generic feature of science fiction.

[10] A very recent example is Joe Trotta and Houman Sadri, who suggest that "stereotypical apocalyptic fiction, as we want to characterise it for our purposes, involves a cataclysmic event (or series or combinations of events) in which civilisation or society has collapsed, is collapsing or will collapse—life, or more specifically human life, is threatened on a global scale, whether from natural or manmade circumstances" (4).

fiction. More precisely, I do not see the haven as a required feature of the post-apocalyptic genre nor as exclusive to it: there are many post-apocalyptic texts that do not use the trope of the haven, and there are texts that include havens or haven-like places that are not post-apocalyptic. The haven is understood in this study to be a spatially restricted place of rest away from harm with a clear narrative function: it provides sustenance and refuge and is often but not necessarily in a rural and beautiful setting. Moreover, it is typically hidden and/or difficult to reach. There are, broadly speaking, two preferred placements of the haven in a post-apocalyptic narrative. One is roughly in the middle of the narrative. In these midpoint havens, the characters find temporary rest and can resupply before they continue onwards. The other placement is at the very end of a narrative. This endpoint haven is usually, but not always, the goal towards which the characters strive, and the narrative closes when the security of the endpoint haven is reached. As mentioned above, the often beautiful and Edenic *setting* of the haven is treated in the first chapter, whereas its *placement* in the story-world is discussed in the second chapter and in the narrative in the third chapter of this study.

However, all post-apocalyptic havens do not necessarily fall into the categorization of midpoint or endpoint placement focused in this study. In David R. Palmer's novel *Emergence* (1984), the girl protagonist Candy climbs out of a bunker under her house as one of the few survivors of a nuclear war—the haven playing here only the role of a starting point. Havens in, for example, Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy, the computer game *Fallout 3*, and J. G. Ballard's novel *The Drowned World* (1962) do not drive the narrative forward in any substantial way; they are places with important functions for the plot but do not function as the narrative engines that provide the main impetus to the stories. Similarly, Justin Cronin's novel *The Passage* (2011) presents a smorgasbord of safe places, almost as if the novel showcases all the different shelters that can exist in the genre: There is, for example, a forgotten military bunker filled with weapons and vehicles, a prison called the Haven where a group of survivors live, and a well-fortified compound called the Colony where many of the major characters live behind high walls.

A generic feature of another, adjacent genre of speculative fiction that exhibits many of the characteristics of the haven is the *polder* of fantasy literature. 'Polder' is a Dutch word describing a low-lying piece of land enclosed by dikes that separate it from surrounding areas of water. Polders in fantasy are defined by *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* as "enclaves of toughened reality, demarcated by boundaries from the surrounding world" (Clute). Examples of fantasy polders are the house of Tom Bombadil, Fangorn forest, or Lothlórien, to use the well-known fantasy world of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* to illustrate the term.[11] The polder and the haven are in many ways similar, but whereas the fantasy polder needs an active agent to uphold its integrity, usually in the form of a magical being like Tom Bombadil or Lady Galadriel, the post-apocalyptic haven lies dormant, waiting for its visitors.

Selection of Primary Texts and Note on Previous Research

To find answers to my research question, I look to post-apocalyptic literary texts in English that contain at least one haven. There are, however, many hundreds if not thousands of post-apocalyptic texts, and even if not all of them contain havens, the amount of available empirical data facing the literary researcher is both daunting and discouraging. Indeed, no matter how many texts I include in my study, there will be many others that I have not mentioned and works that I have not read or am not even aware of. Post-apocalyptic fiction is very much a vibrant and prolific genre with many new texts added each year, making it a Sisyphean task to keep up,[12] even more so since I include any fictional and narrative work of art that portrays the aftermath of large-scale destruction of society. As a consequence of this choice, novels, films, TV-series, graphic novels, and computer games are included in my selection of primary texts.

The primary texts used in this study, then, are by necessity only a small subsample of the possible texts available. My contention is, however, that the selection is a fair representation of the typical uses of the post-apocalyptic haven. I have found encouraging support for this

[11] See Stefan Ekman's *Writing Worlds, Reading Landscapes* (2010) or Ekman's *Here Be Dragons* (2013) for a detailed discussion of the term.

[12] See Jerry Määttä's article "Keeping Count of the End of the World" (2015) for statistical quantification of the genre's historical fluctuations.

methodological choice in the scholarship of researchers who have had to deal with similar difficulties, such as Stephen Greenblatt, who in his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980), encounters a similar problem. In trying to formulate how identity formation in the English Renaissance developed, he realizes that there is seemingly no end to the available texts that could be used to exemplify his analytical points. Greenblatt's path out of the conundrum is to "seize upon a handful of arresting figures who seem to contain within themselves much of what we need, who both reward intense, individual attention and promise access to larger cultural patterns" (*Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 6). A corresponding approach to a successful delimitation of a literary study can be found in M. M. Bakhtin's "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel." In his survey of ancient biographical and autobiographical texts, he comes to the same realization as Greenblatt's: the number of available texts is not possible to cover within the confines of his study. Bakhtin chooses to pick the texts he considers are the best exemplifications of the points he wants to make: "in our survey we will not pretend to any completeness of the data, nor to an exhaustive analysis of it. We will select only those details that bear a direct relationship to our subject of inquiry" (130). Following Greenblatt and Bakhtin, the three main chapters of this study make use of a selection of texts that I consider best illustrate and support the claims made, and I am confident that the selected primary texts paint a reasonably accurate picture of how the genre makes use of the feature of the haven. However, as the genre develops, changes and evolves, the use of the haven as a generic feature will and must change with it, together with any conclusions made in this study.

The primary texts used in the following chapters are all English and originate in a Western context. Most are North American, but there are several texts from Britain and Australia. Taking inspiration from E. M. Forster, this study considers 'English' "as written in English, not as published south of the Tweed, or east of the Atlantic, or North of the equator: we need not attend to geographical accidents, they can be left to politicians" (25). Post-apocalyptic texts produced in English, I argue, share more similarities than differences as a result of their geographical origin. Culture-specific sensibilities do of course inform the texts produced, but the careful study of the subtle variations in the use of

motifs and themes in narratives produced in various English-speaking locations will have to be left to another study.

The different theoretical approaches used in the three main chapters would make a summary of previous research here unwieldy and not very productive. Discussions of previous and current research in each area are, therefore, left to the three main chapters respectively.

Chapter Outline

The research questions of this study are addressed in three main chapters. The chapters follow the same general outline: The theoretical frameworks and previous research are presented, discussed, and the functions of the haven are exemplified through several short analyses of primary texts of post-apocalyptic fiction. Each chapter also ends with a longer case study, which provides a broader theoretical base to illustrate the use of the haven trope as well as a deeper and more nuanced analysis of a primary text.

The first chapter—"The Haven and the Pastoral"— centers on the paradisiacal qualities with which many post-apocalyptic havens are charged. By looking at the history of the idyllic garden, I trace the cultural history of paradise mythology back to the Garden of Eden, show how millennia-old pastoral imaginings inform the haven found in post-apocalyptic fiction, and discuss how ecocritical sensibilities often are explored when post-apocalyptic fiction problematizes and questions the longevity of existence in a green paradise. The primary texts that exemplify the use of the pastoral mode in post-apocalyptic fiction include George R. Stewart's novel *Earth Abides* (1949), Robert C. O'Brien's novel *Z for Zachariah* (1974), and director Kevin Reynolds's film *Waterworld* (1995). The chapter concludes with a case study of Peter Heller's novel *The Dog Stars* (2012), which provides an example of a complex representation of a post-apocalyptic pastoral haven that supports many of the claims made in the chapter.

In the second chapter—"The Haven and (Im)Mobility"—I focus on the placement within the story worlds of havens and how the characters move between them. The tension in post-apocalyptic fiction between racing through often hostile wastelands and stationary dwelling in safe

places of rest is explored. How the haven can be found at the center of this tension is also analyzed; it is in the security offered by havens that rest can be found and the incessant movement can be halted, at least temporarily. The chapter thus highlights how the haven trope is central to questions of place and space asked by the post-apocalyptic genre. Movement is therefore a central theme in the primary texts used to discuss (im)mobility in post-apocalyptic fiction. In Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* (2007), the characters find much-needed rest from their dangerous travels in a subterranean bunker, and in the computer game *The Flame in the Flood* (2016) by production company The Molasses Flood, a young girl goes on a start-and-stop journey down a swift river towards the promise of a final stop in the haven of 'The Kingdom.' In the longer case study of director Joseph Kosinski's film *Oblivion* (2013), the protagonist shifts between racing through the post-apocalyptic wasteland in different vehicles and resting in a hidden valley.

The third chapter—"The Haven and Its Narrative Function"—also deals with placement. But instead of the geographical placement of the haven within the story world, I here concentrate on where in the narrative it is placed and how it informs the meaning-making potential of plot-driven fiction. In particular, by looking at how the narrative moves from and towards havens, I direct attention to how post-apocalyptic narratives ask existential questions dealing with temporal infinity, life, and death. To support the exploration of the narrative function of the haven, I look at John Christopher's novel *The Death of Grass* (1956), in which the characters travel towards the hoped-for safety of a secluded valley placed at the narrative end of the story. I also discuss director George Miller's film *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015), where the characters go on a removal-and-return journey to the same place, ending up where they started. A similar but more complex narrative is presented in the case study of Jeff Lemire's graphic novel *Sweet Tooth* (2009–2013), which concludes the chapter.

The study ends with a few final remarks that summarize and synthesize the main findings of the analysis chapters.

Chapter One:

The Haven and the Pastoral

> We must seek some natural Paradise, some garden of the earth, where our simple wants may be easily supplied.
>
> — Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*

> The expulsion from Eden bears a striking resemblance to the Agricultural Revolution.
>
> — Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus*

> A life is like a garden. Perfect moments can be had, but not preserved, except in memory. LLAP.
>
> — Leonard Nimoy, his last post on Twitter

It is difficult to overestimate the impact pastoral thinking has had on literary history and the cultural imagination of Western civilization. The pastoral is, American ecocritic Lawrence Buell writes in *The Environmental Imaginary* (1995), "a species of cultural equipment that western thought has for more than two millennia been unable to do without" (32). Greg Garrard expresses the status of pastoralism similarly when stating that "no other trope is so deeply entrenched in Western culture" (37). The subtle complexity of the pastoral mode, the tension it generates between real place and fictional artifice, its potential to explore the human/nature divide, and its deep roots in the collective cultural imagination have made the pastoral an enduring mode of artistic expression. 'Pastoral' is used here as a flexible term containing all the many different literary representations of idyllic rurality, Edenic places, or beautiful wildernesses, ranging from the classical dreams of Arcadia via the cottage idylls of eighteenth-century British novels to the green island in the post-apocalyptic film

Waterworld (1995). I thereby align my position on pastoral imaginings with that of Buell, who understands it "in an elastic sense" as "all literature that celebrates an ethos of rurality or nature or wilderness over against an ethos of metropolitanism" (L. Buell 439). Such celebrations can be found in most post-apocalyptic fiction, as one of the genre's more central features is the investigation of humanity's relationship with nonhuman nature. In particular, I suggest that the pastoral haven in post-apocalyptic fiction in some cases represents and reproduces a vision of nature as a reliable and stable entity, which despite anthropogenic abuse always provides humanity with a livable habitat. In spite of environmental disasters, hidden from view in a valley somewhere the natural world is doing just fine, the myth seems to say.[1] In contrast, other post-apocalyptic narratives make use of the pastoral haven to question and problematize this myth of the hidden and resilient idyll, suggesting that even paradise is threatened with extinction.[2]

The aim of this chapter is to explore the pastoral qualities of havens in works of post-apocalyptic fiction. Specifically, I examine how the pastoral setting of many havens seems to invite the exploration of disputed dichotomies, such as natural and nonnatural, human and nonhuman, nature and culture, city and countryside. I do this both by charting the history of the pastoral idyll in Western culture and the various literary forms it has taken, as well as by outlining the development of scholarly theories on the pastoral. The chapter also points to and discusses the pastoral haven's often uncertain ontological status; it seems to hover on the very precipice of existence when it stubbornly retreats into the distance, is lost in time, or hides between the book covers of literary fiction. This ontological status of havens is mostly treated in the case study that ends the chapter.

[1] Such images of nature can also be found in many nature documentaries produced for television. A television series like *Planet Earth* by BBC provides the viewer with hours of footage showing a thriving natural world mostly devoid of humans.

[2] I am in this text only concerned with the literary pastoral: the pastoral found in literature, film, and other narrative works of art. The pastoral is not, however, confined to the world of narrative fiction. We also find the mode put to use in magazines, advertisements, TV shows, and other non-literary expressions, where dreams of idyllic gardens and retreats to the countryside help to sell products and lifestyles.

A Trace of Green

The struggle for uncertain survival in a hostile landscape fills the frames and pages of much post-apocalyptic fiction. But humans are not the only ones to struggle in the wasteland. In the wrecked ecosystems following the apocalypse, nonhuman life fights to adapt to changes brought on by nuclear war, global warming, or simply the disappearance of the world's top predator. The extent to which nonhuman life is affected by the catastrophe differs greatly, but most post-apocalyptic narratives have in common the very active presence of nonhuman nature in its various forms. Perhaps the most famous example of a post-apocalyptic narrative in which nonhuman nature is completely devastated and all ecosystems have collapsed is Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2007). In McCarthy's novel, the earth is no longer capable of sustaining life—nature is dead. Seeds will no longer germinate, and as a consequence the basic condition for all life no longer exists. When grazing animals die out, the omnivores and carnivores are left to eat each other until no one remains. Based on a premise quite atypical for a genre that often dreams of new beginnings, *The Road* leaves very little hope for the long-term survival of either human or nonhuman life. The striking lack of a living nonhuman nature, however, only helps to emphasize its importance to human existence: humanity cannot exist without it. This silent and glaring absence of biotic nature provides the novel with much of its thematic impact.[3] As a parallel to the dead landscapes of *The Road*, the haven the protagonists find half-way through the narrative only provides sustenance in the form of canned and freeze-dried foods. Although the haven provides the nourishment and refuge the protagonists so desperately need, the tomb-like haven is just as dead as the surrounding wastelands.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, we find works of post-apocalyptic fiction describing ecosystems that barely notice the passing of humanity. In George R. Stewart's landmark novel *Earth Abides*

[3] An apocalyptic narrative that explores the utter destruction of not only humanity but the entire biotic and abiotic world is Danish director Lars von Trier's film *Melancholia* (2011). As the Earth is completely destroyed in a collision with another planet, there is no post-apocalyptic setting in which to investigate the relationship between humanity and the natural world.

(1949), even the title indicates a natural world that patiently and indifferently adapts to an existence without humans. In the novel, a measles-like plague only affecting humans spreads globally and reduces humanity to near extinction. All the while, the nonhuman natural world carries on unabated, and descriptions abound in the novel of how nature creeps back into the cities. A very similar turn of events is narrated in Jack London's novel *The Scarlet Plague* (1912), in which humanity succumbs to a highly contagious infection, and, as it does in Stewart's novel, the natural world inexorably re-appropriates land previously claimed by civilization without otherwise being greatly affected by the disappearance of humanity.

Much post-apocalyptic fiction falls between these two extremes, by describing a natural world negatively affected but not obliterated by the catastrophic event. Just like the remnants of humanity fight for survival, nonhuman nature is forced to adapt to the changed circumstances in a world that is quickly and harshly thrown off balance. This struggle of nonhuman nature goes back at least to Richard Jefferies's novel *After London; Or, Wild England* (1885), which describes how Britain reverts back to nature after some unknown and unnamed disaster. The first part of the novel describes in detail how poorly domesticated flora and fauna respond to the absence of farmers and caretakers. The narrator describes how corn fields are slowly but surely invaded by trees and undergrowth, how escaped cattle cannot survive without the farmer to care for them, how domesticated dogs revert to hunting in packs, and how the roads and paths disappear under the grass: "It became green everywhere in the first spring, after London ended, so that all the country looked alike" (Jefferies Pt I, Ch I). And the city of London "was after all only brick, and when the ivy grew over and trees and shrubs sprung up, and, lastly, the water underneath burst in, this huge metropolis was soon overthrown" (Jefferies Pt I, Ch V). In Jefferies's novel, London does not become a cityscape in ruins where survivors can wonder at the architecture of the pre-apocalypse, a generic trope established as early as Shelley's *The Last Man*. Instead, it becomes a putrid marshland of toxic gases impossible to inhabit or successfully explore: "For all the rottenness of a thousand years and of many hundred millions of human beings is there festering under the stagnant water, which has sunk down into and penetrated the earth,

and floated up to the surface the contents of the buried cloacæ" (Jefferies Pt I, Ch V). It is clear in Jefferies novel that, despite its initial struggles, nonhuman nature survives, while the buildings and streets of London fall into ruin and decay.

Another example of a work of post-apocalyptic fiction in which nonhuman nature fights for survival is the animated Disney-Pixar film *WALL·E* (2008). In the film, humans have evacuated a wrecked Earth completely inundated with the garbage of consumer society, and only a few hardy scraps of the natural world endure. Humanity has managed to survive in enormous cruise-like spaceships in which the explicit critique of capitalist society is further emphasized by the passengers' continued consumer behavior.[4] Back on Earth, the protagonist of the film—the endearingly portrayed robot WALL·E—is left seemingly alone with the Sisyphean task of cleaning up the trash. Signs of nonhuman nature are scarce but nonetheless present in the urban world that WALL·E occupies. The robot has a cockroach as his friend and companion—a choice of companion pregnant with meaning as the cockroach is the classic example of a hardy nonhuman life form that can survive enormous environmental abuse. Together, the cockroach and WALL·E also find a small, green plant, which functions as the main MacGuffin-like plot device in the film and has managed to germinate inside a refrigerator. Even though the post-apocalyptic world of *WALL·E* is seemingly an uninhabitable mess, nonhuman nature struggles and adapts to new and unaccustomed circumstances, and the film describes how humans and robots search for evidence of how non-human nature recovers its ability to sustain human life in a post-apocalyptic world.

A natural world adjusting itself to an existence without the global agency of humanity provides the physical setting for most of what we call post-apocalyptic fiction. Even if part of the destruction usually originates from human activities, for example in the form of a nuclear war, the slow eradication of human material achievements is usually brought about by the encroaching greenery or abiotic processes like rising sea levels, forest fires, and earthquakes. Forests and animals move into the ruins of cities, plants break the tarmac of airfields, and

[4] Even though it is not directly addressed in the film, it is quite obvious that only people of considerable wealth have managed to escape the dying earth.

rust eats away the metal of stranded cars. Whether cows graze in the streets of an "overgrown metropolis [in] the great heart of mighty Britain" as in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (188), or train engines are "decomposing for all eternity" as in *The Road* (McCarthy 192), humans are clearly not the only agents in the worlds of post-apocalyptic fiction.

Consequently, it is difficult to maintain clear boundaries between nature and culture in much post-apocalyptic fiction, between an ostensibly chaotic wilderness and the supposed order of human existence. Actually, the post-apocalyptic landscapes seem to facilitate the exploration—and questioning—of binaries such as the one between nature and culture, which has been absolutely central to Western thought for millennia. Post-apocalyptic fiction foregrounds profoundly ecocritical questions of humanity's relationship with the natural world, and the genre often invites—and sometimes even imposes—an ecocritical perspective. In narratives that so clearly and so often appear to question our construction of wilderness, of the city, and of the nature/culture dichotomy, it is therefore significant that the haven so frequently takes the form of a *pastoral* hideout. The haven in post-apocalyptic fiction is usually lush, green and thriving, a place where it is seemingly possible for the characters to settle down for the supposedly good life of self-sustained farming. In remote valleys, atop desert mesas, or in uncharted oceans, a trace of green can often be found in the depopulated and often dangerous post-apocalyptic landscape.

The Pastoral Mode in *Earth Abides*

Considered one of the most central and influential texts of the genre, Stewart's *Earth Abides* (1949) has helped to shape many of the tropes of the genre, like the portrayal of people's dependence on cars, dangerous treks across natural landscapes and through ruined cities where nature is taking over, as well as the reliance on finite pre-catastrophe commodities for short-term survival. But the many pastoral impulses of *Earth Abides* do not manifest themselves in a post-apocalyptic haven. It actually seems as if the post-apocalyptic haven as a generic trope has only materialized in the current form

discussed here in the latter half of the twentieth century. A much more thorough survey of many more post-apocalyptic texts would, however, have to be done to support such a claim. While *Earth Abides* does not feature a post-apocalyptic haven, Stewart's novel is nevertheless a good example of how the genre draws on pastoral imaginings to investigate human agency in relation to nonhuman nature. The novel is included here for its considerable influence on the genre and as an example of the rich use of the pastoral mode in post-apocalyptic fiction.

Stewart presents a story focalized through the young geographer Isherwood Williams, referred to only as Ish, who survives a plague-like pandemic that kills almost everyone else. The story is set in America in the 1940s, and in what could perhaps be considered a homage to Washington Irving's "Rip van Winkle," Ish is alone in the mountains when bitten by a rattlesnake, which ostensibly saves him from the pandemic but throws him into feverish dreams. Like Rip van Winkle, Ish returns to a completely different America when he wakes up and descends from the mountain. Ish goes on a road trip across the continent and back, through empty cities and open plains where cattle now graze without their human handlers and cultivated crops fight a losing battle against hardier plants. With its many descriptions of beautiful rural landscapes, cities being overgrown by plants, and domesticated animals returning to feral states, the novel activates a distinctly American version of pastoral, where the natural beauty of an uncultivated wilderness takes the place of the European rural idyll as the main counterforce to the city: "Great differences of history and topography ensure differing meanings of pastoral on either side of the Atlantic," writes Greg Garrard (54). Terry Gifford concurs: "American Arcadias are usually set, not in a garden, but in a wilderness" (*Pastoral* 32). Later in the novel, Ish finds a few other survivors with whom he establishes a small community, called "the tribe," in the San Francisco bay area (a recurring setting in American post-apocalyptic fiction).[5] The novel is divided into three parts further divided by inter-chapters called "The Quick Years." The novel thus spans Ish's life from when the plague hits to when he dies as an old man many years later in the final chapter "The Last American."

[5] Examples include Jack London's novel *The Scarlet Plague* (1912), Justin Cronin's novel *The Passage* (2010), and the Hugh Brothers' film *The Book of Eli* (2010).

With most of humanity gone, nonhuman nature is settling into new and tenuous equilibriums. Mountain lions, ants, and plants, as well as forest fires, earthquakes, and droughts all assert their presence and agency. This focus on events in the natural world imbues the novel with what the ecocritics call a "sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given" (L. Buell 7). Nonhuman nature is a central concern in *Earth Abides* and functions much like a character in itself. As noted, the disappearance of large-scale human agency facilitates such a foregrounding of both biotic and abiotic processes. The protagonist is mostly relegated to the function of observer and commentator in relation to these changes. Furthermore, the small tribe of survivors live in awe of the natural world, realizing that "nature had become so overwhelming that any attempt at its control was merely outside anyone's circle of thought" and the tribe now lives as "part of it, not as its dominating power" (Stewart 262).

When Ish and a small group of men encounter a dangerous mountain lion, they choose not to attack the animal with their bows but instead seek an alternative route around the lion, because "men had lost that old dominance and the arrogance with which they had once viewed the animals, and were now acting more or less as equals with them" (Stewart 308). The San Francisco bay area in California, and especially its flora and fauna, thus becomes one of the most important characters in the narrative, acting as a living and agential presence that shapes the future of the tribe just as much as, if not more than, its human survivors. On several occasions throughout the story, the question whether agency resides with the nonhuman natural world or with humans troubles the protagonist. Ish asks himself: Who, or what, shapes the events of history? Does civilization purposefully work in a direction that humanity has chosen for itself, or do material circumstances and random events decide the fate of humanity? "How much," he wonders, "did man strike outward to affect all his surroundings and how much did the surroundings press in upon him?" (Stewart 267). Consequently, the novel articulates a central tenet of ecocriticism: humanity is deeply involved in, dependent on, and part of the nonhuman environment. Stewart's novel thus succeeds in raising many of the concerns of the environmental movement, a decade and a half

before the American environmentalist movement kickstarted with the 1962 publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.

Yet, despite being a novel that aligns well with many later concerns of ecocriticism, *Earth Abides* was written too early to show an awareness of how industrialization and other human activities have irrevocably affected the geography of the earth as well as the biology of all living things. For example, Ish uses DDT profusely to combat invading ants and defend his garden from snails.[6] *Earth Abides* shows no recognition of humanity's impact on almost all ecological processes, which were well underway but poorly understood in the 1940s, and no realization that humanity is destroying habitats and unsettling ecological systems. This lack of awareness must of course be seen in the light of the historical situation of the author.

Exiting Paradise in *Z for Zachariah*

In contrast to *Earth Abides,* Robert C. O'Brien's American post-apocalyptic novel *Z for Zachariah* (1974) offers a very straightforward example of a pastoral haven.[7] Both novels draw heavily on the pastoral mode, but whereas this mode is never clearly manifested as a haven in Stewart's novel, the entire story of *Z for Zachariah* takes place in a pastoral valley. Instead of providing only temporary rest for the characters or acting as the narrative goal towards which to travel—the narrative functions of the haven dealt with in the other two chapters of this study—the pastoral haven of O'Brien's novel constitutes the main setting in which the narrative unfolds. The protagonist Ann Burden, a precocious 16-year-old girl, is left as the sole surviving occupant of a family farm tucked away in a valley mysteriously spared in a nuclear war that has devastated the rest of America. Among the trees, ponds, and meadows of the valley, Ann makes a living off the land, learning how to farm and care for the animals.

[6] DDT (or dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane) was discovered in 1939 by Swiss chemist Paul Hermann Müller, who nine years later received the Nobel Prize for his discovery. Carson's book *Silent Spring* was crucial in describing the environmental impact of DDT, which as a result was banned from use in agriculture in the US in 1972 (Wikipedia).

[7] The novel was adapted to film in 2015.

A pastoral haven such as this functions very much like the well-documented literary trope of the *locus amoenus*, a sequestered and serene Arcadian or even Edenic idyll where the usual burdens of living are alleviated. Ernst Robert Curtius defines the *locus amoenus* as "a beautiful, natural site. Its minimum ingredients comprise a tree (or several trees), a meadow, and a spring or brook. Birdsong and flowers may be added" (195). However, unlike the *locus amoenus* of the classic era or in Romantic poetry, the post-apocalyptic pastoral haven is less stable and not as assuredly harmonious. This discord relates to one of the main arguments of this chapter: the ambiguous and uncertain ontological nature of the pastoral haven, which is explored in the case study of *The Dog Stars*.

In *Z for Zachariah*, a man wearing a protective suit shielding him from the radioactivity of the wastelands enters the valley and disrupts Ann's life. Initially, the young woman and the middle-aged man, the only characters in the novel, seem to get along well. But following the man's attempt to impose himself upon her, the novel ends with Ann walking into the wasteland, searching for another place with the capacity to sustain human life, a new pastoral haven. In the very last sentences of the novel, the hope of finding a new haven is restored as the protagonist heads into the wasteland: "As I walk, I search the horizon for a trace of green. I am hopeful" (O'Brien 249). And so, her quest for a paradise continues. In the third chapter of this study, the lure of such an endpoint haven, the search for a final place of rest, is discussed in more detail.

The hope expressed by the female protagonist, that somewhere beyond the horizon another pastoral hideout will manifest itself, is—from an ecocritical perspective—an example of a problematic view of nonhuman nature. In O'Brien's novel, the ravages of a nuclear war have transformed the American continent into an uninhabitable wasteland. Yet, despite this environmental abuse brought on nature by human activities, the novel suggests that pockets of resilient nature that can sustain human life can be still be found.

The Ideal Garden

The idea of the pastoral idyll appears in many works of post-apocalyptic fiction to paradoxically survive the reconfiguration of other categories usually needed to define it. Traditionally, the pastoral has been seen as an escape from the complexities of urbanity, what Terry Gifford calls a "discourse of retreat" from the hardships of life in the city (46). From Virgil and onwards, the pastoral has mainly been an arena in which to explore alternatives to or to comment on life in the city. In the two examples of post-apocalyptic fiction just discussed, *Earth Abides* clearly finds some of its narrative energy in this traditional tension between urbanity and rurality, whereas the pastoral idyll of *Z for Zachariah* functions as a contrast to the radioactive wasteland surrounding the valley rather than the city.

Even though much pastoral writing reverts to a nostalgic dream of a Golden Age when food was in abundance and life was lived in close harmony with the cyclical time of seasonal changes, scholars like Leo Marx and Gifford agree that the pastoral mode is imaginative and complex, that "however much [pastoralism] sings of naïve innocence, the mode is ineradicably sophisticated and urban" (Greenblatt and Logan 554). Yet, despite the understanding that the pastoral has much more to offer than simple and nostalgic escapism, scholarly work on the pastoral has mainly centered on its exploration of the city/countryside dichotomy, which has historically been so central to the formation of pastoral thinking. With the pastoral mode being put to such recurrent use in post-apocalyptic fiction, there is reason to expand the understanding of the pastoral mode and consider the utopian promises offered by an idyllic garden that exists in worlds *without* urban life, like the example of O'Brien's *Z for Zachariah*, where both humans as well as nonhuman nature struggle for survival.

The idyllic garden of cornucopian plenty and peaceful rest behind protective walls is one of the strongest and most long-lived myths to come out of the ancient world—a place where the trees are laden with low-hanging fruit ripe for the picking and the sheltered groves protect from the intrusions of the outside world. As in many other languages, the word in English for such a bountiful and ideal place is paradise. It comes from the Greek *paradeisos*, 'enclosed park,' similar to the

Avestan word *pairidaēza*, 'enclosure.'[8] Paradise, I would suggest, is the original, pre-More utopia, the place where we can rest and our ailments be remedied.[9] The biblical Eden, the Promised Land, Cockaigne, Arcadia, and Avalon are only some examples of the names this paradisiacal place has been given in Western mythology. To exemplify, the twelfth-century bishop Geoffrey of Monmouth writes in *The Life of Merlin* (1925, translation from Latin by John Jay Parry) that Avalon, the mythical resting place of King Arthur, is called the island of apples, a name it gets

> from the fact that it produces all things of itself; the fields there have no need of the ploughs of the farmers and all cultivation is lacking except what nature provides. Of its own accord it produces grain and grapes, and apple trees grow in its woods from the close-clipped grass. (325–326)

Such descriptions of a benign nature that provides food requiring very little work are common to most depictions of ideal gardens, and they form the background imagery of much pastoral writing. Paradise is construed as a place of comfortable rest and a habitat perfectly suited to the needs of its human occupants. It is a tended and cultivated, domesticated and controlled garden. And when such pastoral qualities are attached to the restful place of the post-apocalyptic haven, it activates the dream of paradise that has been such a rich source for utopian thinking about far-away places or long-forgotten eras. At the same time, the pastoral haven of the post-apocalypse not only reproduces a familiar mythology but also makes possible a renegotiation of the ancient myth of the ideal garden, adapting it to contemporary conditions.

The garden, the nucleus of the myth of the pastoral idyll, is by definition a clearly demarcated and enclosed space often aligned with

[8] Avestan is an old East-Iranian language of Indo-European origin that is closely related to Vedic Sanskrit.

[9] According to Allan Gunnarsson, "utopia is the building of Paradise on a grand scale—a castle in the air in an unknown future based on the Golden Age tradition" whereas "the garden can be seen as a concrete, paradisiacal construction on a smaller scale with its roots in the garden of Eden" (126; my translation from Swedish); Swedish original: "Om utopin är ett paradisbygge i stor skala – ett luftslott i en okänd framtid, byggt på guldålderstraditionen – så kan trädgården ses som ett konkret paradisiskt byggnadsverk i mindre skala med rötter i Edens lustgård" (Gunnarsson 126).

human architecture. The idea of the garden, a place constructed to provide a pleasurable habitat for its human occupants, is in the very earliest historical records intimately associated with the city rather than with rural landscapes. It cannot be imagined without buildings and infrastructure, cottages and walls. Historian and expert on ancient Babylon Stephanie Dalley explains that the ancient Mesopotamian gardens were a uniquely urban phenomenon. Only behind the safety of city walls was it possible to construct a pleasure garden that was not immediately ravaged by either wild or domesticated animals. Since the city walls did not provide shelter from the din of the city, the first pleasure gardens were constructed behind a further set of walls, those of the royal palaces (Dalley 2). Hidden behind multiple sets of walls and made possible only through great feats of engineering, for example the diversion of water for the plants, the Mesopotamian garden was an enclosed space at the very center of the city: the walls of paradise were also the walls of the city.[10]

Two of the most famous paradisiacal gardens of the ancient world—the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the seven wonders of antiquity, and the biblical Garden of Eden—are both thought to have been located somewhere in or near the region of the two rivers Euphrat and Tigris in Mesopotamia. Dalley identifies the palace garden of Sennacherib (Assyrian king c. 700 BCE) at the city of Nineveh as the historical Hanging Gardens of Babylon, which in turn might have been inspired by the then already old myth of the Garden of Eden. She uses a convincing array of architectural, archaeological, and textual evidence for her placement of the Hanging Gardens in Nineveh instead of in the actual city of Babylon (Nineveh is in several sources referred to as 'old Babylon').[11]

The location of the Garden of Eden, however, still eludes those researchers who assign it more than mythological status.[12] But the

[10] The history of the paradisiacal garden as a place of rest for Mesopotamian aristocracy could possibly provide a clue to the shiftless feature with which pastoralism has been charged: the job of laboriously tending the gardens were left to a workforce whose stories have only seldom found their way into the history books.

[11] I here use Stephanie Dalley's 1993 article from *Garden History*: "Ancient Mesopotamian Gardens and the Identification of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon Resolved." In 2013 she published a comprehensive account of her research in *The Mystery of the Hanging Garden of Babylon*.

[12] In contrast to the typical Mesopotamian garden, the Garden of Eden is not associated with the city.

scarce evidence that does exist points to somewhere either on the border between modern Iran and Iraq or in modern Syria. The myth of the Garden of Eden may have, in turn, come from an old Sumerian tale (3500–2000 BCE) of the paradisiacal garden of Dilmun, which, psychologist and religious historian Edward Conklin points out, "is referred to as a land that is pure, clean, bright, and is a place where there is no illness or no age" (10).[13] The difficulties to identify the location of the Garden of Eden is, however, in keeping with its mythical and religious status both as the actual Paradise on Earth and as a heavenly, supernatural place of rest. One scholar of Jewish history even suggests we read the passages in Genesis that provide information regarding the location of the Garden of Eden as "a piece of subtle and superb irony," because "all you have to do in order to reach Paradise is to find the place where four rivers originate from, of which two . . . have no common source, the third . . . is a little brook across the nearby valley, and the fourth does not exist"; the obvious conclusion to draw from such a description is that "Eden is nowhere" (Yehuda Radday 30–31).[14] The difficulties in pinpointing the exact geographical location of the ideal garden as well as when it existed are features that have carried over to the post-apocalyptic pastoral haven: the haven of post-apocalyptic fiction is just like the garden of Eden difficult to locate and enter.

But even if Eden is nowhere to be found, the myth is everywhere. The dream of a distant paradise or a Golden Age of yesteryear has haunted humanity for as long as we have had textual records, and it has travelled through the millennia, across cultures, and is still a very much present and potent cultural construction. It is therefore not very surprising that it also appears in a genre occupied with themes of destruction and rebirth, death and survival. At the center of both the myth of paradise and the post-apocalyptic haven we find hopes for a better future and a longing for an affluent past manifested in a hidden place somewhere and sometime. "There are many passages in ancient literature," classical scholar H. C. Baldry points out,

[13] The ancient civilization of Dilmun had its center on the Bahrain island in the Persian Gulf.
[14] Cf. the homophones 'utopia' and 'eutopia' and Sir Thomas More's well-known play with words: 'Utopia' is Greek for 'no-place' and 'eutopia' is Greek for 'good place.'

> which depict an imaginary existence different from the hardships of real life—an existence blessed with Nature's bounty, untroubled by strife or want. Naturally this happy state is always placed somewhere or sometime outside normal human experience, whether 'off the map' in some remote corner of the world, or in Elysium after death, or in the dim future or the distant past. (83)

Such ideas of paradisiacal places of rest have taken many shapes and forms depending on time and place. Sometimes it is a garden enclosed behind walls or some other form of boundary, quite often it is an island surrounded by the sea, but "everywhere," Charles Sanford points out, "in ancient Mesopotamia and Syria, in India and Greece, among early Christians as well as among North American Indians recur the myths of a lost paradise" (5). A list of mythical paradises or of Golden Ages in various cultures during the last five thousand years would be extensive indeed, but a common feature that must be mentioned is that they provide their inhabitants with the necessary sustenance, usually in the form of food produced with a minimum of effort, in the pleasurable surroundings of the cultivated garden.[15] These ancient mythologies of ideal gardens have transformed and fed into versions of the literary pastoral that later eras have produced.

The questions why myths of paradise can be found in so many cultures and why the literary pastoral has survived over such long periods of time are at least partially answered in biocultural theory—a cross-disciplinary approach that emerged in the late twentieth century and gained traction in the scholarly community during the first two decades of the twenty-first century. "From a biocultural perspective," Joseph Carroll et al. explain, "cultural processes are rooted in the evolved and adapted structures that govern the human life cycle. Culture is driven by biologically grounded impulses, and those impulses, in turn, are constrained, organized, and developed by culture" (1). According to biocultural theory, then, there is a causal link between the evolved behavior of humans and the cultural expressions it takes: "the forms of imaginative culture reflect our evolved motives and emotions and give evidence of our evolved cognitive mechanisms"

[15] See for example Harry Levin's *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance* (1969) and Krishan Kumar's *Utopian and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (1987) for more extensive analyses.

(Carroll et al. 2). In "Imagining the End of the World," Mathias Clasen analyzes the post-apocalyptic genre from such a biocultural perspective. He argues that the genre "taps into the deepest springs of ancestral emotions," and suggests that it "found in modernity a particularly hospitable cultural ecology and a particularly receptive audience" (Clasen 66). Clasen looks at the central themes of destruction, survival, and death as a cultural response to the "evolved psychological mechanisms for coping with disaster, especially our tendency toward worst-case hypothetical thinking." He also comments on how the imaginations of the consumers of post-apocalyptic fiction "are stirred by images of lethal struggle and precarious combat" (66). To Clasen's analysis could be added that through the inclusion of a haven the post-apocalyptic genre also taps into the equally important impulse to look for places of rest and safety. The most basic of human biological impulses—to belong to a social group, to find sustenance, and to procreate—could from this perspective thus be seen to find a cultural expression in the perennial appeal of pastoral thinking, and in post-apocalyptic fiction more specifically they can find expression in the form of havens.

Sentimental and Complex Pastoral Havens

The eulogizing of the rural idyll found in literary pastorals has made it an easy target for critique. It is all too easy to relegate the mode to luddite dreams and regard it as sentimental writing ripe with naïve descriptions of the good life. According to Gifford, Roger Sales has formulated "the most comprehensive and succinct attack" on the literary pastoral "as essentially escapist in seeking refuge in the country and often also in the past" (7). Leo Marx, in his influential book *The Machine in the Garden*, identifies two aspects of the pastoral mode, of which one is "popular and sentimental, the other imaginative and complex" (5). In the former, which seems close to the literary pastoral as defined by Sales, we find writing describing the felicities of green places, of longing for a bygone time or a different place when and where life is, or was, supposedly easy and secure. Such a literary pastoral does not problematize a city/countryside dichotomy or question categories

like nature or wilderness. This sentimental kind of pastoral is the uncritical "yearning for a simpler, more harmonious style of life" (Marx 6). The other kind, "the imaginative and complex" pastoral, instead draws on the contrast between a green countryside and an industrialized city to question and investigate the binary (Marx 5). This complex pastoral explores the troublesome relationships between society and nature, between humans and their green as well as industrialized environs. Marx's identification of two configurations of pastoral thinking—one naïve and sentimental, the other imaginative and complex—could perhaps be seen as one of the first critical attempts to express more nuanced dimensions of the pastoral that had previously gone unnoticed. Marx showed that a nostalgic escape to the idyll from the metropolis is not the only possible use of the pastoral mode. There is also the complex negotiation and collapse of the city/countryside binary, which has the "power to enrich and clarify our experience" (Marx 11). Yet, despite his perceptive and ground-breaking analysis of the pastoral, Marx's framework still voices an urban-centric understanding of pastoral thinking, and the green concerns of ecocriticism are to a large extent absent in his work.

In the late 1990s, Gifford drew on Marx and others to distinguish between three kinds of pastoral thinking. Gifford's first kind of pastoral is the historical, literary form with roots in Greek and Roman poetry that deals with the country life of shepherds, which he calls the "classical pastoral" (*Pastoral* 27). Gifford's second kind is pastoral in content, which includes the expression of a romantic pastoral ideal without any attempt to approach it critically, a kind identical to Marx's sentimental pastoral mode. This second kind, Gifford states, describes any depiction of a rural idyll "with an explicit or implicit contrast to the urban" (*Pastoral* 2) but without any attempt to problematize the contrast. Gifford's third kind of pastoral is the critical, pejorative approach to pastoralism often called anti-pastoral or counter-pastoral, which draws attention to the superficial and false image of the countryside conveyed by the sentimental pastoral. The anti-pastoral mode challenges the idealized idyll and points to the hard work needed to raise livestock, till the land, and keep a well-pruned garden. If pastoral, at least historically, has predominantly meant a general critique of the city, the anti-pastoral is a critique of the pastoral ideal in

and of itself. As such, the anti-pastoral is similar to Marx's complex pastoral, but just as Marx's two versions of pastoral, Gifford's three kinds take the city as the main antithesis to the rural idyll.

An example of a sentimental pastoral haven in post-apocalyptic fiction can be found in the closing scene of one of the more recent film adaptions of Richard Matheson's 1954 novel *I Am Legend*. In the 2007 film, which differs greatly from Matheson's novel, New York scientist Robert Neville (Will Smith) survives a plague that has turned most people into nocturnal zombie-like vampires. After Robert finds a cure for the plague, he sacrifices himself so that a woman and a child he has befriended can escape and search for other survivors. The film ends with the woman and the child reaching a walled-in community, delivering the cure. In the middle of the enclosure there is a church surrounded by fields and pastures, green houses, and wind turbines, all portrayed in the warm, yellow light of a beautiful sunrise. This pastoral endpoint haven is sentimental in the sense that it displays many of the mainstays of an American family-centered and Christian version of a good life in ecological harmony with nature without any attempt to question or problematize these values and categories.[16]

When the pastoral haven appears in the primary texts presented throughout this study, it seems to function either as a place of comfort where a hope for resilient nature can be supported, as in *I Am Legend* (2007) or *Z for Zachariah*, or as a place that instead investigates and questions that very hope. These two uses of the haven correspond to some extent with Marx's division into sentimental and complex uses of the pastoral mode, albeit, in the case of *Z for Zachariah*, not in direct contrast to the city. And when the pastoral haven in post-apocalyptic fiction is presented as a small pocket of thriving nature, as a place where plants and animals manage to flourish in an otherwise desolate landscape, it can be criticized from an ecocritical perspective for portraying nature as overly resilient. Such sentimental portrayal of the pastoral haven seems to say that despite the environmental abuse inflicted on the biotic world through the anthropogenic agency of

[16] Even though the pastoral community in *I Am Legend* is here identified as an "endpoint haven," it does not function as the narrative engine of the typical endpoint haven, as discussed in chapter three. The woman and the child reach the haven in an epilogue to the main narrative.

humanity, there will always be paradisiacal pockets of nature where humans can survive.

The Island Paradise in *Waterworld*

The dry land so desperately searched for in director Kevin Reynold's film *Waterworld* (1995) is a good example of a more complex pastoral idyll that can "enrich and clarify our experience" and challenge the sentimental pastoral without a clear contrast with the city (Marx 11). In the film, a paradisiacal verdant island functions as an endpoint haven with clear pastoral qualities without shying away from a more complicated portrayal of the ideal garden, albeit couched in the insouciant atmosphere typical of the action films of the period. The characters live precariously on boats and atop floating atolls in a world completely submerged beneath the sea, and the setting thereby simultaneously activates the biblical story of the flood. Among the marine survivors, there exists a rumor of "Dryland," a place with freshwater where it is possible to walk on solid ground, and where soil—or "dirt" as it is called in the film—for growing food is abundant and free instead of a rare and expensive commodity. The map to Dryland is tattooed on the back of the young girl Enola (Tina Majorino), who therefore quickly becomes the main focus of the film. As discussed in the third chapter, the post-apocalyptic endpoint haven drives the entire narrative forward: in *Waterworld*, finding the haven is the main motivation of almost all characters except for the unnamed protagonist, called the Mariner (Kevin Costner). For unclear reasons, the Mariner has adapted to a world dominated by the sea, for example by developing gills that make it possible for him to breathe under water. However, soon after the setting has been established and the main characters have been introduced, the hunt for Enola begins in the hope of finding a better world than the dreary wasteland of the endless sea. The main characters eventually reach Dryland in a dirigible balloon, just when their stores of freshwater run out. The haven they eventually reach is a lush island with water gushing down green hills and trees providing shelter from the searing sun evoking Genesis (see figure 1):

"And God said: 'Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear'" (Gen 1:9, KJ21).

Figure 1. Dryland in *Waterworld* (Universal Pictures, 1995).

However, all is not well in paradise. In a wooden hut under the tropical trees, the skeletons of Enola's parents lie together in bed. Even though the island seems to offer everything the sea-dwelling survivors need, especially the rare freshwater and soil, something made Enola's parents send their child off on the sea while they lay down in repose.[17] As so often is the case with more complex retellings of the paradise myth, there is a serpent somewhere ready to disrupt the serenity of the ideal garden. Even in paradise, it seems, death is present: *Et in Arcadia ego*. Or in the words of ecocritic Frederick Turner: "The true artists of Eden have always built into it a sort of shiver, the possibility of a cloud passing over the sun and transforming the glowing landscape into a tragic or heroic mode" (51). The cloud passing over the pastoral haven in *Waterworld* is most clearly illustrated by the bones of the parents, but it is further emphasized by the Mariner's departure. In the final scenes of the film, he is restless and wants to return to the sea. The island is not for him. While the island is a paradise for the other characters, it does not offer him what he needs. As a posthuman mutant

[17] The film provides no clues as to the fate of the parents; it might be possible that a hidden agent living on the island sent Enola off and arranged the bodies of the parents in the hut.

with gills and webbed feet, the Mariner is more adapted to the post-apocalyptic and nomadic world of the seas.[18] The Mariner's exit from the haven in the final scene of the film, together with the camera panning upwards to show the vastness of the sea, serves to remind us that this is still very much a post-apocalyptic world.

Despite the more complex use of the haven trope in *Waterworld*, the film nonetheless exhibits some distinctly sentimental impulses.[19] The island of Dryland is yet another example from fiction of how nature seems able to continue thriving despite global ecological destruction. Despite the fact that the world is completely inundated with water—a world in ruin—there exists a tropical paradise that can successfully continue to sustain human life. Such sentimental uses of a pastoral haven could, then, be said to function in post-apocalyptic fiction as a pacifier blanket for the audience, if you will, a sliver of hope in the face of a global catastrophe that poses a very real threat to the long-term survival of humanity.

The post-apocalyptic pastoral haven provides a literary version of and response to dreams found in the collective imaginary of reposing in the tranquility of an ideal garden. Yet, for all their beauty and abundance, these pockets of paradise are not without flaws. Turner's "true artists of Eden" question the sentimental, escapist notion of reverting to the life of a simpler age. The exact locations of complex imaginings of paradisiacal places, regardless of whether they are the stuff of fact or fiction, are shrouded in mystery, and should a remote idyll eventually be reached, it comes more often than not with unforeseen shivers.

Leaving the City Behind

At the core of pastoral imaginings, critics have traditionally identified a tension between rural and urban. Virgil's flute-playing shepherd, the pastoral romances of renaissance Europe, the prevalence of meadows and idyllic gardens in the early English novels, the descriptions of

[18] See the second chapter for a longer discussion of the nomad figure in relation to havens.
[19] As always, there are fuzzy boundaries between different categories. The Dryland haven of *Waterworld* can be said to be both a sentimental use of the haven trope as well as a complex one.

sublime landscapes and rural idylls of the romantic poets, and the American transcendentalists' reaction to industrialization are but a few examples of the many literary uses of a pastoral mode to address the contemporary concerns of urbanized society. The literary pastoral has been seen as the artistic articulation of a longing for and examination of green places of abundance, but only away from and in contrast to the clamor of the city. The main focus when studying the pastoral has been the tension between the steady seasonal rhythm of the country and the erratic pace of busy city life, between tradition and progress, between the hearth of the cottage and the fires of industry. The "key" to unlocking and understanding pastoral thinking, Raymond Williams asserts, lies consequently in "the contrast of the country with the city" (46). In a curious irony, the walled-in paradisiacal gardens of Mesopotamia that were found in the middle of the city have through the cultural work of history shifted away from the city and into the rural landscapes of the literary pastoral mode.

Many suggestions of an updated understanding of the pastoral mode that do not rely on the city/countryside tension as the point of departure have been offered by critical scholars, so many that one could perhaps talk of a rather adjectival-heavy postmodern understanding of the pastoral. Among the updated approaches, there are examples such as the post-pastoral (Terry Gifford), the dark pastoral (Heather I. Sullivan), the postmodern pastoral (Scott Hess), the necropastoral (Joyelle McSweeney), the toxic pastoral (David Farrier), and the list does not end there. One could also add Lawrence Buell's notion of the "environmental text" (7). These ecocritical approaches to the pastoral mode aim to lay bare previously obscured circumstances as well as point our attention to how nature, environment, and place have been taken for granted.

Gifford states that an updated perspective on the pastoral mode, a perspective more in line with the ecocritical thinking of the current historical moment, "would need to recognise that some literature has gone beyond the closed circuit of pastoral and anti-pastoral to achieve a vision of an integrated natural world that includes the human" (*Pastoral* 148). He goes on to suggest that we should understand ecocritical readings of the pastoral as a reversal of the city/countryside dichotomy by which the city becomes the literary construction, and the

pastoral space "now stands for the real world we inhabit" (*Pastoral* 148–49).[20]

It is, however, all too easy to slip from discussing how works of art construe nature to urging how nature should be rendered in order to further an ecocritical agenda. "Indeed," Timothy Morton reminds us, "ecocriticism is barely distinguishable from the nature writing that is its object" (*Ecology without Nature* 13). For the present discussion, it is important therefore to separate the pastoral as a way to categorize and investigate a literary mode from the desire to valorize it and, implicitly or explicitly, try to impose a preferred usage.[21]

The post-apocalyptic genre typically envisions situations when the period of human global influence has ended, and by doing so opens up for an investigation of nonhuman agency. Even if the catastrophe is the consequence of humanity's activities and global agency, for instance in terms of a nuclear war (*Mad Max*, *Z for Zachariah*, *Fallout*), human-designed disease (*Oryx and Crake*, *The Passage*), or global warming (*WALL·E*, *Waterworld*), the resulting post-apocalyptic landscape and its nonhuman lifeforms are quite often directing the dramatic narrative rather than merely framing it.

In post-apocalyptic fiction, the pastoral haven has continued this detachment of the ideal garden from the city. The pastoral qualities of Dryland in *Waterworld* do not draw explicitly on a tension between a city and a countryside for its thematic and narrative impact. Granted, there are submerged cities in the film, which only the Mariner knows about and has access to, but the characters' search for Dryland is solely driven by the need to escape the wasteland of the sea. Instead, urbanized modernity, to which pastoral rurality stands in opposition, can be found outside of the story world. The vast majority of the middle-class consumers of English post-apocalyptic fiction can be found in the large cities of Western societies. For readers of post-

[20] In the case study of *Oblivion* in chapter two, I propose that the pastoral haven of Jack's valley is suggestively real; the diegetic music, the ambient natural noises, and the movement of the camera all invite realism in a way that rhymes well with Gifford's idea of this ecocentric reversal of the city/countryside dichotomy of pastoralism.

[21] For clarity, the distinction between what a literary work of art is or attempts to be (descriptive) and what it should be (prescriptive) needs to be kept in mind. Such a distinction is of course fraught with its own problems. As scholars we are often deeply invested in the critical approaches we use as well as the objects of our research, and all researchers are subject to confirmation bias, which only serves to make the difference between descriptive and prescriptive approaches even harder to maintain.

apocalyptic novels and viewers of post-apocalyptic films, the characters' search for the pastoral comforts of a green haven can therefore function as a vicarious escape to the country for the city-dwelling audience. The use of the pastoral imagery in post-apocalyptic fiction can thus be said to have at least in part decoupled from Williams's assertion that the city/countryside contrast is key to its understanding. The attraction of the utopian greenery of the island in *Waterworld* lies not in an oppositional position to a politically centralized urbanity or an industrialized cityscape of the story world; the narrative momentum in *Waterworld* is towards a green place rather than away from a city—towards a livable habitat and away from the wasteland of the open water.

Consequently, in order to more fully understand the impact of the pastoral mode in post-apocalyptic fiction, the urban situation of most readers needs to be taken into account. The green island in *Waterworld* and the hidden valley of *Z for Zachariah* are clearly not examples of what Gifford calls "a discourse of retreat" from the city if viewed from the characters' perspective:

> pastoral is essentially a discourse of retreat which may . . . either simply *escape* from the complexities of the city, the court, the present, 'our manners,' or *explore* them. This is the difference between the pejorative and the primary senses of the pastoral, between Leo Marx's 'sentimental pastoral' and his 'complex pastoral.' (*Pastoral* 46, emphasis in original)

The emphasized words "escape" and "explore" are telling. They are both intimately bound to human activities and agency. They describe human actions and behavior and an escape from or exploration of the city. The lush landscapes of the idyll are silent, and the countryside is only what surrounds the city and has no obvious value outside of its role as a mirror to the comings and goings of urban-centric human life. Whereas the study of the urban-centric pastoral has seen the retreat from and eventual return to the city as the main operator behind pastoral thinking, the study of a pastoral haven like Dryland calls for an uncoupling of the pastoral from the urban, at least at the level of the story world, and a change of focus towards the escape from modernity by proxy at the level of the reader.

Indeed, many of the pastoral havens of post-apocalyptic fiction use the pastoral mode to investigate and describe a movement *towards* green spaces not necessarily predicated on either the *escape* from or the *exploration* of the city emphasized by Gifford. It could possibly be argued that the pastoral never really was about escaping from the city, that it was always already a search for paradise, even at the level of the story world. Granted, it is quite clear in films like *I Am Legend* and novels like *Earth Abides* that the city/countryside dynamic is still relevant when discussing some versions of pastoral imaginings in post-apocalyptic fiction. The security of the pastoral haven reached by the woman and the child at the very end of *I Am Legend* (2007) is bluntly contrasted to the dangers of the zombie-infested New York City they leave behind. At the same time, it is equally clear that the thematic and narrative impact of the pastoral haven, in for example *Waterworld* does not rely on a city/countryside dichotomy. Here the pastoral mode is instead used to emphasize not only the peaceful security reached towards the end of the narrative, but also, and more importantly, it is used to underline the reliance of humanity on a nonhuman natural world in order to thrive.

Case Study: The Pastoral Haven in Peter Heller's *The Dog Stars* (2012)

A much more recent example of a post-apocalyptic, environmentally oriented text, to speak with Lawrence Buell, that also make strong use of a pastoral haven as the center for ecocritical investigations is Peter Heller's debut novel *The Dog Stars* (2012), in which the ability of the midpoint haven—a hidden valley—to sustain human life deteriorates as a consequence of global warming. In Heller's novel, most of humanity has succumbed to a human-engineered flu virus and nonhuman nature is struggling under a warming climate. In keeping with other contemporary post-apocalyptic narratives like *The Road* and *Mad Max: Fury Road*, the plot of *The Dog Stars* does not occupy itself with the catastrophic event as such, but instead focuses on the circumstances of survival after the collapse of the U.S. government and the death of the vast majority of the country's inhabitants. The novel as

a whole is a rather sentimental account of the resilience of the American wilderness and of male-coded love of women and nature. The novel was nominated for The Center for Fiction's First Novel Prize in 2012, nominated for the Arthur C. Clarke Best Novel Award in 2013, and won the French 'Prix Une autre Terre' in 2014. It has also received favorable reviews, with Donna Bettencourt calling it "a stunning debut novel" written in "spare, poetic prose" (75).[22] But despite award nominations and critical praise, the novel has garnered almost no scholarly attention.[23]

In this study, *The Dog Stars* serves as an example of a post-apocalyptic narrative with a prototypical haven, which will be the focus of an examination of the bind created by the fundamental desire to occupy what can only be a transitory paradise. The novel, I argue, depicts a place of rest in its most ideal form as an enduring, green garden paradise catering to every need of its human inhabitants while also being a fictional refuge or fanciful conceit, distant both from characters and readers. In other words, the novel seems to suggest that when a pastoral haven is inaccessible and distant it comes closer to an ideal and persistent state of being. Both the midpoint pastoral haven as well as other haven-like places presented in the novel will therefore be discussed in terms of their ontological status—their degree of facticity. This degree of facticity extends from havens of the actual world to havens that are figments of fictional characters' imagination.[24] The novel presents the more ideal pastoral havens as fleeting and difficult to reach, if reachable at all across spatiotemporal and narrative divides. But even when it is not possible to reach it, the desire for a paradise

[22] See also reviews by Donna Seaman and M. H.

[23] As of January 2020, very few scholarly treatments of Heller's novel can be found in either the MLA International Bibliography or on JSTOR. When mentioned in some articles, it is only in passing as part of a new wave of post-apocalyptic fiction. Mussgnug uses Heller's novel as one of several examples of contemporary post-apocalyptic fiction that does not seem overly concerned with the loss of humanity: "In a genre mostly concerned with death," he writes, "there appears to be paradoxically little room for expressions of loss and mourning" (*Apocalyptic* 2). Stacey D'Erasmo suggests in the *Mississippi Review* that Heller's "survivor of a global pandemic spends long hours fishing and flying his plane over a depopulated world, to no particular end" (98). And Christopher González mentions Heller's novel briefly in a book chapter as "a highly touted book from 2012," in which "there are seemingly no people of color" (134).

[24] Here and elsewhere, I refer to the world occupied by the reader as the 'actual world.' In *Possible Worlds*, Ryan presents a more refined nomenclature to discuss the actual world (AW), the universe projected by the text, or textual actual world (TAW), and the textual reference world (TRW). In fiction, the distinction between TAW and TRW usually collapses.

remains. The protagonist of Heller's novel calls this longing a "bottomless yearning" that can never be truly satisfied and concludes that we are "almost never home, any of us" (35).

Told by the male, middle-aged protagonist Hig, the novel depicts the end of the United States—and probably the rest of the world—which has succumbed to an accidentally released, human-engineered, lethal virus. Hig is a carpenter, a hunter, and has a pilot's license; in many ways he is a stereotypical, heterosexual American male who loves the outdoors and who anthropomorphizes nature by aligning it with women. *The Dog Stars* is written in a rather terse language, with fragmented sentences and non-traditional punctuation patterns that mimic the post-apocalyptic landscape of its setting: the protagonist spots any topographical anomaly from the height of his Cessna airplane as a "sentence out of place. A gap. Two periods where there should be one" (7). The novel is divided into three books consisting of six, four, and three chapters respectively. Book 1 revolves around Hig's life nine years after the catastrophe at a small, communal airfield just east of the Rocky Mountains in what used to be Colorado. From his small Cessna airplane, which he calls the Beast, he scouts the surrounding area for intruders and possible caches of food and equipment. The only other inhabitant of the airfield is the former soldier Bangley, with whom Hig has a somewhat tenuous friendship. Together they defend the airfield from intruders, shooting anyone on sight. Book 2 is centered on Hig's chance discovery of a box canyon, the main pastoral haven of the novel, on his way to an airport in Grand Junction from where he had received a stray radio transmission a few years before the events of the novel. The canyon is the hideout of an old man called Pops, also a former soldier, and his daughter, the medical doctor Cima. By keeping cattle and growing vegetables, the two have stayed successfully hidden from the catastrophic events that destroyed the U.S. After initial altercations—Hig forces his way into the canyon—they are befriended and Hig and Cima become sexual partners. Soon Hig learns that the canyon is no longer able to sustain them. Because of rising temperatures and lack of rain, the creek that runs through it is drying out; humanity has managed both to engineer a rampaging flu-virus and destroy the climate. Book 3 sees the trio leave the haven in Hig's Cessna en route to Grand Junction, where they discover that an old couple has

managed to demolish the planes that were attracted to the airfield by using a metal wire stretched across the runway, killing all survivors and looting the wrecked planes. After killing the old couple, Hig, Cima, and Pops return to the first airfield where Hig and Bangley had set up camp. Bangley has been attacked and severely injured but survives. The novel ends with the sighting of several large commercial airliners traveling westward at high altitude. Through the Cessna's radio, they hear the pilots speak Arabic with each other, thereby providing hope for a new beginning to civilization so common to the genre.

Interspersed with analepses providing scenes from before and during the catastrophe, the main narrative of Heller's novel is autodiegetic and switches intermittently between present and past tense. There is no explicit intradiegetic narratee to whom the narrator addresses his story, but an audience is at times not only implied but explicitly addressed by the narrator. One example is when the protagonist asks if the audience has "[e]ver been in a retiree's RV? The one they sold their house for?" (Heller 285). Another example is when Hig has just discovered the pastoral haven of the box canyon. While flying over the canyon Pops manages to shoot a bullet through the window of Hig's Cessna, and as a reaction to nearly being killed he turns directly to the audience: "In that instant I knew what I had come for. *Not what you think: you are thinking Woman* but that wasn't it. It was to be glad again to be alive" (Heller 160–61; emphasis added). In this second example, the audience is addressed on a metadiegetic level and thereby implicated in the narration. Such a break is what Genette categorizes as a metalepsis, which is "any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.) or the inverse"; a metalepsis "produces an effect of strangeness that is either comical . . . or fantastic" (234–35). Moreover, in the absence of a frame narrative that could explain to whom Hig is retelling the story, there is a possible conflation of the narratee and the reader. Coming at a point in the narrative when the protagonist is close to dying, the "effect of strangeness" lends weight to the exploration of the boundaries of life and death so prominent in the novel as well as the genre. But this breach of the barrier between the narrator and the audience/reader also highlights the ontological status of the haven. When directly

addressed, the audience/reader is implicated in—drawn into—the narrative producing a vertiginous effect of the fantastic.

The Unreality of the Pastoral Havens

The Dog Stars does not only feature the explicitly pastoral haven of the remote box canyon's "boisterous green hole" (Heller 159), which is presented in greater detail in a later subsection. The novel also portrays several other idyllic places of natural beauty that contrast to the dilapidated ruins of human civilization and the fights between the few scattered groups of survivors. As such, the notion of a place of rest is activated throughout the novel. Not only has Hig lived in a haven-like place before the events of the novel's plot and finds a pastoral haven in the box canyon, but he dreams of possible havens in the future. He is constantly searching for what he believes he once had: a place of plants, water, and security. The ontological status of these numerous havens range from factual places in the actual world to fictional places in metadiegetic narratives told in the diegesis. As discussed above, the further removed a pastoral haven in the novel is from the actual world of the reader, or even from the fictional world of the first-level narrative, the more paradisiacal and ideal it seems to become.

The beautified and cornucopian places of rural harmony in pastoral texts are often illusions rather than realistic attempts at representing the countryside. Alexander Pope's "A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry" reveals a similar understanding of literary pastorals and the necessity to aestheticize the countryside: the "pastoral is an image of what they call the Golden Age," and "we must therefore use some illusion to render a Pastoral delightful; and this consists in exposing the best side of a shepherd's life, and in concealing its miseries" (50–51). Discussing the classic pastorals of Virgil and Theocritus, Pope expresses an awareness of the inherent fictional nature of pastoral writing that extends well beyond both classical pastoral and his own poetry to become highly relevant also to the present discussion of modern post-apocalyptic havens. In *Pastoral*, Gifford concludes a discussion of Pope by suggesting that "the pastoral is a retreat . . . into a literary construct" (45). An understanding of the pastoral mode as one of fictional beautification and conceit aligns well

with the notion of the havens' ontological degree of facticity discussed here.

Marie-Laure Ryan's negotiation of the contested dichotomy of fiction and nonfiction is a productive way to frame a discussion on the havens' degree of facticity. Ryan terms her description of a postmodern situation that has collapsed the fiction/nonfiction dichotomy "the doctrine of panfictionality," with the explicit understanding that it is possible to define the terms of the duality and still maintain an appreciation of the creative and rich complexity that comes from a blending of the two ("Postmodernism" 165).[25] The main difference between fiction and nonfiction is to her the latter's reliance on the actual world for the assessment of the veracity of its statements. Whereas fiction creates its own ontologically independent reality, with the fictional artifact as the only available source of verifiable information, nonfictional statements can be verified or contested by other nonfictional texts or empirical evidence: "The reader evaluates the truth value of the text by comparing its assertions to another source of knowledge relating to the same reference world" (Ryan, "Postmodernism" 166). Needless to say, fiction too may draw on ontological and scientific principles as well as social and political belief systems of the actual world, but can also intentionally forego such principles. Where the realist novel typically strives for correspondences between its fictional universe and the actual world, a fantasy or science fiction narrative usually introduces a different reality altogether.[26] When an overlap occurs, Ryan calls it a *resemblance* between the actual world and the world of the text: "Resemblance occurs when some of the propositions expressed by the fictional discourse receive a positive truth value in both the fictional world and the real world" ("Postmodernism" 167). The discussion below uses Ryan's framework on fiction and nonfiction as well as some additions from Genette's

[25] I here use Ryan's article "Postmodernism and the Doctrine of Panfictionality" from 1997. Much of the material of the article found an earlier expression in her book from 1991, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*. While the book is more comprehensive and offers a more elaborate discussion on the fiction–nonfiction dichotomy, I find that the article's more concise argument is better suited to the needs of the present analysis.

[26] I do not mean to say that fantasy novels by definition do not overlap with the actual world. For example, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels show a larger degree of overlap with the actual world than do G. R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series of novels.

narratological terminology to discuss the ontological degree of facticity of the pastoral havens in the novel.

Before the catastrophe, Hig lived with his pregnant wife Melissa on the outskirts of Denver. Their home is from the perspective of the story's present an unreachable pastoral haven that draws on the classic city/countryside contrast of the pastoral mode discussed earlier in the chapter. In relation to the novel's present, the Denver home no longer exists and is only accessible through memories and dreams. Occupying the threshold between nature and culture so typical for the pastoral, a region between city and wilderness that Marx calls the middle landscape, Hig and Melissa watched the wildlife from the security of their cottage and had ready access to all the city had to offer: "[We] lived on a lake in Denver. Only seven minutes from downtown, the big bookstore, the restaurants, movies, we liked that. We could see grass, water, mountains out the big window of the little house" (Heller 11). They lived in a perfect "middle ground somewhere 'between,' yet in transcendental relation to, the opposing forces of civilization and nature," where all needs and wants of its human dwellers are met (Marx 23). Hig's Denver home is temporally distant and retold only through analepsis, reachable only through recollection and memories. As such, it functions to some extent as a pastoral haven, albeit unreachable.

Another example in the novel of a haven that failed to sustain its inhabitants is the island of Nikumaroro in the Pacific Ocean on which the female aviator Amelia Earhart supposedly crashed together with her navigator Fred Noonan in the late 1930s.[27] Hig mentions that before the pandemic he had read about Earhart's undertaking and disappearance. Hig describes Nikumaroro (see figure 2) "from the air" as an "elliptical oasis with a central lagoon" (Heller 66). Correspondingly, Hig first sees the box canyon from the vantage point of his aircraft, and the box canyon is described as a "boisterous green hole" (Heller 159). But where the paradisiacal qualities of the box

[27] According to one of many theories, Earhart lived out her last few days together with her navigator Noonan on the island. As claimed by the non-profit organization TIGHAR (The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery), while attempting to cross the Pacific Ocean, Earhart and Noonan crashed in the ocean off Nikumaroro (also known as Gardner Island, part of the Phoenix Islands archipelago) and managed to survive there for some time. TIGHAR has financed several trips to the island to collect (yet inconclusive) evidence in support of their claim (www.tighar.org).

canyon are readily apparent, the island where Earhart presumably crashed failed as a haven since it cannot sustain the crashed aviators: it has a "[f]lat outer reef at low tide like a parking lot" on which Earhart and Noonan could only find sustenance from "shells and rain" (Heller 66). Since the island of Nikumaroro exists in the actual world, the possible fate of Earhart as described by Hig is verifiable in other nonfictional accounts. Following Ryan's discussion, *resemblance* occurs between the fictional world of the novel and the nonfictional actual world. The failed haven of Nikumaroro is temporally and spatially distant from the events of the novel's narrative but exists in the actual world, and its existence can thus be verified by the reader. As such, the haven-like island can be seen as having a high degree of ontological facticity from the perspective of the reader.

Figure 2. The Island of Nikumaroro (Apple Maps).

A much more successful pastoral haven is described by Hig only a few pages later. Hig retells a joke "he heard once about a shipwreck" of how the sexy cover girl Trippa Sands is washed up on a deserted island together with Hig's friend Jed after a shipwreck (Heller 69). The original teller of the joke is not revealed, and when Hig retells it, the unidentified audience/reader is the receiver. The island of Trippa Sands have striking similarities to, as well as differences from, Earhart's island of Nikumaroro:

> They wash up onto the beach, the waves christen them with foam, they are in tatters, mostly naked, and they look into each other's eyes with the dawning apprehension of their unique solitude, and love hits them like a falling coconut. They fall hopelessly. Luckily, the island is replete with low hanging fruit and sweet fresh water, and oysters and fish that jump into their woven baskets, so that sustaining themselves is a breeze and they have a lot of leisure time just to gaze into each other's eyes and make the kind of fierce love I imagine an apocalypse affords. (Heller 69)

The island of Trippa Sands is presented as an ultimate pastoral haven. Not only does the island provide easy and plentiful access to food, water, and security but adds guilt-free sex of the kind Hig "imagines an apocalypse affords" (Heller 69).[28] Hig's story of Trippa Sands's island continues to describe how Jed asks Trippa to draw a charcoal mustache, don a cowboy hat, and call herself Joe, so that he can cry "Joe! I'm fucking Trippa Sands" at her (Heller 70), implying that when paradise is found there is an unstoppable urge to tell others (at least other men) about it.

In the terms of Genette, the section on the island of Trippa Sands, Hig's Denver home and Earhart's Nikumaroro all exist on a *metadiegetic* level. The Trippa Sands story is told to the narratee through metadiegetic embedding, which is achieved by framing one narrative inside another (also called second-level narration).[29] What makes the island of Trippa Sands different from the Denver home and Earhart's island, however, concerns its degree of facticity. It is not only nowhere and anytime (spatially and temporally distant) but a fictional joke inside the fictional world of *The Dog Stars*. As such, the island of Trippa Sands is as far away from the reader as is possible, speaking in terms of ontological degree of facticity. The narrative also switches from autodiegetic to heterodiegetic: Jed takes on the role of the

[28] This meta-commentary is an explicit example of genre consciousness. The narrator seems aware of the type of apocalyptic narrative that is usually referred to as a 'cozy catastrophe,' in which male protagonists survive catastrophic events and enjoy social and sexual power. The short story-within-a-story of Trippa Sands's island is an almost ironic example of a cozy catastrophe. The origin of the term and a discussion on whether *The Dog Stars* can be considered a cozy catastrophe narrative follows in the next subsection.

[29] The difference between narrative levels is defined by Genette as "any event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed" (228).

protagonist in this metadiegetic narrative, further distancing Hig from the haven. The island of Trippa Sands is completely fictional without any resemblance in the actual world (Ryan) and embedded at a higher level of narration (Genette). As such, the text seems to suggest that the ideal (albeit androcentric) pastoral haven of the island of Trippa Sands can only be reached through the imagination.

In the discussion of different havens, or haven-like places, the abandoned airfield where the protagonist Hig has set up camp together with his dog and Bangley should be mentioned. Much of the first third of the novel describes Hig's and Bangley's life on and around the airfield, which has characteristics echoing that of a pastoral haven. There is water, houses to live in, and open fields, which, however, do not provide enough food needed for them to survive. Hig frequently goes hunting in the surrounding mountains and keeps a small but inadequate vegetable garden. He laboriously grows potatoes, beans, tomatoes, and herbs, but his georgic labors are not condoned by Bangley, who from a decidedly androcentric perspective asserts that "men weren't meant to be farmers. . . . Beginning of everything fucked up" (Heller 63). Bangley here expresses the understanding present within some contemporary discussions that much of humanity's grievances have their root in the move from a supposedly freer and easier hunter-gatherer existence to a land-bound toiling of the earth with the introduction of agriculture. Ecocritic Timothy Morton calls this "twelve-thousand-year machination *agrilogistics*" (*Dark Ecology* 42; emphasis in original). The pastoral haven could be read as an expression of a collective cultural memory of a time prior to the hegemonic influence of the grand narrative of such an *agrilogistics*.[30]

Even though Hig's hunting provides the two men with much-needed protein, Bangley sees it as recreation, which to him is a dangerous business. Since there are no outer defenses or natural boundaries that keep the airfield hidden and safe, like those of the typical haven, they kill intruders, including children, by shooting them without warning, after which Hig dries some of the human remains for his dog Jasper's food. As an extra safety precaution, Hig does not sleep in a house, as any attack against the house would have him cornered

[30] A similar sentiment is expressed by historian Yuval Noah Harari in *Homo Deus*: "The expulsion from Eden bears a striking resemblance to the Agricultural Revolution" (89).

and an easy target. As such, the airfield turns many of the qualities of the pastoral haven upside down. The home is dangerous, the growing and hunting of food laborious and inadequate, and women are only present in the form of the teasing nude models on posters in Bangley's house. To Hig, "the sight of [these] unclad women, actually constricted [his] throat so [he] kept [his] visits to the bare minimum" (Heller 139). The airfield is a mirage of a haven unable to meet the needs of the protagonist, but its presence in the narrative provides contrast to the pastoral haven of the box canyon Hig finds later in the narrative.

A Cozy Catastrophe?

Florian Mussgnug, drawing on Brian Aldiss, argues that post-apocalyptic narratives such as Trippa Sands's love island are an expression of "an essential and embodied masculinity lurking beneath the veneer of civilization" ("Naturalizing" 334). The end of all material comforts and social structures of civilization are "enabling conditions" for a masculinity that is then "rewarded with social autonomy, political supremacy and sexual gratification" (Mussgnug "Naturalizing" 335). Aldiss coined the term 'cosy catastrophe' to refer to androcentric 'last man narratives,' the essence of which "is that the hero should have a pretty good time (a girl, free suites at the savoy, automobiles for the taking) while everyone else is dying off" (294). Aldiss bases much of his description of the cozy catastrophe on the works of British author John Wyndham (e.g. *Day of the Triffids* and *The Kraken Wakes*) but he also offers Stewart's *Earth Abides* as a prime example of a cozy catastrophe. Science fiction scholar Roger Luckhurst calls Aldiss's discussion of Wyndham's novels a "harsh judgement" that "has all the hallmarks of the anxiety of influence" as Aldiss himself wrote the post-apocalyptic *Greybeard* (Luckhurst 130). Be that as it may, the alliterative 'cosy catastrophe' has proven a useful and suggestive term for a certain type of class- and male-coded post-apocalyptic story.[31]

Heller's novel could very well be seen as a 'cosy catastrophe' as it exhibits many of the concept's features. The protagonist of *The Dog Stars*, who himself seems aware of the cozy catastrophe in his almost

[31] Jo Walton broadens the concept in her essay "Who Survives a Cosy Catastrophe," showing that the typical protagonist of a cozy catastrophe is not only male but also secular, middle-class, and white.

ironic retelling of the Trippa Sands joke, displays classical signs of male-coded virility, like the ability to survive in the wild, the knowledge of how to handle weapons, and a heterosexual energy directed towards both women and a nature he frequently associates with women. When out on one of his treks away from the airfield he follows a creek "the curves and moods of which [he] knew as well as [he] had known the body of [his] dead wife" (Heller 56), and as he embraces the trunk of a tree, his fingers hold "the flaked corduroy of the bark with almost the same affinity, the same sense of arrival as they would hold to the swells of a woman" (Heller 96). The opposite—women as nature—is also suggested. The full name of Cima, the woman he encounters in the pastoral haven of the box canyon, is Cimarron—Spanish for feral, someone or something who has returned to the wild. As she approaches Hig's hammock in the night for sexual intercourse, his reaction borders on the sublime:

> The rusty moon painted her without shadow. My toes dug into the wool and I stopped swinging. I held still and watched her. A kind of suspended awe. The way I had watched a royal elk step out of aspen: what you are seeing, Hig, cannot be real, it is just too magnificent. (Heller 253)

It would seem that Hig is "rewarded with social autonomy, political supremacy and sexual gratification," the "enabling conditions" and hallmarks of a cozy catastrophe (Mussgnug "Naturalizing" 335). Yet, when contextualizing the novel in a broader spectrum of views on the American relationship with nature, a more complex picture comes into focus. So, a closer look reveals details placing it more as an environmentalist counternarrative, as outlined by philosopher and environmental historian Carolyn Merchant.

American cultural history is steeped in the images of nature gendered as female. The history of the European settlement and colonization of the American continent "is filled with metaphors that cast nature as a female object to be improved by men," writes Merchant (*Reinventing Eden: The Fate* 117). American history and art are founded upon a well-established Recovery (of Eden) Narrative that tells the story of the American continent as a pristine environment

"whose bountiful potential can be realized through human male ingenuity" (Merchant *Reinventing Eden: The Fate* 118). In these terms, the American Recovery Narrative and the American version of the cozy catastrophe become different signifiers of the same underlying cultural signified. But Merchant also outlines American "environmentalist and feminist counternarratives" that construe "nature as a powerful female to be revered, rather than a virgin land to be plowed and improved" (*Reinventing Eden: The Fate* 118–19).[32] Instead of fashioning the supposedly empty wilderness of America as an unfinished garden in need of enterprising males, this type of counternarrative positions nature as beautiful, pure, and complete—no improvements required.

Heller's novel aligns quite well with the tradition of the environmentalist counternarrative as outlined by Merchant. The novel draws on a rich American, as well as European, tradition of looking at nature as female, but instead of presenting nature as a passive virgin to be exploited, *The Dog Stars* is more in line with a counternarrative where nature instead is a site of female power and possibility. Hig finds Cima in the Edenic box canyon already plowing and planting. She is no virgin metaphorically or sexually, nor is she passively waiting for the male to release her potential. Through the feral Cima the novel seems to suggest that Nature as well as women do well without men. Yet, Merchant urges disengagement from such "sexual, acquisitive, and exploitative connotations of the image of nature as female," even if they are in the form of respectful and sublime reverence in the face of feminized nature. Instead, she argues for a less problematic and more "personal engagement with nature," free from gendered discourse (Merchant *Reinventing Eden: The Fate* 119). *The Dog Stars* is not a cozy catastrophe as understood by Aldiss and Mussgnug but a heavily gendered narrative that puts women and nature in an ostensibly privileged position over a seemingly subordinate male—a set-up that might signal a reductive and sentimental stance towards highly complex issues of both gender and environmentalism.

[32] Merchant places the origins of this counternarrative with the American nineteenth-century transcendentalists.

The Hidden Paradise of the Box Canyon

When Hig flies his Cessna airplane over the devastated and de-populated American Midwest in an attempt to reach Grand Junction, from which he some years earlier had heard a radio transmission, he catches sight of a secluded valley that on closer inspection turns out to be an inhabited, paradisiacal smallholding with grazing cattle, vegetable gardens, and a homey cottage. The box canyon is not only the main pastoral haven of the novel but a major part of the narrative as such: the events in and around the box canyon take up roughly 100 out of the 311 pages of the novel. It is a paradisiacal place of aching beauty, a thriving ecological "utopia of sufficiency," to speak with de Geus, that contains everything needed to survive and thrive in sustainable harmony with nonhuman nature.[33]

The Dog Stars explores the functions of pastoral havens, and above I briefly sketched how the numerous places of rest of the novel can be discussed in terms of their degree of ontological facticity: the more distant a haven is described as being—in temporal, spatial, but most specifically narratological terms—from the reader as well as from the characters, the more successful it seems to be in meeting the perceived needs of its human inhabitants. Yet, the box canyon is successful despite being readily accessible. But like all havens that can actually be reached by the characters of the story world, which by necessity means that they exist on the first level of narration, the box canyon is not a stable haven. Soon after arriving, Hig learns that the warming climate will render the box canyon uninhabitable when the creek stops supplying the valley with water. The reason for this impermanence of the midpoint haven is humanity's predatory use of the Earth's resources prior to the apocalyptic events of the virus. By not excluding the garden paradise of the haven from the results of humanity's global agency, the novel aligns itself with Lawrence Buell's notion of "an environmentally oriented work" (7). Unlike the many examples of sentimental havens in post-apocalyptic fiction where the places of rest are mysteriously protected from the consequences of climate change (as in for example *Oblivion*), the main haven of *The Dog*

[33] Leslie Thiele succinctly summarizes de Geus's utopias of necessity as "societies . . . characterized by simplicity and self-restraint rather than material abundance and overconsumption."

Stars is ensnared in the effects of the Anthropocene. This lack of permanence is underscored by the narrative's couching of the haven in a dreamlike imagery, the effect of which is to question and destabilize the reality of the haven. Instead of employing the strategy of narrative levels to conceal and dissociate the haven from the textual world of the first level narration, the novel obscures it by detaching it from the reality of the world in which it exists.

It is, as indicated, from the vantage point of his Cessna airplane that Hig unexpectedly finds the canyon half-way through the novel after having traveled past his 'point of no return,' when the fuel in his airplane can no longer take him back to the safety of the airfield. The Cessna is one of the few machines in the novel that still runs, but the technology is not entirely benign and mirrors the life-and-death theme of the novel and the genre. The satellites of the Global Positioning System still orbit the earth, making it possible for the Cessna's GPS navigator to direct Hig to the nearest airport. The tarmac of the landing strips has not been maintained, however, and potholes and debris make it very dangerous for Hig to land his airplane. As a result, pressing the button on the navigator for the nearest airport that "used to mean Nearest Haven now means Nearest Maybe Death Trap" (Heller 27). Even though the airplane makes it possible for Hig to cover great distances and provides him with access to views of the world not possible without it, the machine is an ambiguous affordance, underlined by the possible interpretations of its name: The Beast can be construed benignly as his beast of burden or malignly as a monster threatening to kill him.

When Hig first approaches the canyon, he flies tight circles around it and is surprised that it is there: "How could I have never seen it?":

> Never flown this. We always came here in a truck. The road is grown in. Overgrown tracks swings away from the smaller river to climb a ridge. Bank right to follow it into another drainage and the country I used to hunt. But. Off to the left in the path of the creek a flash of red rock, the upper wall of a canyon just revealed. Always amazed that such a small stream can leave such a landmark, that so much big country stays hidden in these clefts. I bank back to take a look. (Heller 159)

The ensuing description of the haven manages to include almost all the characteristics of a haven as well the presence of death in paradise:

> The split and riven little canyon widens into this boisterous green hole. Creek winds through. A meadow on the left bank. And so shocked and curious I am descending in my gyre and I almost spiral into the high wall. A stone hut against the cliff. Smoke wafting from. A stone bridge over the creek to the field. Cattle scattered on the watered grass. Half a dozen. Cattle. And. A garden plot larger than ours. Fed by a ditch cut from an oxbow of the creek. And. A figure in the garden bent. And. It's a woman. (Heller 159–160)

When circling the canyon in his Cessna, Hig and his flying machine become the disturbers of the tranquility of the pastoral haven. Even in the most beautiful and serene of surroundings, Leo Marx tells us in *The Machine in the Garden*, we hear how the "ominous sounds of machines . . . reverberate endlessly in [American] literature" (15–16). Providing a long list of examples, from the whistling train disturbing the pastoral musings of Hawthorne and Thoreau to the crushing of Huck and Jim's raft by the steamboat in *Huckleberry Finn*, Marx even goes as far as saying that "it is difficult to think of a major American writer upon whom the image of the machine's sudden appearance in the landscape has not exercised its fascination" (16). However, while the protagonists have their tranquil repose disturbed by the intrusion of the machine in all the examples provided by Marx, in *The Dog Stars* the protagonist is the one disturbing the peace. Through first-person narration, *The Dog Stars* reproduces the disturbance of the solitude of the pastoral described in such detail by Marx, but now from the novel perspective of the protagonist as the intruder, shifting the responsibility for the intrusion from distant machines to the human agent. With this shift in the source of the intrusion, agency is transferred from the anonymous machines of industrialization to the human narrator of the story. This transfer of agency is an important difference between Marx's pastoral setting and the pastoral haven of the post-apocalypse: whereas the pastoral surroundings of nineteenth century American literature can be entered freely, the post-apocalyptic haven evades exploration, demanding persistent effort to enter or to keep.

Moreover, after landing his Cessna on a road some miles from the canyon Hig disturbs and conquers the haven using machine technology in the form of automatic weapons, grenades, and a superior strategic position. In so doing, the human is positioned as the active agent and disturber of the pastoral peace instead of the distant machines of industrialization described by Marx. More importantly, by attacking the haven Hig plays a symbolic part in initiating its failure: The secure haven is compromised by his intrusion, presence, and agency. As such, Hig carries with him the weight of anthropogenic agency into the garden paradise.

The box canyon seemingly occupies a different level of fictional reality from the rest of the novel. As with all havens, it is hard to find and enter, and it is "a perfect spot to ride out the end":

> From ground level at the top you couldn't see the hole, the canyon, at all til you were right on it, right on the edge. And I bet that the way up from downstream was beset by waterfalls and cliffs. It was perfect. A hideout. Outlaws of old would covet. (Heller 183)

After Hig has shown Pops and Cima his superior firepower from an elevated position at the edge of the box canyon, he needs to trek through a ravine to actually enter the pastoral haven. Climbing down the cliff face and into the box canyon is not feasible and Hig has to take a circuitous route, following the creek as it descends into the canyon. He thereby loses the strategic advantage of the higher ground in relation to Pops and Cima. When Hig tries to sneak up on them in the canyon, the trekking through the difficult forest along the stream at the bottom of the canyon is exhausting and fatigue overtakes him. Pops finds Hig sleeping, ties his hands, and brings him into the pastoral haven at gunpoint. Having fallen asleep, again like Rip Van Winkle on the mountain, he wakes up in a different reality: "The flight over [the box canyon] already seemed like another life" (Heller 184). Hig thus enters the haven through a dream world. Yet another dimension of accessibility, another level of unreality, is consequently added to the qualities of the fictional haven. The dreamlike nature of the pastoral haven is emphasized even further when Hig and Pops come to the edge of the waterfall that overlooks the interior of the box canyon: "From

this angle through the mist the little box canyon looked like Eden. Green and bounded, waterfed, remote from death" (Heller 187). The dream state, the mist, and the reference to Eden all help to underline the ephemeral nature of the haven's existence and push the pastoral haven of the box canyon towards the unreal and a lower degree of ontological facticity.

While Hig is in the haven, he, as the narrator, further establishes it as a dream separated from the rest of reality. While sleeping in a hammock outside, Hig dreams that he and his (dead) wife Melissa are bow-hunting for wild goat in the Himalayas,

> and when she had her bow drawn on a big buck, very close, I cried NO! and the animal leapt and ran and she turned to me and her face was bright with fury and betrayal. When I woke up I was gripping the rope side of the hammock and it took me a minute to realize where I was, that it was a dream, and then the near vertigo, thinking, This is a dream, and a little relieved I was in this one and not that one. (Heller 243)

Here, two levels of dream reality seem to be experienced: at one level, there is Hig's dream of buck hunting with his late wife, which he wakes up from to find himself in a hammock in the pastoral haven, and at another level there is the reality Hig calls the dream he is relieved to be in. The pastoral haven is set up as fleeting and idyllic, not having any real possibility of permanent and material existence. It is a dream, and Hig is aware that it is a dream. Not only are the readers made aware of how the pastoral haven is framed as a literary construct and a figment of imagination in Heller's novel, the characters of the story world are aware of it as well. Through its hidden nature and vague, dreamlike contours, the pastoral haven is charged with the unreal and pushed further into the realm of fiction.

Hig is not alone in his need to be inside a dream world. Both Pops and Cima express a similar desire for invented sanctuaries. In high school, Cima was encouraged by a college counselor to draw on her feelings about losing her brother Bo in her application essay for a college scholarship. However, not wanting the counselor to encroach on the fond memories of her brother, what she considers her private haven, Cima was outraged: "Bo to me was like a secret garden. A place

only I could go. A source of both grief and great strength" (Heller 237). Cima thereby makes an explicit connection between green sensibilities and places of refuge. And when the warming climate and sparse raining are threatening to dry up the creek, rendering the canyon uninhabitable, Hig, Cima, and Pops decide to leave the pastoral haven together. On the way out of the canyon, they discuss the possibilities of returning:

> Pops thought some of the animals might survive here on their own if it rained later on, if the winter was as mild as last. When things get better we can come back, he said. Nobody else said a word. Pops was not in the habit of bullshitting himself but there it was, *every man has his imaginary refuge*. (Heller 244; emphasis added)

Pops needs the pastoral haven to continue as a possible sanctuary, as a place he might but probably won't be able to return to. Besides Pops's wish for an imaginary refuge, the passage shows how the narrator is aware of the pastoral haven's unreal qualities. Even within the ontologically consistent reality of the fictional world, all three characters recognize that the pastoral haven is an imaginary construct and express similar needs for fictional places framed as green oases.

The pastoral haven of the box canyon seems not only to work as an imaginary refuge for the characters of the novel, but the reader is also invited to vicariously experience the refuge of the pastoral haven through the characters. Gifford considers the *reader* as the receiver of the literary construct: it is for our pleasure as readers the beautified aesthetics of the pastoral idyll is constructed. So, when the chimeric nature of the box canyon is recognized by the characters, the literary construct is destabilized from within the novel, its illusory qualities are brought to the fore, and the readers are asked to confront their own need for, or ideas about, an imaginary refuge. The literary construct of the pastoral haven can in itself be just that refuge, that secret garden. In short, the box canyon of the novel not only (re)actualizes the imaginary refuge, it offers itself *as* an imaginary refuge to the reader. The novel thus seems to explore not only a need for a fictional sanctuary, but it also concurrently offers the reader such an imaginary refuge.

It is, however, only when the characters leave the box canyon that they can fulfill their potential. Hig notes a change in Cima after they have settled back down on the airfield: "Something about her. Something over the week had grown and flowered, something hibernating in the canyon had come out into the sunlight and liked what it saw" (Heller 301). Perhaps everyone needs an "imaginary refuge," but the novel suggests that lingering too long in that literary construct threatens to keep the visitor in a state of torpor (Heller 244). Hig expresses this conundrum when Cima asks him what he wants: "I want to be two people at once. One runs away" (Heller 250).

The pastoral haven Hig searches for is elusive and distant, constantly slipping away into the past or into the future, or into fiction, further away on the sliding scale of ontological facticity. When the gap is seemingly bridged, as with the box canyon, the haven is not stable and the stay is only temporary. The only pastoral havens that seem to never fail are paradisiacal figments of imagination that cannot be reached, like the island of Trippa Sands.

The pastoral haven in post-apocalyptic fiction is a relatively recent addition to the ongoing cultural construction of a green paradise mythology. In all its historical manifestations, the pastoral paradise is articulated as a remote place shrouded in mystery and glamor, an unreal cornucopia that can be visited only temporarily and often only reached through perseverance and hardship, if at all. It is a green place with trees and water as well as an abundance of food, a romantic place where one can eat and make love underneath the protective canopy of the trees. Recognizing the reality of the toils and hardships of country living, as well as the unreal nature of pastoral thinking, Alexander Pope realized that "we must therefore use some illusion" to render a pastoral image (50). In *The Dog Stars* this search for and construction of a fictional green paradise is played out in the narrative's numerous manifestations of pastoral havens. All of them are, of course, literary constructs, but can nevertheless be talked about in terms of their degree of ontological facticity. The impermanent havens that fail are also the ones coded as more real and reachable, whereas the successful ones are, more or less explicitly, understood as castles in the air. While the failed haven of Emelia Earhart's island of Nikumaroro is an actual place in the nonfictional reality of the reader, the seemingly flawless

paradise of the island of Trippa Sands is a joke told as a second level narrative, embedded deep within the literary construction of the novel. Between these extremes we find the mostly successful but dying pastoral haven of the box canyon. But instead of distancing this haven through narrative embedding, metalepsis, or nonfictional resemblance, the box canyon is connected with the unreal through a Rip van Winkle allusion by which the protagonist only manages to enter it after falling asleep and walking through the misty shrouds of a waterfall. Yet, despite meeting the needs of its human inhabitants, the pastoral haven of the box canyon remains a dream and a literary construct.

Chapter Two:

The Haven and (Im)Mobility

> To begin with, the corner is a haven that ensures us one of the things we prize most highly—immobility.
>
> — Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*

> It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end.
>
> — Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*

> Art is longing. You never arrive, but you keep going in the hope that you will.
>
> — Anselm Kiefer

Movement is a central motif in a post-apocalyptic genre that often portrays characters moving ceaselessly across the open space of wastelands, whether pushing their cart south in *The Road*, sailing the barren oceans of *Waterworld*, flying over the empty American mid-west in *The Dog Stars*, or racing through the deserts in *Mad Max*. As such, the post-apocalyptic wastelands could tentatively be construed as landscapes through which constant movement often appears to be the only possible action and pressing on the only available mode of being. Yet, this movement is just as often interrupted by moments of rest where the wandering through the wasteland changes into stationary dwelling. While the protagonists in many of these narratives strive for an often chimeric permanent shelter, more often they will have to make do with a temporary rest from the surrounding turmoil. But as has been shown in the previous chapter, the haven is seldom, if ever, a place of simple rest. *Et in arcadia ego*: death, or at least unrest, also dwells in the haven. Before long, most protagonists exit the haven to continue their travels, or the haven proves not to be the imagined panacea. That is, there seems to be a constant push-and-pull between movement and

rest, between mobility and immobility, between the open spaces of the wasteland and the confinement of the haven. This recalls what science-fiction scholar Pamela Bedore sees as the central "tensions" at the heart of the genre: "security versus freedom, conformity versus chaos, static versus kinetic," where the first part of each pair maps well onto the haven and the second part the wasteland (04:24:30).

The central concern in this chapter is a critical exploration of the interface between the open space of the movement-engendering wasteland on the one hand, and the stationary rest afforded by the haven on the other. Drawing on theories on space and place formulated by geographers such as Edward S. Casey, Tim Cresswell, David Harvey, and Yi-Fu Tuan, I examine the function of the haven as a contained *place* in contrast to the expansive *space* of the wasteland and the implications this contrast has for matters of identity and modes of being that are explored by works of post-apocalyptic fiction. Using examples from several contemporary post-apocalyptic narratives, I show how the haven is used to interrogate the identity-forming potential of human dwelling and migration, of rest and mobility. However, I also question the often place-centric or even place-essentialist position of scholars like Tuan and Casey by using the post-structuralist framework of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Their figures of the nomad, the migrant, and the war machine as well as their concomitant theories of smooth and striated spaces are productive tools to unpack how the space/place dichotomy is reproduced and interrogated through the havens in post-apocalyptic fiction. The case study of the 2013 film *Oblivion* that ends the chapter will also introduce the notion of *liminality*, first conceived by Dutch anthropologist Arnold van Gennep and further developed by Victor Turner, a complementary framework that informs my reading of the haven in *Oblivion* as not only a place of sedentary rest but as the in-between space separating differently structured realities.

Mind and Body, Time and Space

It would be fair to say that Western philosophy has favored mind and time over body and space. It has been "one of the main agendas of philosophical modernity," writes Casey, to subordinate "all discrete phenomena to *mind*" (203; emphasis in orginal). Barney Warf and Santa Arias add that throughout the nineteenth century, "space became steadily subordinated to time in modern consciousness" (2). With such an overtly Cartesian focus on sensible reality as only reachable through representations, the external world was reduced to the mental processes of the human subject. Casey calls this attention to the mental a "panrepresentationalism," which paradoxically implies that "space . . . is itself based on mind" (Casey 203). However, drawing on Kant, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty, Casey traces a rediscovered focus on "what had been almost entirely neglected by the subjective idealists of the previous century and a half": the body's intimate implication in our understanding of and relationship to space (203). It is because of the paired symmetry of the human body, with its left and right, up and down, front and back "that we can perceive sensible objects as placed and oriented in regions that rejoin and reflect our bodily bifurcations" (Casey 205). Body and place are according to this line of thinking constituted simultaneously. Who and what we are as well as how we understand the world must be construed in terms of *where* our bodies are located and how they move in relation to everything else. As a consequence, space and place, regions and locations—in addition to all other circumstances of our physical presence in the world—thus have a profound impact on both cultural and individual formations of identity.

But it is important to also note the *dialectical* relationship, understood as a constant and complex reciprocal flow, that exists between the corporeal presence of the subject and its environs. Humans are shaped by the material context in which they find themselves, at the same time as their mere presence alters the surroundings in which they dwell and move. Human agency designs, builds, and alters the very same dwelling places and surroundings that shape their cultures. Even though humans modify their surroundings at an unprecedented and ever-increasing speed and magnitude, David

Harvey notes that this is true for all life, as all "organisms through their productive activities transform the environments to which they subsequently adapt" (*Justice* 66). This dialectical relationship between subject and surroundings, between body and space, also applies to the post-apocalyptic haven, in that it changes when occupied. It is only in its status as a dream that the haven achieves some permanence as a place of rest (cf. the discussion of the havens' degree of ontological facticity in the case study of *The Dog Stars*). As soon as humans dwell in the haven they change it, often by diminishing its capacity to function as a haven. Resources are depleted, internal strife within a group of people compromises the safety of the haven, and the movement of people in and out spreads the knowledge of the haven's existence.

This shift to a more dialectical understanding of how space is produced, a shift not only from mind to body but also the concurrent shift from time to space, has been identified as a *spatial turn*. Geographer Edward D. Soja sees it as the "assertion of the ontological parity of space and time," a move which attempts to break the pervasive privileging of the temporal dimension in modern Western thinking (18). This reorientation towards spatiality, mainly within the social sciences and the humanities, is closely tied to the rediscovered importance of the body briefly outlined above. Michel Foucault declared in 1986 that "the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time" (23). But the idea that space would more or less replace time as the privileged dimension, as Foucault seems to suggest in his text, is not shared by the present study. Instead, Soja's acknowledgment of an 'ontological parity' between the dimensions of time and space informs my analysis of spatiotemporal aspects of the post-apocalyptic haven.

Much recent post-apocalyptic fiction could to some extent be said to reify or reproduce this spatial turn, and thereby be seen as providing a fictional response to the anxieties and concerns raised by the geographers. The temporal axis of the world, usually described in a traditional Western Enlightenment context as a progression from simple to complex, from barbarity to refinement, from dark to light, from ignorance to knowledge, is broken, halted, or even reversed in the post-apocalyptic narrative. When temporally oriented scholars look at

the world from a perspective that "[marginalizes] space by positing the existence of temporal 'stages of development," write Warf and Arias, human culture becomes locked in an "inexorable ascent from savagery to civilization," whereas the spatial dimension "offers a richer, more contextualized understanding of human experience, social relations and the production of culture" (2).[1] This continuous, temporally coded advancement of society is interrupted when many of the typical signs of historical progression, like technical, financial, and sociocultural developments are destroyed or severely challenged by the catastrophic events at the center of the post-apocalyptic narrative. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that many post-apocalyptic narratives question whether it is possible or even desirable to restart civilization and return to organized society, which can be seen as an extension of the question whether the temporal or the spatial dimension carries the greatest ontological validity.

Just as the primacy of the temporal dimension is regularly questioned in post-apocalyptic fiction, space is (re)asserted as the major axis along which human activities develop; narrative development is mapped onto movements through the space of the story world. In McCarthy's *The Road*, the very survival of the man and his son hinges on their continued movement south. When the boy asks if they could not linger just another day camping by a river, the father answers that "it's not safe," they "have to keep moving" and "keep heading south" (McCarthy 36). In Heller's *The Dog Stars*, when the protagonist Hig decides to leave the relatively safe but also stagnant existence of the airfield to contact hoped-for survivors at an airport beyond his Cessna's range, he sees himself as "*[e]n route to Something Completely Fucking Different*" (155; emphasis in original). These are but two examples, and there are many others in post-apocalyptic fiction where change or the breaking of a status quo is intimately tied to and dependent on movement and relocation.

[1] Naomi Klein points to both the intimate relationship between signs of industrial progress and the Western penchant for the ontological separation of the mind from the body discussed here as well as its deeply gender-coded and ecocritical dimensions, when she writes that "feminist scholars have long recognized that patriarchy's dual war against women's bodies and against the body of the earth were connected to that essential, corrosive separation between mind and body—and between body and earth—from which both the scientific revolution and the industrial revolution sprang" (177).

Placing Space

The spatial turn is not only about the shifts from time to space and from mind to body outlined above, but it also includes a reorientation from the limitlessness of space to the particularity of place. Just as the spatial dimension has been subsumed by and subordinated under temporal concerns in most Western thinking, place has been lost in the infinity of space. As a consequence, core questions addressed by theorists on spatiality is how the terms *space* and *place* relate to each other, how they work to form our understanding of our surroundings, and how each term has been defined and construed both historically and in a modern, largely Western cultural context. Since I argue for the wasteland as space and the haven as place in post-apocalyptic narratives, it is important to explain the terms that inform the present analyses.

In Tuan's book *Space and Place*, space is put in a straightforward opposition to place, both terms being defined in relation to degrees of (im)mobility:

> From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (6)

That is, the vastness of space allows movement between discrete places of rest. The terms are mutually non-exclusive and co-constitutive parts that "require each other for definition" (*Space* 6). As Tim Creswell puts it, Tuan "develops a sense of space as an open arena of action and movement while place is about stopping and resting and becoming involved" (35). Crucial to how Tuan understands space is that it is "experienced directly as having room in which to move" (*Space* 9). Hence, Tuan's space presupposes the experiencing subject; it is through the subject's corporeal experience of movement that space is constructed and imbued with meaning. Casey offers an understanding of the movement/rest distinction that in most respects is very similar to that of Tuan's:

> Part of the perennial appeal of Aristotle's conception of place as something confining or confined is doubtless the philosophical support it offers to human beings' longing for cozy quarters—not merely for adequate shelter but for boundaries that embrace, whether these boundaries belong to decorated rooms in the home or to indecorous glades in the forest primeval. But human beings (and doubtless other animals) also long for wide open spaces and thus for lack of containment, perhaps even for limitlessness. (79)

What should be noted is the privileged position of place assumed by both. Place—and thus immobility—is clearly their preferred mode of being. Rest is couched in positively charged words like "cozy" and "embrace" (Casey), and place is where "security and stability" is to be found (Tuan). The post-apocalyptic haven fits snuggly into this conception of place: the cozy quarters and embracing security of "the forest primeval," to use Tuan and Casey's vocabulary, is very much a description of the pastoral havens of post-apocalyptic fiction. In other words, post-apocalyptic havens could be seen as manifestations of a place-centric "longing for cozy quarters," existing in a space/place tension with the surrounding wasteland that in themselves express a simultaneous longing "for wide open spaces" (Tuan 79). This place-centric understanding of being is called into question below, in the section "Voyage in Place: Resting in the Wasteland."

Embracing Boundaries: The Dark Cellars in *The Road*

Cormac McCarthy's critically acclaimed and award-winning post-apocalyptic novel *The Road* is about the journey of a father and a son, whose names are never revealed, through an unspecified part of a North America laid waste by a cataclysmic event.[2] One of the more fascinating aspects of McCarthy's novel is how it manages to fit solidly into the post-apocalyptic genre while avoiding, questioning, or revising many of its tropes. It flouts genre conventions by providing almost no information on the way the world ended. The apocalyptic event is only

[2] Among other accolades, *The Road* won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2007.

described as "a long shear of light and then a series of low concussions" (McCarthy 52). The end of the world might have been brought on by humanity itself, by for example a nuclear war, but it could also have been a natural disaster in the form of a meteor strike. Regardless, the result of the catastrophe is devastating on a magnitude seldom seen in post-apocalyptic fiction. The protagonists push a shopping cart with their few belongings through an utterly ruined world completely unable to sustain any form of life. Seeds no longer germinate and animals die of starvation. The sun is hidden behind a gray overcast sky, dead trees flank the roads, and the seashores are littered with the bones of dead fish.[3] A few remaining humans rummage through the dead world searching for canned goods, other edible remains, or each other, as cannibalism is widespread. The boy's mother committed suicide before the events of the novel, and the man suffers from a lung condition that takes his life and leaves the boy orphaned at the very end of the novel. In short, it is difficult to conjure up a more desolate world than the one imagined by McCarthy in *The Road*.

The novel both explores and questions the preference of rest over mobility. The protagonists' endless walking south is temporarily halted when they find provisional safety in an unspoiled and well-stocked subterranean bunker that in many ways functions as a typical haven. Its concrete walls offer a rest more welcome than in many other similar stories partly because of the magnitude of the surrounding desolation. It is the only location presented in the novel offering anything remotely similar to a safe place of rest. This post-apocalyptic haven offers shelter from the dangers of the wasteland and is filled with what the man describes as "the richness of a vanished world" in the form of food, water, and survival gear (McCarthy 138). But like much in McCarthy's bleak vision of the end of the world, it is an uncomfortable and ambiguous haven that serves as an examination of the basic premises of a place of rest.

Part of the ambivalence of the bunker comes from its thematic connection with another of the novel's subterranean spaces. Earlier in the narrative, the man and the boy come across a locked hatch in the

[3] The author and political activist George Monbiot famously called *The Road* "the most important environmental book ever written" as he thinks it is a poignant description of where our biosphere is headed.

floor of a country house that opens up to a cellar where captured men and women are kept in storage for later consumption by their cannibal captors:

> Huddled against the back wall were naked people, male and female, all trying to hide, shielding their faces with their hands. On the mattress lay a man with his legs gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt. The smell was hideous. (McCarthy 93)

The man and the boy just barely escape the clutching hands of the prisoners and the returning cannibals who live in the house. The novel thus not only establishes an uneasy relationship between underground places and food consumption but also questions the cellar as a dwelling place: cellars seem to be places where food is kept, whether it is in the form of human flesh or canned peaches.[4]

Drawing on the work of Bachelard, Justin T. Noetzel juxtaposes these two underground spaces, calling the cannibals' cellar a "metaphorical and literal pit of despair" (121) and the bunker "a buried paradise . . . of sanity and domestic comfort" (128). He suggests that the bunker can be read as an "underworld of hope" that becomes "the true home" for the man and the boy (121). Noetzel, however, misrepresents both the complexities surrounding the bunker in McCarthy's novel and to some extent Bachelard's poetics when he so strongly emphasizes the contrasts between the two spaces, contending that "this buried paradise is the exact opposite of the cellar" (132). I would rather argue that the bunker haven is charged with ambivalent meanings through the similarities it shares with the cannibal cellar.

The bunker is the most utopian place McCarthy's dystopian vision can sustain, but it has few of the Edenic qualities of the pastoral haven. Described as a "tiny paradise trembling" (McCarthy 126), the bunker is clearly a safe haven where the man and the boy find much needed rest from the trials of the wasteland, but it is also a potential death trap. Its underground structure with an opening "like a grave yawning at judgment day in some old apocalyptic painting" suggests a place of

[4] Much more can be said about food consumption in *The Road* as well as in many other post-apocalyptic narratives. This, however, is not the place for such a discussion.

death rather than rejuvenation (McCarthy 154). Under the artificial light in the bunker, the man and the boy eat the preserved and limited foodstuffs of a destroyed consumer culture. "Perhaps in another kind of narrative," Petter Skult suggests, "the pair would give the shelter a name and make it their home. Not so in *The Road*" (113). This is not a place to kindle hope for a rebirth of civilization, unlike the havens of many other examples from the genre, like the island in *Waterworld*, the citadel in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, the box canyon in *The Dog Stars*, and the walled-in community in the film *I Am Legend*.

Instead, the bunker can be construed as an ironic mirror image of the vibrant, cornucopian pastures of the pastoral haven: while the pastoral haven offers fresh produce from orchards and gardens, the father and the boy eat canned peaches; while many of the havens discussed in this study come in the form of verdant islands or hidden mountain valleys, the man and the boy hide underground. On this note, and in contrast to Noetzel's reading of it as an "underworld of hope," Ben de Bruyn writes that the bunker in *The Road* "might be the faintest echo of the Garden of Eden-motif imaginable" (777). Or as Anthony Warde puts it: "the bunker is at best an ambivalent space, an industrial Eden" (10). In spite of the bunker's function as a place of rest, the man knows that "[a]nyone could see the hatch lying in the yard and they would know at once what it was" (McCarthy 121). As a consequence, when the boy asks his father how long they can stay in the bunker, he must answer,

> Not long.
> How long is that?
> I dont know. Maybe one more day. Two.
> Because it's dangerous.
> Yes. (McCarthy 125)

In short, the bunker fails to live up to the utopian qualities that at some level it clearly seems to embody. It is a place of rest and immobility, but lingering there for even a few days is dangerous. The man and the boy are forced into motion again.

Perhaps McCarthy's "tiny paradise trembling" (126) can be better understood if seen in terms of Foucault's notion of *heterotopia*: "we

live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another" (23). Foucault sees places as being defined by the relations they have with all other places, especially between what he calls places of "temporary relaxation" (24).[5] While he sees utopias as "unreal spaces" which "present society itself in a perfected form," heterotopias are "real places" where "other real sites . . . are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 24). Both have relations to other places "in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect" (Foucault 24). That is, utopias and heterotopias are sites where place relations are upended and revealed, thereby opening up for a rich cultural commentary.

To better describe his reasoning, Foucault uses the mirror as a metaphor. Since the mirror "enables me to see myself there where I am absent" (Foucault 24), one discerns a placeless place, a virtual, utopian existence beyond the glass. But, crucially, the mirror also works to "discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there" (Foucault 24). In this modus, then, the mirror functions as a heterotopia, since

> it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there. (Foucault 24)

In this manner, the bunker in *The Road* vacillates between a safe place of rest and a dead end: the haven can potentially be turned into a dark underground cellar where marauding cannibals might easily trap the man and his boy. As such, it can be read as a heterotopian mirror in which the man sees the utopian promises of a place of true rest, but

[5] This approach is reminiscent of David Harvey's discussion of what he calls *relational space*. Harvey outlines a tripartite understanding of space: absolute, relative, and relational space. In contrast to absolute (cartesian) and relative (non-euclidean) spaces, the possibility of measurement breaks down completely in a *relational* notion of space, which understands a point in space as being constituted not only by its coordinates (as in absolute space) or its position vis-à-vis other places (as in relative space) but also by a multiplicity of both internal and external influences.

since the utopian impulses of the bunker hinge on the existence of a vanished world, it simultaneously reflects a place of death—a grave.

Looking at it from the perspective of Foucault's mirror, the bunker scene is an elaborate interrogation and subversion of the post-apocalyptic genre trope of the haven. Waking up in the bunker after a lavish meal and with the boy still sleeping beside him, the man realizes that he cannot "construct for the child's pleasure the world he'd lost without constructing the loss as well" (McCarthy 129). The man cannot revel in the riches the bunker offers without charging it with crippling feelings of nostalgia for a lost world. In *The Road*, writes Skult, "the old world is truly gone, and a temporary safe place like the fallout shelter is at best a simulacrum" (114). Instead of promising a future, the bunker becomes a reminder of an irretrievable past, and as a result "some part of him [the man] wished they'd never found this refuge" (McCarthy 129–30). [6] All complex representations of the post-apocalyptic haven carry elements of this Foucauldian heterotopology, but McCarthy goes further than most in exploring the haven's dark side of rest and immobility.

Resting in the Wasteland

Notwithstanding the apparent explanatory strength of the space and place dialectic proposed by Tuan and Casey, it is not without its problems. Despite the presentation of space and place as co-constitutive and in dialectical relation with each other, place is quite clearly positioned as the privileged mode of being for both Tuan and Casey (and others).[7] It is from the secure shelter of immobile place that we move out and to which we inevitably return. Movement through open-ended space is only temporary, an experience that helps charge the stationary place with meaning. Movement is necessary in the

[6] In a brief passage, Foucault also introduces the notion of *heterochronies*, the temporal equivalent of the spatial: "Heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time—which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies" (26).

[7] A good example of a clearly place-centric position is expressed by Noetze when he states that "[t]he home is an essential place for human existence, not only because it is where we lay our head or eat our meals, but also because it is the center of the mythical relationship between creation and destruction, and between life and death" (124).

constitution of a sense of place but cannot, it seems, be the preferred mode of being in and of itself.

In contrast to such place-essentialist positions, Deleuze and Guattari argue for an understanding of 'sense of place' where immobility is not a necessary condition or even the preferred mode of being. In a distinctly postmodern approach to the space/place opposition, they successfully deconstruct the binary to reveal and subvert place-centric beliefs and present *nomadic movement* (or vagabondage) as a complementary mode of being:

> We can say of the nomads, following Toynbee's suggestion: *they do not move*. They are nomads by dint of not moving, not migrating, of holding a smooth space that they refuse to leave, that they leave only in order to conquer and die. Voyage in place: that is the name of all intensities, even if they develop in extension. (560; emphasis in original)

Deleuze and Guattari show that it is possible to associate a sense of place and belonging with mobility and space, a movement that is corporeal but (paradoxically) not necessarily experiential. Nomads bring a sense of place with them on their travels as they "voyage in place" (Deleuze and Guattari 560).

For nomads, places of immobility, or *points* in Deleuze and Guattaris phraseology, are only locations that connect the paths on which they travel. A nomad, they argue, is not unaware of locations, but they are only consequences rather than governing principles of existence:

> [A]lthough the points determine paths, they are strictly subordinated to the paths they determine, the reverse of what happens with the sedentary. The water point is reached only in order to be left behind; every point is a relay and exists only as a relay. A path is always between two points, but the in-between has taken on all the consistency and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own. (Deleuze and Guattari 443)

Not everyone who moves between two points is a nomad, however. Deleuze and Guattari also posit *the migrant*, who "goes principally from one point to another, even if the second point is uncertain, unforeseen, or not well localized" (443). For the nomad the point is a necessary consequence of movement, while movement for the migrant is only a consequence of points being dispersed in space.

Deleuze and Guattari offer a rich if sometimes labyrinthine analysis of spatial matters in their presentation of *smooth* and *striated* spaces, terms closely related to the nomad and the migrant. In brief, smooth space is the heterogenous and rhizomatic space of for example the sea or the desert associated with the movements of the nomad, whereas striated space is the homogenous, measured space of the city and its industrial, sedentary society. The smooth and the striated spaces, however, are symbiotic, with a strong dialectical relation between them: they are intertwined and co-constitutive. That is, even though they are each other's opposites, Deleuze and Guattari remind us that "the two spaces in fact exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space" (552).[8]

Post-Apocalyptic Nomads and Migrants

Post-apocalyptic fiction abound with figures of nomads and migrants and their markedly different relationship to place and movement. But even though it is tempting to categorize characters or even whole works of fiction as belonging to one or the other side of the nomad/migrant distinction, most works of post-apocalyptic fiction defy such simple categorization. Having said that, there are a great many examples of post-apocalyptic narratives that depict migratory movement between established and secure places of rest as the favored mode of being. When the teenager Ann Burden leaves the pastoral haven in *Z for Zacariah*, she moves on a migrant's trajectory between two points:

[8] Casey sees smooth space as an attempt to conflate place with *region*: "Deleuze and Guattari maintain in effect that region and place converge" (305). However, I would argue that Casey's reading of smooth space is too occupied with place as something measurable, and with region being quantitatively larger than place. The smooth space of Deleuze and Guattari operates outside of easily measurable quantities.

Upon exiting the valley she immediately searches "the horizon for a trace of green" where she hopes to re-establish her sedentary, immobile lifestyle (O'Brien 249). That the life of the sedentary dweller is the preferred mode of being is also made very clear in the post-apocalyptic graphic novel *Sweet Tooth* by Jeff Lemire,[9] in which the protagonist dies happily and contentedly in a chair, surrounded by family and friends in the pastoral haven they have built for themselves in the forest—an end they only come to after an arduous, migratory trek through the wasteland (see figure 3).[10] In *Waterworld*, most people are forced to live in constant but migratory movement on the open and completely smooth space of the ocean, searching for Dryland and the possibility of settling down.

Figure 3. Death of a migrant in *Sweet Tooth* (Lemire 3, 350).

In an article addressing smooth and striated spaces in post-apocalyptic fiction, Petter Skult acknowledges the striking presence of the Deleuzoguattarian spatial distinction in post-apocalyptic fiction. Where the smooth spaces of nomadic movement found in the post-

[9] *Sweet Tooth* is analyzed in greater detail in the case study of chapter three.
[10] Just as in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, the haven where the characters finally end up in *Sweet Tooth* is the same as their point of departure.

apocalyptic genre "celebrate the disappearance of industrialized society and the walls that enclosed it," the post-apocalyptic migrants of striated space "retreat into their safe place and attempt to survive" (Skult 114). He acknowledges the "many variations in how post-apocalyptic novels treat smooth and striated space, or as it were, space and place" (114), but focuses in his contrastive reading of McCarthy's *The Road* and Max Brooks's zombie-holocaust novel *World War Z* (2006) on migratory movement and the widely different approaches to the construction of place found in the two novels. While *The Road* presents an "almost complete effacing of place," *World War Z* shows an "utter dependence on place," and together they form "two extremes of the representation of place in the post-apocalypse" (Skult 104). Skult concludes that in *World War Z* there is hope for a return to the striated spaces of society, whereas in *The Road* there seems to be little or no expectations of a deliverance from the complete smoothness of the story world. Neither of the novels "celebrate the disappearance of industrialized society" (Skult 114), as the secure and stationary dwelling of the migrant seems to be the mode of being preferred by both texts. In contrast to such clearly migratory modes of being, the post-human Mariner in *Waterworld* cannot find rest in the island paradise but instead continues his nomadic travels shortly after finding Dryland, a choice also made by the eponymous hero of the *Mad Max* series. Both exemplify the ceaseless traveling of the post-apocalyptic nomad, making the smooth space of the desert or ocean their home.

The Dog Stars provides a more complex mix of the nomad and the migrant. The GPS of Hig's Cessna airplane points him along a clear and migratory trajectory to the next airport.[11] Yet, the view of the landscape that Hig as a pilot is able to obtain from his elevated position is that of the smooth space of the nomad, which also finds a correspondence in the long, uninterrupted flow of a very long sentence:

[11] Airports are from the perspective of the migrant the ideal place. It is a point connected to other points between which travel is more akin to teleportation than a corporeal experience of displacement. In Emily St. John Mandel's post-apocalyptic novel *Station Eleven* (2014), an airport functions very much like an endpoint haven.

> The way the landscape falls into place around the drainages, the capillaries and arteries of falling water: mountain slopes bunched and wrinkled, wringing themselves into the furrows of couloir and creek, draw and chasm, the low places defining the spurs and ridges and foothills the way creases define the planes of a face, lower down the canyon cuts, and then the swales and valleys of the lowest slopes, the sinuous rivers and the dry beds where water used to run seeming to hold the hills and the waves of the high plains all together and not the other way around. (Heller 47)

There is nothing striated about the sensual and corporeal description of the flowing and inviting landscape that Hig experiences. Despite flying his plane between very distinct points according to detailed and in themselves striating flight plans in the modus of the migrant, the very same act of flying reveals a smooth landscape below him. However, this is not the smoothness of *The Road*'s destroyed wasteland or *World War Z*'s zombie-infested spaces but the smooth space as seen by the nomad. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that "[n]omads and migrants can mix in many ways, or form a common aggregate" (443). When flying, Hig could tentatively be read as such a nomad-migrant aggregate.

On a Nomadic Trajectory in *The Flame in the Flood*

The dialectical relation between space and place, as described by Tuan and Casey, seems to constitute the entire narrative structure of *The Flame in the Flood*, a 2017 post-apocalyptic computer game. However, applying the framework offered by Deleuze and Guattari unpacks several more layers to the game's logic. The game is set in a flooded America where incessant raining has turned the landscape into a rushing river with scattered islands of terra firma.[12] The player's in-game avatar, a girl referred to by the extra-diegetic menus as Scout, races down a swift river on a ramshackle raft together with her dog

[12] The game's premise quite clearly draws on the Genesis flood narrative, a common template for end-of-the-world stories in Western culture.

Aesop in an attempt to escape the rising water.[13] From the very start, *The Flame in the Flood* quite literally advertises itself as a game of movement: On the menu screen the player is advised on an intra-diegetic information board not to idle (see figure 4). What happens to anyone who remains stationary is equally explicit. Next to the sign sit the skeletal remains of someone who, presumably, did not move quickly enough.

Figure 4. Menu screen, *The Flame in the Flood* (cropped; Molasses Flood, 2017).

The main part of the game narrates the story of the girl and her dog's race down a quickly moving river on a raft while making intermittent landfalls on islands to find equipment, food, and places of temporary rest. The pace of the game changes between the necessary mobility (through space) afforded by the craft and the equally necessary short stops that make "it possible for location to be transformed into place" (Tuan 6). However, not long after Scout has stopped in a place, the game's incentives to move further down the river become clear. In order to survive, she has to find food, clean water, warmth, and somewhere to sleep, and for this, she needs to continue

[13] The dog's function in the game as a guide-dog, together with the girl being referred to as Scout, is pregnant with meaning from the perspective of spatiality and movement. The scout is the one sent forward to reconnoiter in order to gather information, which, in turn, facilitates movement. The dog's name Aesop, of course, alludes to the Greek storyteller of the same name, famous for his fables. Aesop as a guide-dog suggests a connection between spatiality and narrativity in the game. Together, Scout and Aesop create a narrative through explorative movement.

traveling. No one place can cater to all her needs. As such, the game's logic turns into a dialectical interplay between immobility and mobility, between being and becoming, between rest and movement, between place and space.

Furthermore, the physical space through which the girl is moving is *procedurally generated*, which means that it is different every time the game is played. The game's algorithms randomly structure both the space of the river and the places where Scout and Aesop make landfall. As a result, any attempt by the player to memorize the spaces and locations in the game is made impossible by its design. The ceaseless flow of the water together with the constantly changing landscape thus constitute an unstable space, which upsets all attempts to construct a sense of stable place.

The brief landfalls the girl and the dog make on islands in the river may be understood to cater, in Casey's words, to our "longing for cozy quarters—not merely for adequate shelter but for boundaries that embrace" (79), but also function as a contrast to the boundless void of the river. However, although these temporary places of rest provide a chance for the girl to mend her raft and acquire supplies, they are far from cozy or welcoming. Rather, in the vastness of the open river-space they are small and insecure places where dangerous animals and humans roam. Figuratively speaking, these places push the girl and the dog out into the river again. To find more food, water, warmth, and places to rest, they are forced to stay mobile. As a result, the privileged position of place in Tuan's and Casey's treatments of the space/place dialectic is to some extent undermined and questioned by the game. In the story world, place is necessary for survival, but as the skeleton and the information board in the title screen remind us, immobility is not an option. Staying put means dying. Thus, the game appears to question the privileged position of place and instead to favor the mobility of space.

The procedurally-generated river space aligns well with the idea of the heterogenous smooth space of Deleuze and Guattari. The turbulent waters of the rushing flow could even be said to smooth the formerly striated spaces of the story world. Houses and cars from pre-catastrophic times float aimlessly down the river as the laminar flows and striated spaces of pre-apocalyptic cities are "returned to a smooth

space" (Deleuze and Guattari 552); it could be argued that this smoothing is a fundamental premise of the post-apocalyptic genre as such. The girl becomes a nomad traveling on the smooth space of the river with her raft being the home she always brings with her on her "voyage in place," thereby construing movement as a mode of being as well as becoming (Deleuze and Guattari 560).

The raft can thus be read as a metaphor interrogating the complex dialectic between rest and movement, place and space, being and becoming that does not represent the place-centric dialectic of Tuan and Casey as much as the place-agnostic smooth and striated spaces of Deleuze and Guattari. The game's mechanics and narrative emphasize this fact. For example, the girl is centered on the screen in a way that reinforces the being of the nomad rather than the becoming of the migrant: With the exception of the very last scene, which I discuss below, the girl is more or less in the middle of the screen at all times. The girl moves around in the story world, but from the perspective of the player, the world moves around the girl—a true "voyage in place" (Deleuze and Guattari 560). Yet, as Deleuze and Guattari stress, while "[v]oyaging smoothly is a becoming" it is "a difficult, uncertain becoming" and one should "[n]ever believe [that] a smooth space will suffice to save us" (561, 581).

The only feasible alternative for continued, long-term survival is for the girl to reach 'The Kingdom,' a sunny place of rest, community, and calm waters. 'The Kingdom' is the final destination in the game—a pastoral endpoint haven—where a community of survivors grow vegetables, keep livestock, and send dogs out into the wasteland to guide people to the safety of their island paradise (see figure 5). Importantly, this final location is pre-designed and not randomly generated, which makes the forming of a sense of (immobile and striated) place possible.[14] According to the game's lead designer Gwen Frey, there are only four fixed or predesigned locations in the game: the

[14] A more elaborate discussion on the game's construction of place would need to address different narrative levels of the audience/player. To the girl in the story world, there is no difference between randomly generated and pre-designed areas. The increased 'sense of place,' which I argue that 'the Kingdom' offers because it is pre-designed rather than procedurally generated, works mainly on the level of the *player*.

first island where the game starts, the final destination of 'The Kingdom,' and two story-essential locations along the way.[15]

Figure 5. 'The Kingdom'—the game's final destination (cropped; Molasses Flood, 2017).

'The Kingdom' is an archetypal example of a post-apocalyptic, pastoral haven—a thriving, utopian place of rest in a ruined world. It encapsulates the main characteristic of place the way Tuan, Casey, or Bachelard somewhat narrowly understand place: a place is where (stationary) *rest* is not only possible but preferred. As a place of rest, 'The Kingdom' functions as the dialectical counterpoint to the spacious and dangerous wasteland of the river. It gains a sense of place from the contrast with the river's open-ended space: The island and the river could be said to "require each other for definition" (Tuan 9). Fittingly for an understanding of the relation between space and place as dialectical, the final scene of the game points back into the wasteland, back into space. When the girl enters the central building of the island, the screen fades into white and a question appears in writing: "Tell us, traveler… what's out there?" The question demonstrates a curiosity "for wide open spaces and thus for lack of containment" regardless of the apparent security offered by the island's comforting immobility (Casey 79).

But there is something disquieting about the 'The Kingdom,' something jarringly obvious to the player: no humans can be seen. Despite the hints of human activity—crops are cultivated in neat rows

[15] This information was provided by Gwen Frey, lead designer at The Molasses Flood, through direct messaging via her Twitter account @direGoldfish.

and cattle is kept behind well-built fences—the girl does not meet any other human. When she enters the central building and the question is posed about "what's out there," the player is left uncertain who is asking the question, to whom (the girl or the player?), and in what modality (written or spoken?). The haven as an actual place of rest is thus undermined not only for the girl but also for the player: 'The Kingdom' might not be the place of rest and community she needs or searches for. Instead—to speak again with Deleuze and Guattari—the girl's smooth voyaging down the river on her raft together with the nonhuman Aesop is offered as an alternative form of both being and becoming, an alternative that subverts and questions the utopian qualities of the haven.

The space/place distinction, identified by Tuan as being culturally codified through a human mobility versus stationary duality, seems, at least in some post-apocalyptic narratives to favor place. Whereas movement through space is violent and involuntary in *The Flame in the Flood*, place offers security, albeit tenuous and temporary, food, and rest. As such, the haven of 'The Kingdom' seems to position place as the preferred mode of being in the story world of *The Flame in the Flood*. However, even when space is dangerous and limitless, it offers a chance of reaching an even better place: Movement is necessary—even essential—to reach a place of rest. Moreover, the game offers the option of an 'endless game' where the girl never reaches 'The Kingdom': the player can choose to play a version of the game that even more fully embraces a nomadic logic of voyaging in place. Instead of reaching the final island, the river continues endlessly, and in this game mode the moving raft becomes the girl's only fixed location in the world.

Case Study: Flying Below the Radar in Joseph Kosinski's *Oblivion* (2013)

While *The Flame in the Flood* undermines place-essentialism through its subversive advocacy of nomadic possibilities and movement, Joseph Kosinski's film *Oblivion* (2013) seemingly does the same while actually doing the opposite. Whereas the temptations in *The Flame in the Flood* of settling down in the haven are counteracted by the choice of

continuing on a nomadic trajectory, the haven in *Oblivion*, I argue, positions immobility and a migratory lifestyle as the preferred mode of being despite the film's ostensible support for nomadism.

The film portrays a post-apocalyptic future in which the Tet, an extraterrestrial machine entity orbiting the Earth, has destroyed the moon and killed most of humanity in an ensuing war. The Earth is now covered in a thick layer of grey dust with only a few tall buildings and bridges as the only visible remains of human civilization; the opening logo of Universal Pictures shows a ravaged Earth from space, suggesting that the ruined landscapes depicted in the film can be found all over the globe. The ruins of the Capitol Building and the Washington Monument (see figure 6), as well as the destroyed landmark structures of New York City (e.g. the Empire State Building and the Brooklyn Bridge), set the events of the film in and around the urbanized megalopolis of the Northeastern Atlantic Seaboard, in the United States.[16] In the film, the protagonist Jack Harper (Tom Cruise) shifts from a position of anonymity as one of the Tet's migratory worker-subjects to becoming part of a Deleuzoguattarian nomadic war machine that eventually destroys the Tet. Central to his development is the protagonist's frequent visits to a pastoral haven: a hidden verdant mountain valley out of reach of the Tet. The film draws on a number of science fiction, dystopian, and post-apocalyptic tropes and is thus in a rich intertextual relationship with different genres. It addresses themes such as identity formation, surveillance, class struggles, [17] and humanity coming together to fight a common threat. Nick Jones has pointed out that "numerous reviewers have rightly commented that the film increasingly relies on ideas from other sf" (291), but this fact rather adds to the film's impact. The intersection of surveillance, memories, and (im)mobility is especially central to the film's construal of identity formation, and the haven gives a spatial form to these interrogations.

[16] See Jerry Määttä's essay "Framtiden I ruiner" (in Swedish) and Sibylle Machat's *In the Ruins of Civlizations* for discussions on ruined buildings in post-apocalyptic fiction.

[17] In Nowell Marshall's Marxist reading of the film, he argues that the film shows how "a working-class Anglo-American man [the protagonist] must align himself with a woman [Julia] to overthrow and kill the oppressive capitalist Anglo-American woman [the Tet in the form of the supervisor Sally]" (37).

Figure 6. The wasteland in *Oblivion* (Universal Pictures, 2013).

Deleuze and Guattari's theories on smooth and striated spaces, and the concomitant figures of the nomad and the migrant, inform my reading of the haven in *Oblivion* and form an integral part in what I see as the constitution of the protagonist's identity progression. In short, the haven is central to the protagonist's transition from a migratory worker to a position of greater agency as nomadic warrior and leader of a human rebellion. My reading of the haven is also informed by theories of liminality, as outlined by Arnold van Gennep and developed by Victor Turner and others, and I argue that the pastoral haven in *Oblivion* is a liminal space in which the protagonist reconfigures his identity. As a hidden space located in-between differently structured realities, it allows the protagonist to explore his past and future selves from a place out of reach from an outside world mainly represented and (violently) enforced by the Tet's surveillance technologies. Yet, while the final destruction of this surveillance apparatus seemingly frees the protagonist from a migratory mode of anonymous being through his very literal death, the post-liminal social structures he enters into in cloned form carry their own elements of striation: He becomes a compliant part in an Anglo-American, heterosexual, and sedentary family lifestyle strongly advocated by the film.

Oblivion's plot revolves around Jack slowly learning about a past he remembers but has not lived, and his realizing the Tet's true purpose. From its orbit, the Tet oversees the harvesting of energy through the use of enormous 'hydro-rigs' that destroy the Earth's oceans. The film's protagonist works as a drone maintenance technician and spends his working days moving across a devastated

landscape to make sure the Tet's extractivism continues uninterrupted. The drones are spherically shaped, highly capable robotic weapon-systems that fly around searching for scavengers, or "scavs," whom they kill on sight. Jack incorrectly believes that the Tet is a human space station used as a steppingstone to the Saturn moon of Titan, where humanity supposedly continues to exist. He gradually discovers that the scavs instead are the surviving scraps of humanity. They live a nomadic existence and fight a losing battle against the Tet.

Jack's nights are spent in an elevated sky tower together with his female companion Victoria (Andrea Riseborough), who works as a communications officer relaying orders from the Tet. They have a sexual albeit loveless relationship. The sleek and transparent sky tower that functions as their home serves as a contrapuntal topos to the rustic cottage of the haven.[18] Where the sky tower has floor-to-ceiling windows and direct visual contact with the Tet, the haven is a hidden valley surrounded by high mountains. That is, the futuristic and elegant aesthetic of the penthouse-like sky tower works very much like an inverted version of the haven. Both places are spatially restricted, but while the haven is hidden away in a valley, the sky tower is conspicuously positioned in the clouds. Two versions of sedentary place, two versions of home, thus spatialize the narrative.

Victoria is equally in the dark regarding the Tet's identity. Unbeknownst to themselves as well as to the viewer for the first part of the narrative, Jack and Victoria are human clones. Sent to intercept and investigate the Tet when it first appeared in the solar system some 60 years before the events of the film, the original Jack and Victoria were astronauts aboard the NASA spaceship *Odyssey*. They were captured by the Tet and used as genetic blueprints for the numerous Jacks and Victorias now working all over the world. In the story's present, pairs of Jacks and Victorias protect the hydro-rigs and fight the scavs unaware of the existence of other pairs, each pair given a prescribed grid area to monitor and forbidden to cross over into any adjacent and supposedly contaminated out-of-bounds grid area. Jack

[18] The sleek lines and dust-free environment of the sky tower are reminiscent of and clearly pay homage to the envisioned aesthetics of the future found in for example the many installments of *Star Trek* or Stanley Kubrick's genre-defining *2001: A Space Odyssey*, a film that just like *Oblivion* explores the difficulties and dangers of human-computer interaction.

refers to himself as "Jack Harper, tech four-nine" in the film (00:04:32), which not only provides a clue to the existence of more maintenance technicians but helps to emphasize his position as an anonymous, numbered worker in the Tet's service. The controlled and monitored situation of Jack and Victoria clearly draws on dystopian sensibilities, providing the film with a rich mix of generic tropes from several genres.

Like the corresponding setup in the two *Blade Runner* films, the protagonist's dreams of a pre-apocalyptic existence question the subjectivity of memories and their role in identity formation. Jack comes to question the veracity of his memories and consequently his own identity. Too many years have passed since the catastrophic war for the images of the past to be his memories: "I know I'm dreaming, but it feels like more than that. It feels like a memory. How can that be?" (01:01:09). Even though his dreams are images of events that have actually taken place, they are the memories of the original Jack still lingering in the clone (Jack 49).[19]

Jack's days are interrupted by secret visits to a hidden valley, in the form of a pastoral haven where he finds troublesome rest in a ramshackle cottage he has built next to a pond. Unseen by the Tet and Victoria, he explores cultural memories of Anglo-American society by reading books he has found in the ruins, listening to vinyl records, and donning a flannel shirt and a baseball cap.[20] In the haven, the protagonist's lack of personal memories (the film's titular oblivion) is supplanted with cultural memories of a pre-apocalyptic existence, suggesting an erasure of the distinction between personal and cultural memory.

The Striations of the Tet

The wasteland in *Oblivion* is an ostensibly smooth but in actuality a highly striated space with a pastoral haven at the center of a dialectical reconfiguration of the striated-smooth distinction. In most post-apocalyptic fiction, pre-apocalyptic society is overwhelmed by a

[19] The dreams are first presented as black-and-white flashbacks. When Jack eventually learns the truth about his past the flashbacks are depicted in color.

[20] Books are a recurring and prominent trope in much post-apocalyptic fiction, and the written word is usually presented as one of the most important records of humanity. See for example the film *The Book of Eli* (2010).

catastrophic event that obliterates both virtual and actual striations of organized society. Political borders no longer matter and the infrastructures supporting a sedentary society are destroyed. In *Oblivion*, the catastrophic war and extractivist activities have flattened the story world's landscapes and covered it in colorless and infertile dust: The desert-like wasteland of the film is quite literally a homogenous space with only mountains and large structures like bridges and skyscrapers visible over the thick dust cover. On the surface, the wasteland thus seems to be yet another iteration of the post-apocalyptic smooth space.

But despite its appearance, the wasteland in *Oblivion* is in fact highly striated, and as such it deviates from genre convention. While the scavs are similar in many respects to other post-apocalyptic outcasts, they are not the lone remnants in an otherwise empty wasteland but the undesirable others in a highly organized (extra-terrestrial) society. The Tet, as mentioned earlier, has divided the Earth into a grid pattern, with each square assigned an identification number. Through satellite imagery and drone cameras, the machine entity oversees what goes on on the Earth's surface.[21] In this highly controlled and geolocated space, Jack moves around his assigned grid in a 'bubble-ship'—a flying machine very similar to a helicopter—and he is monitored on computer screens by Victoria from the sky tower headquarters. That is, the wasteland in *Oblivion* is, in the terms of Deleuze and Guattari, a highly "metric space" (423): It is measured, controlled, and homogenous. And homogeneity, Deleuze and Guattari explain, is not "a characteristic of smooth space, but on the contrary, the extreme result of striation" (567). Rather than being the typical smooth space of post-apocalyptic story worlds, the wasteland in *Oblivion* draws on dystopian concerns as it mirrors the striation that modern communication and location-based technologies have brought to the actual world, reifying it in the landscape of the story world.

Without invoking the full context of Althusserian Marxist theory, the Tet can be said to enforce and produce striated spaces through a

[21] For some unexplained reason, the Tet can only communicate with Victoria in the sky tower headquarters when the enormous space station rises above the horizon. The level of technology portrayed in the film should make communication possible regardless of where the Tet is, but the high-tech machine entity has probably been provided with this flaw for dramatic effect.

Repressive State Apparatus (RSA). "The State," Louis Althusser writes, "is a 'machine' of repression, which enables the ruling classes . . . to ensure their domination over the working class" (90). In these terms the Tet has supplanted the ruling class as the bureaucratic machinery of the State, implying that bureaucracy *is* the ruling class or has replaced it. The Tet's physical form is in the shape of an up-side-down all-seeing pyramid, which evokes the Eye of Providence found on one-dollar bills in the United States. The Tet thus connotes surveillance state capitalism as well as God—the Subject with capital S. Late in the film, the Tet addresses Jack directly, saying that "I created you Jack. I am your God" (01:55:05). Since "one of the fundamental tasks of the State is to striate the space over which it reigns" (Deleuze and Guattari 449), through its network of armed drones and surveillance technology the machine entity is in full control of the spaces in which Jack and Victoria exist. Their sky tower home even includes a drone, which later in the film is activated by the Tet to kill Victoria. And as all Jacks and Victorias have had their memories wiped before being tasked with a five-year mission on Earth, the Tet also controls their memories. That is, the Tet performs a striation of the mind as well as a striation of the material space in order to construct true dystopian subjects under a State Apparatus whose single-minded goal is to extract the Earth's resources.

To apply another Althusserian concept, the extractionist ideology of the Tet's State Apparatus is enforced through interpellation.[22] Even though the armed drones are programmed not to attack Jack, it is clear from all the encounters with drones that they are tasked both with keeping the scavs at bay and impressing on Jack his place in the societal structures of the Tet's State Apparatus. When the drones point their guns at Jack, asking him to identify himself, their monotone exhortations are the interpellation or 'hailing' of the RSA: It is only by clearly identifying himself as the acquiescent subject "Jack Harper, tech four-nine" that the drones refrain from attacking him. Through

[22] Althusser suggests that "ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'" (105).

the use of force and threat of violence the subject is thus hailed into submission and the extractionist ideology of the RSA is maintained.

The Liminal Valley

The Tet's striations of not only Jack's physical space but also his mind are countered in the narrative by the haven, an expansive and green yet enclosed and hidden mountain valley where the Tet's surveillance technology cannot reach. It is in this place outside the structured domination of the Tet that Jack can investigate the cultural memories of a pre-catastrophe America through books, music, and various paraphernalia of popular culture. In this contrapuntal situation to the striated spaces of the wasteland, it would be tempting to suggest that the haven constitutes a smooth space, but the pastoral haven is not the heterogenous space of the mobile nomad. Rather, I suggest reading it as a *liminal* space, a space found on the threshold between other spaces and therefore not an actual part of the story world proper. It is a space where new possibilities arise from the absence of outside structures. The pastoral haven of the mountain valley is situated in-between Jack's life as the Tet's migrant-subject and his later existence as part of the scavs' nomadic war machine.

The concept of liminality was introduced in 1909 by Dutch anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in his now famous book *Les rites de passage* (1909, translated in 1960 into English as *The Rites of Passage*). [23] In van Gennep's original anthropological context, liminality describes the position or status of a person participating in a ritual that marks a transition from one social situation to another. The person moves from an existence governed by a certain set of (pre-liminal) socio-cultural structures, through the threshold (Latin *limen*) of the transitional (liminal) stage of the rite, and emerges into a new (post-liminal) situation governed by a different set of socio-cultural structures. Examples of such rituals can be rites of passage, marriage

[23] The concept of liminality is very similar to Bakhtin's "chronotope of *threshold*," a chronotope "highly charged with emotion and value" and it appears in literature as "the chronotope of *crisis* and *break* in a life" (248). In my analysis of *Oblivion,* I will use liminality rather than Bakhtin's "chronotope of *crisis*" as I believe it provides a more comprehensive framework.

rituals, or rites of initiation.[24] Van Gennep's original concept failed to reach a wider audience until it was rediscovered and expanded in the late 1960s by British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner.[25] Where the liminal for van Gennep is mainly a phase, a period of time that passes after which the liminal entities are re-established in the post-liminal stage under new societal circumstances, for Turner the concept is expanded to be not only a temporal period but also a space that the liminal entity can occupy:[26]

> Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are exposed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon. (V. Turner 95)

The spatial scope of liminality can vary from the thin line of a threshold—the border, boundary, or limit between two spaces—to, in the formulation of Danish anthropologist Bjørn Thomassen, "more extended areas, like 'borderlands' or, arguably, whole countries, placed in important in-between positions between larger civilizations" (16).[27]

In this study, a liminal space is therefore understood as a position existing "neither here nor there" (V. Turner 95) that is "characterized by a wholesale collapse of order and a loss of background structure"

[24] Gustavo Pérez Firmat exemplifies the multifaceted nature of liminality by providing a list of the many derivatives of the word's latin root: "etymologically, limen connects with nouns like limit, limb, limbo, limbus, slime, lintel; with verbs like limn, delimit, and eliminate; and with adjectives like preliminary, sublime, and subliminal" (Pérez xiv).

[25] See Bjørn Thomassen for a comprehensive account of the intellectual history of liminality and especially the controversies around the failure of van Gennep's work to reach an audience.

[26] The analytical potential and interpretive reach of liminality has made the concept travel between disciplines. With its foundations in anthropology and sociology, liminality has found broad employment in the humanities. As a result of its usefulness as a hermeneutical tool, and the extensive theoretical work done by sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, architects, critical theorists, and many others, van Gennep's concept of liminality has expanded into such a polysemous notion that only perfunctory attempts to pinpoint its many possible uses are made here.

[27] See also Arpad Szakolczai for a discussion on liminality's wide applicability in understanding political, historical, and social events.

where "agency is pushed to the forefront" (Thomassen 20).[28] In *Oblivion*, the pastoral haven of the mountain valley is situated in-between Jack's life as the Tet's migrant-subject and his nomadic existence as part of the scavs' war machine. A liminal situation, regardless of whether it is momentary or permanent, spatial or temporal, large or small, is a resourceful space where new possibilities arise from the absence of outside structures. It is an ambiguous yet creative arena where authority is subverted and a lack of pre-defined rules allows for new possibilities and modes of existence. It is a place where social and judicial structures are porous, weak or even non-existent. It is, as it were, a place below the radar of the State Apparatus. Thomassen points to the creative aspect inherent in such liminal spaces, where "reorientations in modes of conduct and thought are produced" (20). The haven allows Jack to break free from the striating forces of the Tet and makes him accept the nomadology of the scavs. As such, the haven can be seen as a liminal place of enablement.

That the haven is a space separate from the rest of the story world is made clear when Jack enters it: To gain access to the haven he needs to cross several boundaries. When heading for the haven, he flies close to a virtual border set up by the Tet, the outer limit to his freedom of movement beyond which there is a supposedly dangerous radiation zone. The border is a virtual structure raised by the Tet to stop the numerous Jacks and Victorias from learning about each other and the true nature of their situations. Victoria's nervous, interpellational urgings to Jack to remain in radio contact with her is lost in static when he flies down into a gorge and through the misty haze of a waterfall. The final approach to the haven goes through a stone portal, yet another threshold, and the non-diegetic musical score reaches a crescendo while Jack lands his bubble-ship in the haven next to his cottage, and the screen fades to black. The next scene opens to the serenity of the haven, with birdsong, no musical score, and a static or slow-moving camera as Jack enters the small house he has built for himself. Together with the sounds of nature, the absence of a non-

[28] See also Agnes Horvath et al for a similar understanding of the concept: "Originally referring to the ubiquitous rites of passage as a category of cultural experience, liminality captures in-between situations and conditions characterized by the dislocation of established structures, the reversal of hierarchies, and uncertainty about the continuity of tradition and future outcomes" (2).

diegetic musical score, and the slower and longer camera shots, these border crossings all help to drive home the point that he has now entered a zone that exists on a different plane of reality from that of the rest of the film's setting.[29] When entering the liminal space of the haven, Jack is hidden from the structures that usually govern his existence, and the interpellations of the drones or Victoria can no longer reach him.

Situated by a pond, the makeshift cottage has a large fireplace and solar- and wind-powered electricity. The almost wall-less shack is filled with pre-apocalypse memorabilia, like an old stereo system with vinyl records, a refrigerator, and piles of dusty books. Upon the first visit depicted in the film, Jack dons a New York Yankees baseball cap, a flannel shirt and a grey t-shirt—which temporarily covers the identification number 49 on his regular jacket—and starts shooting balls in a basketball hoop tied to a fir tree, all to the tune of Led Zeppelin's 1969 *Ramble On* played diegetically on his stereo. However, the rich nostalgia of this scene does not primarily invoke the time just prior to the catastrophe, which is set to some time around 2017. Jack does not surround himself with artifacts congruent with his memories of a pre-apocalyptic New York of the early twenty-first century, except for the baseball cap that we see the original Jack wearing in a flashback. The haven is instead a smorgasbord of artifacts from the America of the late 1960s set in pastoral surroundings reminiscent of Thoreau's Walden pond.

From his position in the haven, Jack is now "looking not only in and out, but behind and ahead," as Subha Mukherji describes the many-faceted spatial-cum-temporal nature of the liminal space (xxii). The haven thus functions as a threshold from which he experiences both temporal directions. One example of this Janus-faced conflation of temporalities occurs when Jack sleeps on the grass by the pond and dreams (in itself a liminal state) of being at the top of the Empire State Building together with his girlfriend Julia (Olga Kurylenko), at the time when the original Jack proposed to her. He awakes suddenly from these dreams of a past he remembers but has not actually experienced

[29] This situation is very similar to that of Hig entering the haven of the box canyon in Heller's *The Dog Stars*. In *Oblivion*, the heightened sense of reality of the haven can be spoken about in terms of a higher degree of ontological facticity (see the case study in chapter one for a longer discussion).

when a de-orbiting spaceship carrying a sleeping Julia—the wife of the original Jack—plummets through the atmosphere above the haven. The pastoral tranquility of the haven is disturbed by the screeching noises of the crashing spaceship in a scene that brings to mind the sudden intrusion of industrialized modernity on the silent calm of rurality found in Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden*. The spaceship disturbing the idyll serves as an image of the larger world encroaching on the liminal valley, outside time seeping through, but it also serves as an image of a futurity reasserting itself at a point when Jack is preoccupied with the past, thereby highlighting the haven's ambiguous temporal position.

The Nomadic War Machine and the Reconstitution of Smooth Space

Apart from the liminal space of the haven, the Tet has been successful in controlling the natural flows of the Earth. The extractivist activities of the Tet State Apparatus dominate most of the landscape as it works towards its seemingly inevitable end: the complete devouring of Earth's resources.[30] However, from the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical framework, a State cannot refrain from striating space:

> One of the fundamental tasks of the State is to striate the space over which it reigns, or to utilize smooth spaces as a means of communication in the service of striated space. It is a vital concern of every State not only to vanquish nomadism but to control migrations and, more generally, to establish a zone of rights over an entire "exterior". . . . (449)

In *Oblivion*, the machine entity follows its capitalist State algorithms when it maps, measures, and homogenizes the wasteland in order to extract the energy it needs, while, concurrently, its Repressive State Apparatus exerts control over the bodies and minds of its migratory subjects: the many Jacks and Victorias in their sky towers.

Yet, despite the fact that "the forces at work within space continually striate it," Deleuze and Guattari crucially point to the

[30] Any number of ecocritically informed concerns can be raised here regarding modernity's capitalist predation of natural resources and its unsustainable logic, making possible a reading of *Oblivion* as a cultural reaction to and part in such a discussion.

concept's dialectical, interdependent and co-constitutive nature: "in the course of [the State's] striation it develops other forces and emits new smooth spaces. Even the most striated city gives rise to smooth spaces" (581). In other words, the re-appearance of smooth space is an indispensable corollary of striation. Following such a dialectical logic, the Tet State's attempt to striate all available space in *Oblivion*'s story world inexorably results in the production of smooth space. Recalling the discussion earlier in the chapter on the dialectic nature of smooth and striated spaces, such attempts cannot result in anything else: They "exist only in mixture" and "striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space" (Deleuze and Guattari 552).

In *Oblivion*, the Tet's striations are countered by the scavengers. Beneath the surface of the wasteland, they mount a rebellion against the usurping Tet, and in so doing form the core of a Deleuzoguattarian *war machine*. Using guerrilla strategies the scavengers destroy drones and hydro-rigs whenever possible:

> And each time there is an operation against the State—insubordination, rioting, guerilla warfare, or revolution as act—it can be said that a war machine has revived, that a new nomadic potential has appeared, accompanied by the reconstitution of a smooth space or a manner of being in space as though it were smooth. (Deleuze and Guattari 450)

The nomadic war machine is fundamentally different from the violence exerted by the Repressive State Apparatuses. Institutional warfare, like the drone-army of the Tet, is the State's appropriation of the war machine, not the war machine per se. Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the war machine is instead the violent *reaction* to any attempt at State formation and striation. Indeed, the nomads and the war machine both result from the same situational features: "It is not the nomad who defines this constellation of characteristics; it is this constellation that defines the nomad, and at the same time the essence of the war machine" (Deleuze and Guattari 492). While the war machine is not the invention or result of the nomadic mode of being, both are consequences of the same underlying generative processes. In *Oblivion*, the nomadic scavengers and their war machine reconstitute

smooth space and act as the dialectical complement to the Tet's striations.

The scavengers, however, are fighting what seems to be a losing battle against the vastly superior machine entity. In the typical format of American hero narratives with their focus on individual agency and accountability, a (male) leader is needed to win the war against the Tet: the protagonist Jack Harper gravitates in the direction of the "nomadic potential" (Deleuze and Guattari 450) of the scavengers as a result of his visits to the liminal space of the haven. The haven offers him the unsupervised space he needs to formulate an identity, and the exposure to cultural artifacts like books and music sets him on a nomadic trajectory. The leader of the scavengers, Beech (Morgan Freeman), explains to Jack 49 how they have fought several Jack clones over the years. Beech tells Jack 49 that he seems different:

> [The Tet] had taken one of our best and turned him against us. No soul. No humanity. . . . Then one day, I saw you set down, another drone to fix, but in the rubble that day was a book. You picked it up, studied it. And I thought I saw a way. When you stepped in front of that drone and saved her, I knew you were in there, somewhere. I just had to find a way to bring you back. (*Oblivion* 01.33.05)

It is made clear in the film that Jack cannot read his books in the heavily monitored space of the sky tower. The liminal space of the haven offers the only place where he can read and thus develop an identity hidden from the hailings of the State Apparatus. But as I will argue in the next section, the apparent freedom offered by the haven is deceptive in that other ideologies are enforced, albeit not as violently and as conspicuously as those of the Tet's.

Sentimental Celebration of Immobility

When led by Commander Jack Harper, the scavengers' nomadic war machine is successful in destroying the Tet. By ostensibly acting in accordance with his pre-liminal identity as the Tet's migratory maintenance worker, Jack 49 manages to enter the orbiting space station and detonate a nuclear device, bringing the Tet's reign to an end. Jack's transition from a liminal into a post-liminal position is

allegorically depicted in his suicidal attack, aligning the end of the liminal state with death (V. Turner 95).[31] Jack 49 literally dies as the Tet explodes, but Commander Jack Harper symbolically survives as Jack 52, the clone who lives across the radiation zone border and who enters the haven in the final scene, where he finds Jack 49's wife Julia and their daughter.

It appears that *Oblivion* thus thematically explores the successful destruction of State striations and the reemergence of smooth space. The Tet's attempt to establish a sedentary lifestyle is shattered, and the scavengers' nomadic existence is offered as an alternative mode of being. Seemingly, the smoothing processes common to the post-apocalyptic narrative is thereby fulfilled with the destruction of the Tet: The wasteland is only truly smooth when the surveillance of the State Apparatus disappears. However, Deleuze and Guattari's relentless focus on the dialectical flow between the endpoints reasserts itself: "The striated itself may in turn disappear in a 'catastrophe,' opening the way for a new smooth space, and *another striated space*…" (573; emphasis added, final ellipsis in original). While it seems clear that the film advocates a nomadic mode of being free from the striating forces of State ideologies—the nomads after all win the war against the Tet—the film's final scene re-establishes a sedentary lifestyle as *another striated space* appears in the form of the Anglo-American home based on heteronormative family values.

In the final scene of the film, Jack 52 enters the haven, which now has lost its liminal properties and instead functions more like the sentimental endpoint haven seen in so many other works of post-apocalyptic fiction. Indicating closure, it is now a place of migratory rest rather than the more evasive space of Jack 49's liminal state. In a voice-over, which is also the final words of the film, Jack 52 firmly establishes not only his new identity but also the pastoral valley's new function as an endpoint haven of permanent and migratory rest: "For three years I searched for the house he [Jack 49] built. I knew it had to be out there. Because I know him. I am him. I am Jack Harper, and I am home" (01:57:08). When the film closes, the post-liminal Jack 52

[31] Turner suggests that some part of the self is left behind when a post-liminal position is established. For example, for an adolescent to transition into adulthood, the child must metaphorically die.

comes 'back' home to his (or rather Jack 49's) wife Julia and their daughter to (re)unite their family in the endpoint haven. In other words, the post-liminal structures Jack enters are *not* governed by the smooth spaces of the roaming nomads but are those of the immobile migrant. This flagrant advocacy of family values ending the film is "the loose stone which [pulls] down the whole building," as J. Hillis Miller calls "the element in the system . . . which is alogical" (341). While the haven is important in Jack's supposed transition to a nomadic life, in the end it is very clearly presented as a home celebrating the stationary lifestyle of the agricultural family. Even though the post-apocalyptic endpoint haven in *Oblivion* is free from the interpellations of a Repressive State Apparatus, it is governed by Anglo-American structures of the heterosexual, sedentary family. As such, the final scenes of the film see the complex midpoint haven of Jack 49 transform into the sentimental endpoint haven of Jack 52.

Chapter Three:

The Haven and Its Narrative Function

The end is everywhere the chief thing.
— Aristotle, *Poetics*

There is continuall spring, and harvest there
Continuall, both meeting at one time
— Spenser, *The Fairie Queene*

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time
— T.S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*

The very first spoken lines of the post-apocalyptic film *Bird Box* (2018) establishes a haven as the final resolution to the plot: It is made clear that survival is only possible if the protagonist reaches this place of rest. The first scene opens up on a forested river valley with the voice of an anonymous man giving directions over a radio: "We have a place, a compound. We have a community. It's safe here. How many of you are there? Are any of them children? Because the fastest way to get here is by the river, and I don't think you could make it with kids" (0:0:16). The scene following the radio broadcast shows the female protagonist Malorie (Sandra Bullock) preparing herself and her two children for the arduous journey down the river to the haven described by the male voice. The protagonist needs to flee from an unnamed and unseen fear, and the haven promises safety if it can be reached. The entire narrative is thus bookended by the haven: The promise of a haven in the beginning and the successful fulfillment of that promise in the end organize and provide meaning to the narrative. Without the haven to strive for, the journey, and by extension the narrative, loses its

meaning. The existence of and desire to reach a place of rest is established in the first scene, and this desire is fulfilled in the last scene of the film.

In general, there are three broad uses of the haven in organizing the plot of a post-apocalyptic narrative. The haven positioned midway through a narrative functions as a place of rest en route to somewhere, examples of which can be found in the case studies of the previous two chapters. The haven placed at the very end, instead, governs the entire narrative with the lure of a final safe place of rest.[1] But there is also a third possibility. In some stories, the haven is obscured in the beginning of the narrative, and the characters go on a long removal-and-return journey before ultimately ending up in the place where they started, finally realizing that the place they left was actually the place they were searching for. This third and final chapter deals mainly with these last two narrative uses of the haven: the endpoint haven and the start-and-endpoint haven.

The focus of this chapter is on the examination of the narrative functions of the endpoint haven and how it produces meaning by solidifying and spatializing the end—how the haven provides a place, a where, for narratives to end. There is a large body of theoretical work on narrativity and temporality that takes an interest in the profound connection between beginnings and endings. Despite being separated by the events of the plot, the beginning and end of a narrative are in constant dialogue; the anticipation of the end constantly affects and changes the narrative's production of meaning. It is only through the expectation and final experience of an end that a narrative reaches its full meaning potential: "[T]he end," writes Peter Brooks, "calls to the beginning, transforms and enhances it" (94). And in the post-apocalyptic fictions studied in this chapter, the haven is the locus of this communication. In *Bird Box*, the end's transformative call to the

[1] As a main motif of character action, endpoint havens could also be said to sometimes function as MacGuffins, the usually uninteresting but highly important loci of action for the narrative, the places or items characters are searching for. The idea of the MacGuffin was popularized and put to strong use by Alfred Hitchcock in many of his films. Todd McGowan, writing on Hitchcock's films, suggests that "[w]hat the MacGuffin really is doesn't matter though the entire narrative turns on the pursuit of it. Its appearance of rich content functions as a lure for characters within the narrative and for spectators outside it" (514). When characters finally arrive at a MacGuffin-like haven, the narrative reaches a swift closure and ends.

beginning takes the literal form of a radio message, a call from a haven placed both temporally and spatially at the narrative endpoint. The endpoint haven thus becomes a "structuring power" of not only the characters' journey but the entire narrative (P. Brooks 94).

In addition to examining the narrative "structuring power" of the haven, the chapter also investigates the haven's part in the potential of fiction to alleviate the existential crisis presented by the insignificance of a human lifespan when compared to the boundlessness of infinity. The plot-driven fiction of a novel or a film demarcates a segment of time by imposing a beginning and an end between which the story unfolds. By this operation, the narrative confines time to a more manageable size. The post-apocalyptic haven is often found at the very center of the genre's exploration of the complex interplay of beginnings and endings, and it works to make eternity finite by *placing* the end through its provision of a spatially restricted cul-de-sac, where the narrative comes to a temporal and a spatial stop. As such, the haven provides a remedy to the human mind's inability to cope with eternity and its own inevitable demise. The claim in this chapter is therefore that the haven can be seen as the locus for the genre's investigation of and reaction to the fear of temporal and spatial limitlessness. The haven is a tangible space where time and place can both start and end, a bounded place where the spatiotemporal vastness of being can be controlled and meaning can be produced.

Similar to the previous two chapters, this chapter begins by discussing the theoretical framework needed to understand the narrative functions of the haven. The theory is applied to and exemplified by primary texts throughout the chapter. The chapter then ends with a longer case study of Jeff Lemire's graphic novel *Sweet Tooth* (2009).

The Terrifying Limitlessness of Time

The human condition is often one where people have trouble relating to the immensity of cosmological time, and from a classically Western frame of reference, time extends seemingly indefinitely. In such a non-cyclical notion of time, the infinitely long arrow of time stretches back

in history and forward into the future without any clear boundaries or endpoints. Without the bookending supports of beginnings and endings, time runs inexorably along a vast temporal continuum without restrictions, what Frank Kermode calls "the terrifying limitlessness of time" (169). The organizing structure of narrative, which can be seen as the mind's ability to formulate a fictional concordance between events, grows from and speaks to the human mind's demand for congruence and causality as well as its longing for a response to this temporal infinity.

The post-apocalyptic genre caters, at least in part, to such a need for time to be limited and segmented. Not only is one of the functions of any plot-driven narrative to rein in and control a fear of infinite timespans, the post-apocalyptic genre seems particularly well suited to fulfill this function. It does so by describing how the world ends as well as how it might continue. In detailing stories of how human-based, large-scale activities come to an often brutal stop, the post-apocalyptic narrative not only gives the reader an account of an end but also of possible new beginnings, albeit fictional.

The genre can therefore be seen as seeking to divide time into manageable segments through an examination of fictional beginnings and endings on both a societal and an individual level; the alternative, a plotless chaos of sempiternal time, is frightening, and Kermode speaks of this fear when he talks about the "giddy successiveness of world-time" (169). The wheel of time, as it were, turns ever onwards regardless of and indifferent to human activities. In the great scheme of world time, centuries and millennia pass by incessantly without any regard to human affairs. Beyond the time spans of recorded history, new mountains and oceans form over geological periods measured in millions of years. On a cosmological scale, stars are born and galaxies collide far removed from the temporality experienced by the human mind, to put it mildly. In other words, the human lifespan is seemingly unimportant when put into the context of a world time both vast in scope and indifferent to the mind's search for coherence and segmentation.[2] This "aporia of temporality," writes Paul Ricoeur, "lies

[2] One of the more well-known authorships to deal extensively with what he calls "blasphemous infinity" is H. P. Lovecraft, the American writer of science fiction horror active

precisely in the difficulty in holding on to both ends of this chain, the time of the soul and the time of the world" (14). The human mind is not prepared to deal with the enormous and seemingly irresolvable discrepancy between the subject's experience of time and the eons of world time.[3]

The time of the soul is the measure of the subject's experience of time—what Ricoeur calls a phenomenological sense of time as opposed to a cosmological sense. Put crudely, a life begins at birth and ends at death, and this timespan—the span of a typical human life—is the foundational yardstick with which humans relate to time itself. The human subject's entire experience of a life takes place between these two fundamental points on an otherwise endless time continuum. In addition to a sensation of insignificance that comes from this realization when compared to the cosmological yardstick, humans have no recollections of being born and no knowledge of what death will be like. This means that one has no direct experience of the two most consequential events of one's life. Birth is certain but not remembered, and death is a yet unconfirmed and frightening proposition. Edward Morgan Forster articulates this situation in his *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), where he writes that one's own birth and death are

> strange because they are at the same time experiences and not experiences. We only know of them by report. We were all born, but we cannot remember what it was like. And death is coming even as birth has come, but, similarly, we do not know what it is like. Our final experience, like our first, is conjectural. We move between two darknesses. (55)

That is to say, from its position on the time continuum the human mind can stretch its understanding back towards birth, after which the

primarily in the 1920s. The opening lines of his short-story *The Call of Cthulhu* from 1926 call attention to the horror that would come from a full realization of eternity: "The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of a black sea of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far."

[3] It should be noted that humans are just as ill-equipped to deal with time on a micro-scale. The timespans of bacteria, cells, and atoms can also be argued to be part of the "aporia of temporality." However, in scholars' and artists' exploration of time there is a tendency to focus on our inability to grasp eternity and not addressing our equally poor ability to understand the microcosmic scale.

darkness of the past stretches to infinity. And looking forward, the mind can anticipate its inevitable demise and briefly glimpse the dark expanse of futurity following it. Kermode famously calls this situation to be "stranded in the middle" (186), from which we feel a strong "need in the moment of existence to belong, to be related to a beginning and to an end" (4).

To alleviate fears of Forster's two darknesses, to seek a resolution to Ricoeur's aporia of temporality, and to find a meaningful existence in Kermode's middle many of us look to fiction. Or in the somewhat brusque and bleak words of Walter Benjamin: "What draws the reader to the novel is the hope of warming his shivering life with a death he reads about" (100). From the vantage point of a constant but ultimately limited present, the human mind turns to the meaning-making potential of narrative. It is to the disconcerting dilemma of world time versus soul time that "the narrative operation replies in a variety of ways" (Ricoeur 14). In a situation where the human mind finds itself living in a continuous but finite presence, fictional narratives help make sense of existence. Fictional narratives provide a meaningful concord between beginning, middle, and end—a concord that is absent in the relentless flow of world time. The fictional narrative is "something we know does not exist, but which helps us make sense of and move in the world" (Kermode 37).

Broadly speaking, then, the very form of the novel speaks to, or could perhaps be said to be the product of, this need for temporal congruence and finitude. The novel typically has clear and tangible beginnings and endings. With its often numbered chapters and pages as well as its physically limited presence, the material artifact of the novel reifies the finite temporality of the plot-driven narrative contained between its covers.[4] As such, the novel can be seen as offering a fictional remedy to the limitlessness of time. It has "beginnings, ends, and potentiality, even if the world has not" (Kermode 138). Within the finite spatiotemporal boundaries of the novelistic form, stories with beginnings, middles, and ends can be told and retold, read and re-read (ad infinitum, as it were). That is, the plot-

[4] The fascinating question of how the modality of audiobooks and e-readers alter, add to, and/or subtract from the novelistic form's affinity with finite temporality must be left for another study.

driven narrative—the narrative that presents causally connected events organized on a temporal line between a beginning and an end—produces a meaningful and manageable yet fictional segment of time to help us deal with the incoherent darkness of infinity.

The notion that narratives provide a fictional response to fears of mortality and the apparent meaninglessness of infinite world time is of course not exclusive to the novel. Narrative understood as a chain of events with a beginning and an end is reproduced in many other media, such as films, graphic novels, plays, games etc.; the meaning-making potential of narrative is not unique to the novel. For the last three centuries of occidental history, the novel has been the main cultural conveyor of fictional narrative, but today its previously privileged position is challenged by many other modalities. In his *Narrative Fiction and Film*, literary scholar Jakob Lothe discusses similarities as well as differences between the novel and film. He stresses the two forms' shared approach to narrative while acknowledging the very different forms the presentation of a narrative takes:

> Although film language is essentially different from language in literature, however, the most important components of the definition we have given of a narrative—time, space, and causality—are central concepts in film theory as well. Narrative terms such as plot, repetition, events, characters, and characterization are also important in film—even though the *form* of presentation and the way in which these concepts are actualized vary greatly in these two art forms. (Lothe 8; emphasis in original)

Thus, even though Kermode, Ricoeur, and others point specifically to the novel as the fictional response to the aporia of temporality, other forms of fiction respond equally well. The key feature of the fictional response is the time-bound, plot-driven narrative—the finite nature of a story with a beginning and an end—which can take a multitude of forms.

Returning to Kermode, the main argumentative impulse of his influential *The Sense of an Ending* is its specific investigation of the apocalyptic narrative as a reaction to the preoccupation with and anxieties about endings, leaving little room for a discussion about beginnings. He suggests that the narratives that "continue to interest

us move through time to an end, an end we must sense even if we cannot know it" (Kermode 179). Drawing on St. Augustine, he notes that "anxieties about the end are, in the end, anxieties about one's own end" (Kermode 186). The other end, as it were, of the lifespan—the beginning—is, then, largely left out Kermode's discussion. But if "our interest in [epochs] reflect our deep need for intelligible Ends" (Kermode 8), it should also reflect a need for fictional accounts of beginnings as there can be no end without a beginning. The two points on a temporal continuum producing a segment of time—an operation which is essential to the ability to produce meaning—are mutually exclusive; one cannot exist without the other.

Although Brooks, like Kermode, emphasizes the ending's dominance in the beginning/ending dyad, he does not fail to remind us of the deep entanglement between the two. While Brooks concludes that "the ultimate determinants of meaning lie *at the end*" (52; emphasis in original), he reminds us that "it is the role of fictional plots to impose an end which yet suggests a return, a new beginning, a rereading" (109). Desire for the end is not necessarily a desire for an end of history, it is a desire for an end to the "terrifying limitlessness of time," and a necessary corollary to an end is a beginning. Time never stops, and with the end comes, by necessity, a new beginning.

As indicated earlier, the post-apocalyptic genre seems peculiarly well suited to explore this complicated entanglement between beginnings and endings. The very center of the genre revolves around speculations of what comes after an end, even though not all post-apocalyptic narratives describe the beginnings of a new golden age—McCarthy's *The Road* is, again, a good example of a novel that pushes the boundaries of the genre by describing a very harsh time period following the end. Arguably, the attempt to re-establish something resembling organized civilization is a frequent and even emblematic feature of the genre. And no matter how terrible the situation in *The Road* is, the novel does describe the beginning of a new world—just not a very attractive one. A post-apocalyptic story, writes Claire Curtis, is "any account that takes up how humans start over after the end of life on earth as we understand it" (5). In other words, an end is always followed by a beginning, though not necessarily a beginning we would like.

Making Ends Meet

There are several examples of post-apocalyptic narratives where the story focuses on the close affinity between beginnings and endings, narratives where the end is not only followed by a new beginning but where the end is a spatial *return* to the beginning. By returning a narrative to the beginning, the plot comes full circle and the two points on the endless temporal continuum of time are connected in the perfect geometry of the circle. But in the post-apocalyptic narratives highlighted in this chapter, the return is not made to the same point in time but to the same point in space. The removal-and-return narratives of such post-apocalyptic fiction are thereby realized by a spatial operation. This operation, then, constitutes one of the responses of fiction to the incapacity of the human mind to cope with eternity. In a removal-and-return narrative, a piece on the terrifying continuum of time is wrought into the closed form of a circle—a loop or a knot on an otherwise straight line—and through such operations of narrative, plot, and spatialization, a segment of time is made finite—contained—and possible to charge with meaning.

The use of havens in post-apocalyptic fiction to investigate new beginnings and endpoints draws energy from the Western recovery narrative explored in the first chapter of this study. The recovery narrative is strongly associated with Judeo-Christian imagery of occidental civilization's attempt to regain the lost pleasures of Eden. "[The] place to which people most wish to return," writes ecocritic William Cronon in the introduction to *Uncommon Ground*, "is inevitably some version or another of the original garden, the paradise that would have been ours if only we hadn't lost our way" ("Introduction" 39). Harry Levin writes that "The Judeo-Christian tradition moves from paradise lost to paradise regained, from Eden through the wilderness to Canaan" (5). Curiously, the yearned for garden of Judeo-Christian mythology has not been seen; it is a yearning for a place never experienced. However, through the cultural work of these ancient mythologies and the close affinity between the recovery narrative and the human mind's search for temporal finitude, the desire to return to the garden of Eden can be read as the abstraction of desires to return to a beginning never visited—an articulation of a

deeply felt need "to be related to a beginning" (Kermode 4). In several post-apocalyptic narratives, this abstraction takes fictional and narrative form when the plot doubles back on itself and ends where it started, in the embracing security of the endpoint haven. From this analytical perspective, then, the haven offers safety from the unrestrained expanse of cosmic time.

Returning to Eden in *The Death of Grass*

A salient example of a circular post-apocalyptic narrative where the return to an Edenic place of rest structures the entire plot is British author John Christopher's (a pseudonym for Sam Youd) influential novel *The Death of Grass* from 1956.[5] Christopher's story opens with a prologue (called Prodrome in the novel) describing the visit of two young boys—the novel's protagonist John and his brother David—and their mother to a secluded valley, owned and farmed by the boys' grandfather, called the Blind Gill in Westmorland, in the north of England. The richness of the valley is described in contrast to the surrounding lands and follows the typical description of a post-apocalyptic haven:

> Against the enclosing barrenness, the valley's richness was the more marked; green wheat swayed inwards with the summer's breeze, and beyond the wheat, as the ground rose, they saw the lusher green of pasture.
>
> The entrance to the valley could scarcely have been narrower. To the left of the road, ten yards away, a rock face rose sharply and overhung. To the right, the River Lepe foamed against the road's very edge. (Christopher 2–3)

But here in the beginning of the narrative, the valley is not yet a haven. It is a place of potentiality, a place that in the process of the narrative will be charged with meaning. So even though the protagonist visits Blind Gill as a child, it is not yet imbued with the Edenic qualities it gains when contrasted with the apocalyptic events of the novel.

[5] The novel was published as *No Blade of Grass* in the United States.

Establishing the city/countryside tension so frequent in the pastoral mode, John grows up to be a London-based architect, while his brother David inherits the Blind Gill and continues their grandfather's farming of the valley.

The catastrophe in the novel is brought on by a vegetal virus. Originating in China, the Chung-Li virus is spreading throughout the world infecting and killing all types of grass, from wheat to rice, thereby disrupting global food production. John and his family leave London with a small group of friends as countries around the world plummet into apocalyptic chaos. Even though the Blind Gill is affected by the virus, David has assured his brother that it is still possible to grow potatoes and beets to survive. The main plot of *The Death of Grass* is a series of events describing the group's attempt to travel across England to the safety offered by the Blind Gill. As such, the novel turns into a typical Western recovery narrative. In this case, the valley in Westmorland, which "seemed an oasis among desert mountains," is of course the Edenic haven the characters strive to reach and return to (Christopher 4). As is common with endpoint havens, it is only reached at the closing of the narrative; only the last two-and-a-half pages of the novel describe the situation inside the Blind Gill after they have managed to enter it by use of force. And equally generic, the narrative ends in the presence of death in the paradisiacal haven.

When John and his group break into the valley, John's brother David is killed in a firefight. It is not clear to either readers or John himself whether he was the one who shot his brother, but John takes responsibility for his brother's death and considers it an act of fratricide. At David's deathbed, John remembers when they together visited the deathbed of their grandfather in the same room:

> Into this room he had come with David, side by side, their fingers locked together to calm each other's fear and uncertainty before the mystery of death, to see the corpse of Grandfather Beverley. The room had changed very little in a score of years. (Christopher 193)

In the passages that follow, John is lost in a reverie. A temporal tunnel between the past and the present opens up and John is simultaneously

in both; he appears lost in a nexus between the beginning and the end while he recalls his previous visits to the valley. His wife tries to reach out to him: "'Johnny,' Ann said. She came and put her hands on his shoulders. 'You must snap out of it'" (Christopher 194). The biblical connotations to the story of Cain and Abel are made explicit when John and his wife talk about their son's future as the owner of the Blind Gill: "'He'll do more than farm it, won't he? He will own it. It's a nice bit of land. Not as much as Cain left Enoch, though" (Christopher 194). Here, John identifies himself with Cain, who after killing his brother Abel built a city and named it after his son Enoch. Cain was the first human born (beginning), Abel was the first human to die (ending), and both were the first humans who had not been to Eden, which further emphasizes the close affinity between the starting and end points of the narrative and its implication with recovery narratives.

Racing to the Starting Line in *Mad Max: Fury Road*

The structure of the post-apocalyptic film *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) directed by George Miller is another example of a deceptively simple version of a narrative where the characters start and end a journey in the same place—a place which only through the hardships of the journey is transformed into a haven. Like *The Death of Grass*, *Fury Road* also aligns itself with, draws energy from, and reproduces an Edenic recovery narrative, and it does so by way of ending the narrative where it starts. It thereby also positions the haven at both ends of the narrative arc.

The starting and end point is the Citadel, a fortress of plenty, of water and food. But it is a place from which its patriarchal dictator Immortan Joe (Hugh Keays-Byrne) leads a mostly male warband of motorized marauders that he uses to control the Citadel and the surrounding lands. In the heart of the Citadel he keeps his precious treasure of female sex slaves who bear his children and whose valuable mother's milk is used as a commodified source of protein. Even if the Citadel has all the necessary material components of a place of rest at the start of the film, it is definitely not safe for the group of women

focalized in the story who successfully escape from it. The goal of the women's escape is to reach "the Green Place"—a mythical place of rest "a long night's run heading east" (01:01:20), according to Furiosa (Charlize Theron). She is one of Immortan Joe's few female road warriors and the driver of a large and armored war rig, a tanker truck filled with mother's milk, which thus takes the commodified role of oil in the economy of the post-apocalyptic wasteland. Furiosa uses her rank and the war rig to smuggle the women—the Wives of Immortan Joe—out of the Citadel and mount an escape towards the Green Place. With them on their journey to find a place of rest comes Max Rockatansky (Tom Hardy), another escapee from the Citadel and the eponymous male hero of the film's title.

The Green Place is Furiosa's birthplace, from which she was taken by Immortan Joe at a young age and brought to the Citadel. She has only vague memories of a childhood spent in the lushness of the Green Place and wants to find a way back to it. As such, Furiosa's journey to the Green Place is not only a spatial relocation from the seemingly false haven of the Citadel to what she hopes is the true haven, it is also an attempted temporal relocation back to her childhood. Seeking an impossible regression, she reaches backwards into the darkness of the past, hoping to reconnect with the time of her birth: "We were all born, but we cannot remember what it was like" (Forster 55). Furiosa is thus stranded in Kermode's middle between Forster's two darknesses.

Just as the bunker in *The Road* or the canyon in *The Dog Stars*, the Green Place is placed roughly midway through the narrative as a temporary hiatus on a journey to somewhere else. But where both McCarthy's bunker and Heller's canyon function as temporary places of rest—midpoint havens—the Green Place has been perceived as the potential end point for the travelers. Yet once there, it becomes clear that it can no longer function as a haven. What was earlier a place of rest is now a quagmire of dead trees and carrion birds. It does, however, still function as a place of narrative hiatus for the viewer, if not as a haven for the characters. The tempo of the film changes dramatically when they reach the Green Place. Its mise-en-scène stands in stark contrast to the rest of the film. Instead of the high-speed chase through a saturated yellow and orange desert that makes up both the opening and closing acts of the film, the Green Place is depicted in dark blue

tones, and the tempo of the film slows to a literal crawl as the war rig now creeps through the muddy remnants of the haven while the pursuers search blindly through the misty darkness (see figure 7). Even though the Green Place might no longer function as the haven Furiosa remembers from her childhood, it still serves its narrative function as a mid-narrative hiatus before the second half of the film and the resolution of the conflict.

Figure 7. The Green Place in *Mad Max: Fury Road* (Warner Bros., 2015).

After the brief pause at what used to be the Green Place, the car race continues, but now the characters double back towards the Citadel. They have realized that the place they left is the haven they seek as they return to where they started. The young women who have escaped from the Citadel describe it to a group of older women, survivors of the Green Place, as offering "a ridiculous amount of clear water. And a lot of crops." At the Citadel, they continue, you will find "everything you need" (01:25:15). In the minds of the characters, the Citadel is now slowly turning into the endpoint haven they have been searching for.

The rich and allegorical tapestry of *Mad Max: Fury Road* has received quite a lot of scholarly attention. Most research quite naturally focuses on the film's powerful message of female autonomy, patriarchal hegemony, and emancipation.[6] Not surprisingly, therefore, when the Citadel—the haven of the narrative—is part of the analyses, it is mostly engaged with from a gendered perspective. As Carolyn Merchant points

[6] See for example Bonnie Mclean (2017) and Belinda Du Plooy (2019).

out, "crucial to the structure of the recovery narrative is the role of gender encoded into the story" ("Reinventing Eden: Western Culture" 137). While the focus of my study has not been on the gendered aspects of the haven, the following examination of the narrative function of the Citadel will use two feminist readings of *Fury Road* as points of departure.

Drawing on Mbembe's notion of necropolitics and Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto," Taylor Boulware presents a compelling reading of *Fury Road* as a "a condemnation of toxic masculinity and its complicity in capitalist exploitation of both resources and bodies" (3). Immortan Joe is the epitome of violent masculinity, a caricature of an unchecked testosterone-fueled patriarch: "His monstrosity and villainous stylization—his entire aesthetic—functions to instill the terror of patriarchal capitalism, and the violence and death it produces and perpetuates," continues Boulware (6). Through the escape from, and eventual return to, the Citadel the film's radical message is "that the socialist revolution must first and foremost be a gender revolution" (Boulware 17). But the long-term success of this burgeoning feminist revolt is unclear. In line with the utopian promises of any version—feminist or not—of post-apocalyptic endpoint havens, the narrative ends without revealing the durability of the recovered paradise. In order for the reclaimed haven to fully perform the function as a spatiotemporal limiter discussed in this chapter, the narrative cannot continue. For fiction to relate to a beginning and an end, to find a provisional answer to Ricoeur's "aporia of temporality" and thus assuage the terrifying limitless of time, the narrative must leave the viewer with the possibility of untarnished utopia, a functioning paradise.

Michelle Yates not only presents another feminist reading of the film, but she also more clearly than Boulware engages with the film as an Edenic recovery narrative. Yates argues that the film "draws from, but crucially disrupts, a Western environmental narrative" (355). While the film quite clearly finds much of its thematic energy in the notion of an Edenic recovery narrative, I do not agree with her that *Fury Road* disrupts it in any substantial way. Rather, it almost fully embraces the idea of a recoverable Eden. While Yates briefly discusses "the Edenic nature of the Citadel" (366), she mainly reads the failed

midpoint haven of the Green Place as the Eden of the story. The disruption of the recovery narrative that she argues for is pointed to partly in the placement of the Green Place to the east rather than to the west (Yates 360). Instead of recovering Eden, then, the characters go back and create their own matriarchal and communal society in the Citadel. The film, Yates argues, is thereby "disrupting the traditional Edenic recovery narrative" by "representing female nature not as passive, but rather as powerful and agentive" (369). Although there are compelling parts in Yates's analysis of *Fury Road*, I believe she misrepresents the Citadel, which actually conforms to a traditional Western recovery narrative. Indeed, the characters move *west* in order to reach the Citadel, fully in accordance with occidental culture's general orientation towards the West as a place of possibilities. Seen from this perspective, *Fury Road* does not reverse the recovery narrative—it is rather a typical example of a recovery story.

Yates provides a fascinating observation, however, regarding the level of reality of the Garden of Eden—a discussion reminiscent of the one in this study's first case study, where the claim is made that havens can often be discussed in terms of their degree of ontological facticity. When the characters in *Fury Road* reach the disappointing and failed midpoint haven of the Green Place, Yates argues that

> the film's protagonists and audience learn that the Garden of Eden no longer exists in the material reality of the film's world. Rather, the Garden of Eden only exists in the memories and imaginations of the film's characters. (358)

Here, Yates places the Garden of Eden out of reach of the fictional characters, as a mere memory or a figment of imagination. This supports the claim made in the case study of Heller's *The Dog Stars*, that the most perfect of havens can only be reached through the imaginative work done by fiction. The closer a haven moves to the material reality of the audience, the less like some version of paradise it seems to become. However, in *Fury Road* the characters do reach a haven: The Citadel at the end of the road has all the qualities of an Edenic place of rest, and it does exist in the story world of the movie.

Moreover, Yates suggests that placing Eden "in the most unlikely of places, in the environments where humans actually live, work, play and pray" (367) is yet another disruption of the recovery narrative. But this argument is weakened by Merchant's statement that "the recovery plot is the long, slow process of returning humans to the Garden of Eden through labor in the earth" ("Reinventing Eden: Western Culture" 133). That is, it is only through hardships and toil that Eden can be reclaimed, or more in line with the discussion of this chapter: *Fury Road* seems to say that if paradise can be regained at all, it can be found where you already are. Yet to get there, one has to go on a detour since paradise can only truly be reached at the end of a laborious, and in this case, circular journey back to the beginning. As discussed in the following section, this detour can be seen as life and the endpoint as death.

The film ends on a note similar to several other post-apocalyptic stories. When Furiosa and her posse of mainly female characters reclaim the Citadel, and thereby turn it into the haven it had not been at the start of the narrative, Max leaves it in favor of the roaming life of the desert. According to Yates, Max is the "archetype of the heroic male agent" and "there is no room in this reclaimed space for hegemonic masculinity" (361). Naturally, such a reading fits the feminist approach of Yates's analysis, but Max's departure from the haven could also be read similarly to the Mariner leaving the island paradise in *Waterworld* or the possibility offered the player in *The Flame in the Flood* to not settle in 'Kingdom': Max is the archetypical nomad, a voyager in place. Like the Mariner and the Girl (in the 'endless game' option in *The Flame in the Flood*), Max does not find a home in the sedentary life offered by the pastoral qualities of the post-apocalyptic haven. It is no more than a point "reached only to be left behind" (Deleuze and Guattari 443). Max's home can be found on the road—not at the start or the finish line but in the seemingly endless race through the smooth space of the desert.

Max leaving the haven provides a counterargument to the main claim of this chapter: that the haven is a place where the limitlessness of time is temporarily restricted and spatialized. For most of the characters in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, reaching the haven is the end of a journey back to the safety of home and immobility. For the viewer, the

fictional narrative reaches temporal closure through the operational work of yet another cultural artifact. Through the fictional, plot-driven narrative, the film offers a remedy to the terrible boundlessness of infinity. The nomad's refusal of the offer of immobility and closure thus provides a slight corrective to the attempt to contain time. The disappearance of Max into the smoothness of the desert reminds the audience that while cosmic time can be temporarily halted, it cannot be curbed. "It is the role," writes Brooks, "of fictional plots to impose an end which yet suggests a return, a new beginning: a rereading" (109). The egress of Max in *Fury Road* and of the Mariner in *Waterworld* suggest not only the possibility but the inevitability of a continuation of time and of the new beginnings that necessarily follow narrative closures.

Desire for the End

Sigmund Freud insists in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) that in order to make sense of our lives we actually desire death, an idea Brooks uses in *Reading for the Plot* (1992). In an endeavor to understand "the paradox of the self" in terms of plot and narrative—the contradiction that only in death does life gain meaning—Brooks transfers Freud's insights:

> And here the paradox of the self becomes explicitly the paradox of narrative plot as the reader consumes it: diminishing as it realizes itself, leading to an end that is the consummation (as well as the consumption) of its sense-making. If the motor of narrative is desire, totalizing, building ever-larger units of meaning, the ultimate determinants of meaning lie *at the end*, and narrative desire is ultimately, inexorably, desire *for* the end. (P. Brooks 51–52; emphasis in original)

Readers anticipate and desire the meaning-making end. It is only at the apotheosis of the narrative that the impact of the events of the plot acquire their full meaning, and "the further we inquire into the problems of ends, the more it seems to compel a further inquiry into its

relation to the human end" (P. Brooks 95). Also, the climactic endpoint that lends the narrative so much meaning is where the narrative dies.

As I have noted several times throughout this study, places of rest have a close and somewhat unnerving relationship with death. *Et in Arcadia ego*—even in paradise death is present. At the same time, there is an affinity between the aim of a narrative to bind and segment time on the one hand and the mortality of its reader on the other. The temporally limited plot with a beginning and an end provides a mimesis of life since "narrative has something to do with time-boundedness," and "plot is the internal logic of the discourse of mortality" (P. Brooks 22). As such, the plot-driven narrative presents a segmentation of the unbearably incoherent cosmic time into endurable pieces charged with meaning that invariably ends with the metaphorical death of the reader: "The desire of the text is ultimately the desire for the end, for that recognition which is the moment of the death of the reader in the text" (P. Brooks 108). More often than not the death of the reader (i.e., the end of the narrative) matches the death of one or more characters in the story, but it does not have to be "a literal death—it can be some simulacrum, some end to a period" (P. Brooks 95). The post-apocalyptic narrative even reflects this simulacrum of death on the level of genre. The "desire for the end" that Brooks identifies as what pulls the reader forward is also manifested in the themes almost all narratives of the post-apocalyptic genre address: the end and beginning of new eras.

It is quite clear, then, that the end of the narrative has an uncompromising capacity to impact the entire experience of the narrative. How the story ends shapes our understanding of it, and the end, no matter how it plays out, is intimately allied with death.[7] In post-apocalyptic narratives, the haven is often found at this highly charged endpoint of the narrative. As the narrative's temporal and spatial endings merge, the haven cries out for interpretation, becoming the where and the when of a narrative and metaphorical death.

[7] In an interview with Jeff Lemire, the author of *Sweet Tooth,* in *Entertainment Weekly*, Lemire claims that how the story would end in his post-apocalyptic graphic novel was clear from the start of the project: "The earliest pitches I sent to Vertigo [the publisher of *Sweet Tooth*] had, beat for beat, the last issue, written out. The ending was always there" (Jensen).

The end always has by necessity a temporal component. At the end of the line of causally connected plot-driven events dispersed over time, the final event carries the onus by virtue of being last. The endpoint haven provides the same function on part of the spatial dimensions of the story world; the last page—as it were—of the novel provides the end with spatial and physical materiality on the readers' level. That is, the haven is a spatially limited stopping point, a place of rest from mobility. By consuming a narrative, the reader vicariously shares the characters' "experience of death: if need be their figurative death—the end of the novel—but preferably their actual one" (Benjamin 100). If a post-apocalyptic narrative sets up a haven as its final endpoint, the haven provides a possible answer to Benjamin's question on how the narrative convinces the reader that the characters are, in effect, always already dead: "How do the characters make him [the reader] understand that death is already waiting for them—a very definitive death and *at a very definitive place*? That is the question which feeds the reader's consuming interest in the events of the novel" (100; emphasis added). When the endpoint haven is prefigured in the beginning of the narrative, which so often is the case, the endpoint haven functions as the "very definitive place" for the death of the characters, the narrative, and, metaphorically, the reader (Benjamin 100).

Although the endpoint haven can be the highly charged place of narrative apotheosis of meaning-making discussed above, it can simultaneously function as a somewhat naïve and convenient strategy to end a narrative, much like the discussion of sentimental pastoral havens in the first chapter. Forster rather despondently comments on the problems facing authors on how to end narratives:

> Nearly all novels are feeble at the end. This is because the plot requires to be wound up. Why is this necessary? Why is there not a convention which allows a novelist to stop as soon as he feels bored? Alas, he has to round things off, and usually the characters go dead while he is at work, and our final impression of them is through deadness. (Forster 93–4)

He adds that "if it was not for death and marriage I do not know how the average novelist would conclude" (94). For the post-apocalyptic

narrative, the haven could be added to Forster's short list as a convenient way to conclude. The haven can thus be a simple way to indicate where the narrative ends: "To designate the presence of what is sought or prized is to signal the termination of narrative," writes D.A. Miller in "Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel" (272). Using an endpoint haven to conclude a post-apocalyptic narrative is so common that, I would argue, it is something of a cliché within the genre.[8]

The endpoint haven is put yet again to this clichéd and sentimental use in *War for the Planet of the Apes* (2017), which ends a trilogy of films that re-imagines the classic American science fiction franchise that started with the film *Planet of the Apes* (1968). In the film, the apes' leader Caesar (Andy Serkis) has led his community of intelligent apes through rebellion and war against humans for three films, and succumbs to his injuries in the closing scene. He dies against a tree overlooking a forested and vibrant valley with a lake in its middle, with the small community of apes who have survived the ordeals resting in the sunshine—in every way the typical representation of a post-apocalyptic place of rest. But the endpoint haven in *War for the Planet of the Apes* does not function as the place where the narrative is renegotiated and brought to its full meaning. The haven is not "the presence of what is sought or prized" (D.A. Miller 272). It has not been foreshadowed to any great extent. Reaching the valley is not the main thrust of the film's plot. Rather, the haven in *War for the Planet of the Apes* functions as a convenient, sentimental, and to some extent expected way to end a post-apocalyptic narrative.

Case Study: Finding Your Way Back Home in Jeff Lemire's *Sweet Tooth* (2009–2013)

Jeff Lemire's graphic novel *Sweet Tooth* provides a variety of fascinating and complex havens that give impetus to the narrative.[9]

[8] See earlier discussions on the sentimental use of pastoral havens as narrative endpoints in for example *I Am Legend* (film) and *Z for Zachariah*.

[9] The original 40 issues of *Sweet Tooth* were published between 2009–13. This text refers to the three-book deluxe edition. The numbers 1, 2, and 3 are used to refer to the different volumes of the *Sweet Tooth* deluxe edition.

The overarching plot, however, is another example of a post-apocalyptic removal-and-return narrative in which the protagonist leaves a place only to return to it in the end after a journey of discovery and growth. The novel begins in a forested area with a cabin that, when the story closes, has developed into a fully realized endpoint haven. As such, the basic structure of *Sweet Tooth* is quite similar to that of *Mad Max: Fury Road* discussed above. Apart from the overarching story of a journey away from and an eventual return to the main haven of the narrative, the story also includes several haven-like settings, some of which are embedded in background stories, making for an intricate, cyclical narrative of repetition.

As the main plot unfolds, the narrative relies heavily on analepses, dream sequences, memories, and journal entries. The focalizer of the narrative often changes, and several story arcs unfold in bits and pieces over the course of hundreds of pages.[10] In parts of the graphic novel, two stories run in parallel in different panels on the same page. In this manner, the author takes full advantage of the affordances of the graphic novel to juxtapose present, past, and future, sometimes literally side-by-side.[11] These elaborate uses of the affordances of the graphic novel thematize and provide a material form to the connection and dialogue between past, present, and the future.

In *Sweet Tooth*, the story and the plot combine to formulate a repetitive narrative of life and death. The novel speaks to a central anxiety of human existence, that of temporal and spatial (dis)placement, the when and the where of individual existence discussed in earlier sections of this chapter. Through its circular narrative, constant dialogue between temporal modes, and its life-and-death motif so common to the genre, *Sweet Tooth* explores a "need in the moment of existence to belong," as well as a need "to be related to a beginning and to an end" (Kermode 4). Central to the novel's exploration is the post-apocalyptic haven, which, apart from being the principal *where* of the beginning as well as the end also materializes in

[10] The three-volume deluxe edition referred to here has a total of 928 pages (285, 293, and 350 pages respectively).

[11] I here draw on Caroline Levine's application of the concept of affordances to narratives: "The word *affordance* is used to mean the range of potential actions and uses latent in different forms" (517; emphasis in original). She uses affordances to describe the "potentialities" that "lie latent—though not always obvious—in the form of narrative" (Levine 517).

other shapes and forms, always functioning as a narrative force that either propels the plot forward or threatens to end it.

Sweet Tooth tells the story of the young boy Gus (the eponymous sweet tooth—he likes chocolate), who lives with what he thinks is his father in a cabin in a wilderness sanctuary in Nebraska.[12] The father dies in the first few pages of the novel from the plague-like sickness that has killed most people in the world, adding to the tone of post-apocalyptic death that permeates most of the story. Nine-year-old Gus is left to survive on his own. He knows nothing of the world outside the sanctuary, but his father has taught him to survive on what nature has to offer. His father has told him repeatedly that "there was only bad stuff in the outside of the woods," and that he should stay in the safety of the fenced-in sanctuary (Lemire 1, 32),[13] thus constructing the cabin and the wilderness sanctuary as a haven surrounded by a dangerous wasteland. "The nature reserve represents," as André Cabral de Almeida Cardoso suggests, "'that kind of place' of innocence to which the world is supposed to return, a promise *Sweet Tooth* fulfills at the end" (2). In one of the many analepses of the novel, a prayer uttered by Gus's father makes the connection between the wilderness sanctuary and paradise explicit: "And the good were left to love an' not fear him and to pray. And he blessed these very woods and called it his new Eden" (Lemire 1, 231). Gus's mother supposedly died a long time ago, and the father has told him that "if we wait here and pray hard, one day we'll get to go up to heaven and be with mom" (Lemire 1, 11). Gus has never met anyone except for a father who plans for a secluded life caught in suspended animation—a beginning followed by an end without the necessary interim passage of life. However, with the father gone, the sanctuary does not provide Gus with the answers and the life he feels he needs. The cabin in the woods is no longer the safe place he longs for.

[12] The main events of the story are set in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

[13] The dialogue in *Sweet Tooth* is set in capital letters and follows a speech-like spelling pattern. All quotes from the novel are verbatim with the exception that they are in lower case rather than the upper case of the novel. All quotes from the novel should be read as correct transcriptions, despite unorthodox grammar and spelling. Whenever ellipses are used in the quotes, these ellipses can be found in the primary text and do not indicate omissions.

For the wilderness sanctuary to become the place of rest that the young Gus so desperately wants, he needs to go through the rigmarole of a life his father had planned should never happen. The quiescence that awaits at the end of a life or a narrative (for they are the same) can neither be rushed nor disregarded. As Brooks suggests, between the twin mysteries of beginning and end, between life's sudden inception and inexorable demise "plot itself stands as a kind of divergence or deviance, a postponement in the discharge which leads back to the inanimate" (103). Only by setting out on a journey, on the detour of life, can the cabin in the woods become the place of rest and immobility the protagonist desires. For as Brooks adds, "the organism must live in order to die in the proper manner, to die the right death. One must have the arabesque of plot in order to reach the end" (107).

Gus is not a normal nine-year-old child but a post-human hybrid: He is part human and part deer. He has large ears and antlers growing out of his forehead. During the outbreak of the pandemic, some seven or eight years before the events of the novel's present, women started giving birth to hybrid children resistant to the plague. Some children are more animal than human with weak cognitive skills and lacking a functioning language, while others are more human with less prominent animal features. In the novel's story world, the hybrid children are religiously revered by some surviving humans as harbingers of a new era in human evolution, but most see them as the cause of the catastrophe and bearers of the deadly virus, who must be hunted down and killed to stop the disease. As such, *Sweet Tooth* aligns itself with narratives that question anthropocentric perspectives and that explore human/nature relationships through hybridity and post-human constructions.[14]

While hiding in his wilderness sanctuary following the death of his father, Gus is found by the uncouth and dangerous Jepperd, a middle-aged former NHL hockey player, who has survived in the wasteland due to his knack for violence and strong will to survive. Jepperd is the stereotypical male hero figure of the post-apocalyptic genre (see the

[14] Examples of other post-apocalyptic narratives exploring similar themes include Jeff Vandermeer's Southern Reach trilogy, Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy, and Octavia Butler's Lilith's Brood trilogy. For treatments of hybridity in *Sweet Tooth*, see Mark Heimermann's "The Grotesque Child: Animal-Human Hybridity in *Sweet Tooth*" and Katherine Kelp-Stebbins's "Hybrid Heroes and Graphic Posthumanity."

earlier discussion on cozy catastrophes in chapter one's case study of *The Dog Stars*), and apart from Gus the most important character of the story. Jepperd saves Gus from two men hunting for hybrid children who have found the wilderness sanctuary, but Jepperd is himself on the hunt for a hybrid, albeit for slightly different reasons. He lures Gus from the sanctuary by promising to show the boy the way to the Preserve—one of the false havens of the narrative: "It's a safe place fer little half-animal kids like you. Hardly no one knows where it is. But I do. Just a few days' ride from here. I can take you there" (Lemire 1, 39). Jepperd thus functions as the herald, to speak with Joseph Campbell, voicing the call to adventure: "[T]he call rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration—a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to *a dying and a birth*" (Campbell 51; emphasis added).[15] Believing in Jepperd's promise to help him find safety, Gus leaves the wilderness sanctuary in search of a better place.

Although not the main theoretical direction of this case study, it should be noted that the protagonist's removal and return from the wilderness sanctuary could be understood in terms of the theoretical framework of liminality applied to the case study of *Oblivion* in the second chapter. With the assistance of Jepperd as the hierophantic agent, the protagonist could be seen as entering the liminal state of a rite of passage when he leaves the sanctuary as a child with a very limited understanding of the world and comes back as the leader of a community of hybrids. In other words, the narrative could be construed as the metaphorical journey "betwixt and between" childlike innocence and adult maturity (V. Turner 95). However, while the framework of liminality in the analysis of the haven in *Oblivion* is mainly spatial, in *Sweet Tooth* it is better understood as a temporal period. When Gus leaves the wilderness sanctuary, he crosses a threshold and enters into the liminal stage of a rite of passage into adult life, as originally conceived by van Gennep.[16] Through the liminal process, his childlike self metaphorically dies and his adult identity

[15] Lemire's *Sweet Tooth* adheres quite strictly to the narrative structure of the monomythical hero's journey outlined most famously by Joseph Campbell in his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

[16] In the graphic novel, the metaphorical threshold is made literal in the form of the fence surrounding the sanctuary. Depending on theoretical approach, crossing this threshold could either be the act of *leaving* the sanctuary or the act of *entering* a liminal state.

emerges: the "dying and birth" of the hero's journey (Campbell 51). Another important distinction to make between *Oblivion* and *Sweet Tooth* is that the liminal space in the former takes the form of the haven, whereas Gus enters into his liminal stage as he departs from the wilderness sanctuary at the beginning of the novel and leaves (this liminal stage) as he sets up a community in the endpoint haven at the end of the narrative.

The False Haven of the Preserve

The Preserve to which Jepperd escorts Gus is not the haven the boy is led to believe. Rather, it is the military base of the novel's main antagonist Abbott, who is the "dangerous presence dwelling just beyond the protected zone of the village boundary" to again invoke Campbell (81). Using the camp's laboratories, Abbott kills and dissects hybrid children in the hope of finding a cure for the plague and eradicating the post-human identities that the hybrid children represent. Jepperd, using the promise of a safe place of rest, tricks Gus into following him voluntarily into captivity and leaves him in the hands of Abbott as a bargaining chip for the release of the remains of his dead wife Louise.

There are several examples in post-apocalyptic fiction of false havens—places of rest that turn out to be chimeric or even hostile environments. Other examples of false havens mentioned in this study include the Green Place in *Mad Max: Fury Road* and Grand Junction in *The Dog Stars*. The former is an erstwhile haven now bereft of the ability to sustain and hide its inhabitants, the latter never was a haven but only used as a bait to lure the characters, and it is only upon arrival that their true nature is revealed. Promises of safety thus go unfulfilled when characters end up in places that turn out to be nightmarish versions of havens. The functions of such false havens and their relation to the ones described in this study call for further scholarly attention.

Abbott's military camp plays the role of a false haven in Jepperd's own backstory too. In a series of analepses fragmentarily placed throughout the first book of the trilogy, the reader learns about Jepperd's past and his motifs. His story turns out to be a version of the novel's main story of leaving a home in favor of the promise of a better

place and only later realizing the necessity to return to the original place qua haven, where death awaits. Jepperd and his pregnant wife Louise had left their small countryside farm in the hope of having a better chance to survive the horrors of the plague. They had been lured to the Preserve by Abbott, who wanted the pregnant Louise and the hybrid baby she gave birth to for his experiments. That is, Jepperd and Louise had been persuaded by the same rhetoric used by Jepperd to make Gus follow him to the Preserve, because they thought it might be a place of rest. Abbott kept Louise while Jepperd was thrown out but given the chance to bury the remains of his wife, who died as a result of Abbott's cruel experimentation, if he would find and bring a hybrid child to Abbott.

The embedded story of Jepperd and his wife Louise mimics the main story of the novel, at least in so far as it begins and ends in the same place of rest. After having left Gus with Abbott and been given his wife's bones in exchange, Jepperd returns to their farmstead. We are, Brooks asserts, "always trying to work back through time to that transcendent home, knowing, of course, that we cannot. All we can do is subvert or, perhaps better, pervert time: which is what narrative does" (111). Through such a Brooksian subversion of time, Jepperd's journey back to his home is literally juxtaposed with his leaving the same home. Time is forced to fall back on itself, break its linear flow and form an almost tangible knot. The panels of the graphic novel showing the same place but in different time periods are placed on top of each other. The intimate relation between beginning and end is thereby explicitly highlighted in Jepperd's arrival at his and his now dead wife's farm. In figure 8, Jepperd and his wife leave the farm in a car in the top panel. Set against their departure, in the panel just below it, Jepperd returns on a horse carrying the bones of Louise in a bag. In the top panel Jepperd starts saying that "baby… no matter what… when this is all over…," a sentence which is only finished in the panel below, years later in the timeline of the story, with Jepperd thinking to himself: "…I'll bring you home" (Lemire 1, 143). The affordances of the graphic novel are here put to strong use. The temporal separation of the promise and its resolution into two concurrent, juxtaposed panels is only possible through the creative manipulation of the art form. Through this operation the entire subplot of Jepperd and Louise is

hidden in the gap separating the panels (a liminal space, if you will) and in the ellipsis of the verbalized, temporally stretched-out promise.

Figure 8. The removal and return of Jepperd and Louise (cropped; Lemire 1, 143).

The analepsis describing Jepperd's background, which is not told sequentially but spread out over many pages, thus functions as a prefiguration and mirror image of the novel's main storyline, which is equally fragmented by the insertion of other storylines. Jepperd's backstory simultaneously emphasizes the strong presence of death as a motif in the novel, and highlights the double function of the haven as a starting point as well as a place of narrative closure and death. Beginning and end are here bound together perversely (to use Brooks's term) forming a complete circle of finite time, which speaks to what Kermode articulates as a need for "concords with origins and ends, such as give meaning to lives" (7).

Jepperd buries Louise beneath a tree on their farm, providing yet another invocation of *et in Arcadia ego* (see figure 9). For Louise, the return to the beginning is therefore also an arrival at her final place of rest. Jepperd is very close to also taking his life at this point, but his strong will to survive and his feelings of guilt for leaving Gus with Abbott stops him from ending his story together with that of his wife's. After burying Louise and nearly ending his life, Jepperd's story has a

new beginning as he goes on a violent and redemptive quest to save Gus from Abbott.

Figure 9. Jepperd buries his wife saying "…I'd bring you home, Louise" (cropped; Lemire 1, 145).

Yet another example of the manipulation of temporality in this section can be found in the tenses used in Jepperd's promise to his wife. In the panels shown in figure 8, the future tense is used in both the panel depicting the past and the panel showing a situation that happened years later: "I promise . . . I'll bring you home" (Lemire 1, 143). But in the panel shown in figure 9, when Jepperd buries his wife, the past tense is used: "I promised . . . I'd bring you home" (Lemire 1, 144–45). The past tense used here signals both an end to the embedded backstory and to the perversion of time displayed in the parallel timelines in figure 8. The story of Jepperd and Louise reaches an end, but Jepperd gets a new beginning as the narrative's circularity of events continues.

As Abbott's prisoner in the militia camp, Gus finally meets other hybrid children, who vary wildly in cognitive skills. The hybrid pig-girl Wendy tells the disillusioned Gus that the Preserve is "just a fairy story animal kids' parents tell them. This is a militia camp" (Lemire 1, 138).

One of the more feral children is revealed later to be Jepperd and Louise's hybrid child, whereas Wendy later becomes Gus's partner and the mother of their children. Below ground are the laboratories where imprisoned pregnant women give birth to hybrid children and where lethal experiments and autopsies on the children are performed under the supervision of Dr. Singh. While examining Gus, Singh realizes that he lacks a belly button and has therefore never been born, at least not from a woman's womb. Gus, it seems, lacks a conventional beginning. According to one of his father's prayers, God "blessed this boy and called him his new Adam. And from his rib a new race would rise up and inherit this world" (Lemire 1, 231). Gus turns out to be the beginning of the end since his creation starts the spread of the viral sickness. Yet, while seemingly lacking a human beginning, as the first of the hybrid children, he is simultaneously the beginning of the post-apocalyptic and the post-human situations.

The Midpoint Dam

Together with other hybrid children held prisoner in the Preserve, Gus manages to mount their escape and temporarily free them from Abbott. But the hybrid children are not aware that they carry tracking devices in the tags that have been attached to their ears by the scientists of the Preserve. They are swiftly found and carried back to the compound, where Jepperd eventually shows up and frees them. After escaping from the Preserve, the surviving hybrid children form a group together with Jepperd and a few other adults. Apart from the hybrid children Gus, Wendy, and Bob, the group consists of Jepperd, the two women Lucy and Becky, who Jepperd helped escape from slave-like prostitution, Abbott's younger brother Johnny, and chief scientist of the Preserve Singh. Singh has managed to puzzle out much of Gus's background story from reading his father's prophetic journals. The small group head towards Fort Smith in Alaska, where Singh believes the truth behind the plague, the hybrid children, and specifically Gus's origin can be found.

On their way to Alaska, the party comes across the most conspicuously haven-like place in *Sweet Tooth*, apart from the start- and endpoint haven of the wilderness sanctuary. It is a midpoint haven in the form of a dam, which they stumble upon in the random way

seemingly common to midpoint havens (the cellar in *The Road* and the box canyon in *The Dog Stars* are also found by happenstance). Inside the dam structure, an organization called Project Evergreen has built a self-sustaining community before the catastrophe (see figure 10). Inside the spacious halls of the dam, there are "fruits and vegetables… a massive stock of canned and dry goods, warm beds and banks of artificial sunlight above. All powered by a massive store of electricity from the dam's reserve. And all safely hidden within the walls of the dam" (Lemire II, 176–77). Project Evergreen is long gone and the only inhabitant of the dam is now Walter Fish, a seemingly feeble and lonely man who says he found the abandoned dam by chance some years back. Walter invites Gus and his group to settle down and live in the dam together with him.[17]

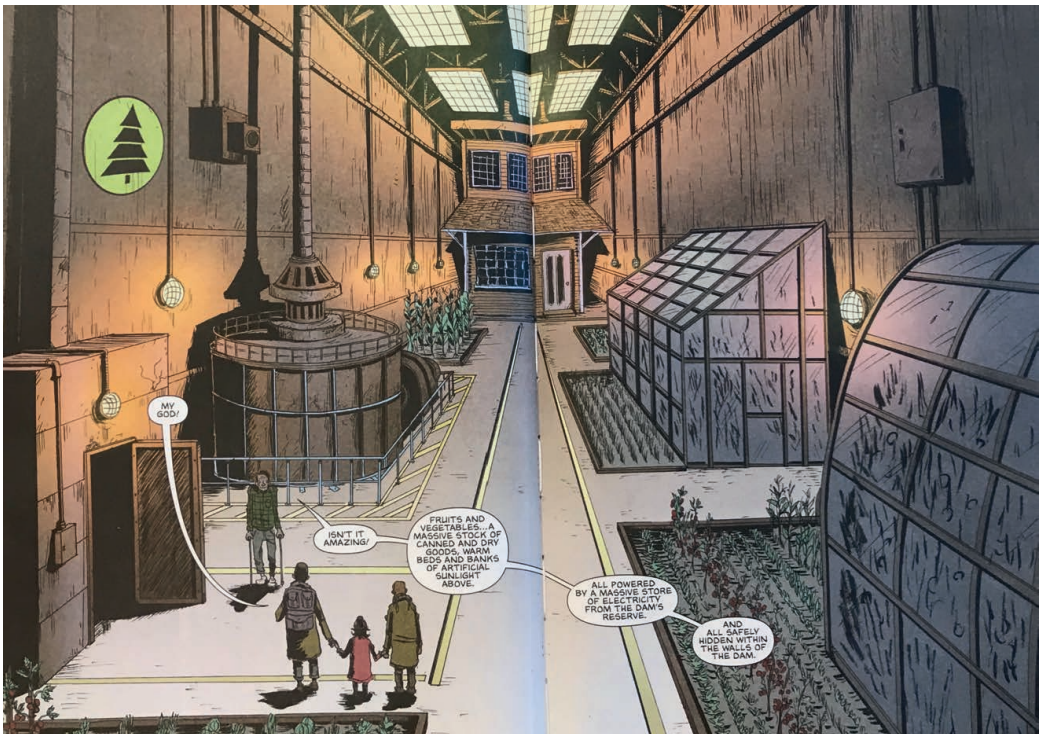

Figure 10. Inside the midpoint haven (cropped; Lemire 2, 176–77).

The dam serves mainly as a midpoint haven in *Sweet Tooth*, but it is also believed to be such a great place of rest that many of the characters argue for settling there permanently. This means that the many qualities of this haven threaten to put a stop to the journey to

[17] Just like the Dutch boy in the polder myth, which is used as a model for the polder motif in the fantasy genre, the dam stops water from flooding the outside plain.

Alaska and thus to the narrative. Becky wants to stop fleeing and find safety: "I've been running from one place to the next since I was a little girl. And everywhere I go, *bad stuff* happens. So what if this is finally it? The place we've been looking for all along? The place where we can just be happy and safe" (Lemire 2, 228; emphasis in original). Lucy instead wants to stay to keep the hybrid children safe: "These kids are the future now… not us. All that matters is keeping *them* safe… and this place is as safe as we'll *ever find*" (Lemire 2, 286; emphasis in original). She also reminds the group that they are "all living on borrowed time anyway" (Lemire 2, 286). This is especially true of Lucy herself, who is dying from 'the sickness,' a not-so-small detail she has chosen to withhold from the rest of the group. Death awaits her, and, she seems to say, this place of rest they have found is the best spot to meet her death. Lucy's insistence on staying and dying in the dam calls attention to the central claims of both this case study and the chapter: A haven is not only a place of rest (i.e., a midpoint haven) but also a final resting place (i.e., an endpoint haven) both for narratives and lives.

As is often the case, the seemingly perfect haven contains the means of its own destruction: There is a proverbial snake in the garden. Walter's actual name is Haggarty, and he killed several members of Project Evergreen before taking residence in the dam. Some survivors of Project Evergreen have unsuccessfully tried to get back into the dam, but Walter/Haggarty has managed to keep them at bay. Now he schemes to oust as many of Gus's party from the dam as possible while keeping those he believes he can control, like the women and the hybrid children. Specifically, while not explicitly spelled out, it is made clear that he wants to keep the sixteen-year-old Becky as his forced sexual partner. However, the group realize his true identity and choose to fight him. Instead of killing him, Gus decides that they should leave the now badly hurt antagonist to fend for himself in the wintery conditions outside the dam.

Despite ending the threat of the figurative snake of the haven, there is still the threat of narrative closure since many of the party members argue in favor of staying. But Gus, inspired by Singh's continued insistence on going to Alaska to learn about the origins of the hybrids, says that "the dam is nice, but we can't stay here. We gotta keep goin'" (Lemire 2, 228). On a direct question why going to Alaska

is necessary, Gus answers that "my daddy came from there. I can't explain it… but I just got this feeling that that's where we gotta go" (Lemire 2, 237). While the midpoint haven of the dam would to some extent fulfill even Gus's need for a place of rest and a sense of an ending, it does not fulfill his equally strong need for a sense of a beginning. Gus has learned that his life did not start in the Wilderness Sanctuary: he has no mother and the father he grew up with was not his real father. His lack of a proper sense of a beginning drives him towards Alaska, much like the hope of returning to her childhood drives Furiosa towards the Green Place in *Mad Max: Fury Road*. "For to make sense of our lives," Kermode philosophizes, "from where we are, as it were, stranded in the middle, we need fictions of beginnings and fictions of the ends, fictions which unite beginning and end and endow the interval between them with meaning" (190). For his own narrative qua life to make sense, Gus has to travel to Alaska in search of the sense-making potential of his origins as well as his end.

In an interview with Lemire included in the third volume of the deluxe edition, the author explains why the rather long episode of the dam was included in the narrative: "Really, the whole Dam storyline was tacked on in the middle to expand the story into the 40-issue range" (Lemire 3, 361).[18] Although Lemire's choice to add a midpoint haven might have been mainly stimulated by a desire to extend the narrative, it simultaneously foregrounds Brooks's statement that narrative is "a prolonged deviance from the quiescence of the 'normal'" (103), to be understood as the subject's non-existence before birth and after death. Narrative, as stated by Brooks, thus becomes a reflection of "the complicated detour called life" (P. Brooks 107), and this "detour" is "the cure that prolongs narrative" (P. Brooks 109). The midpoint haven of the dam is a detour from the group's journey to Alaska, but it also serves the double narrative functions of a place of rest and a final resting place: The tired characters get a temporary hiatus before the final resolution of the story's main conflicts, while Lucy succumbs to the plague and is buried near the dam.

[18] Reading "Dam" using the homophonic "Damn" would include not only the midpoint haven in the author's statement but rather the entire narrative.

The Alaskan Confluence

Fort Smith in Alaska can be seen as the narrative nadir, the place furthest away from the wilderness sanctuary in Nebraska to which they eventually return. As such, it can be read both as the chronological starting point of the story—if not the narrative—of Gus and the endpoint of the main conflicts of the plot. Alaska is where Gus was born, and it is where Jepperd dies: Alaska "is where it began. And this is where it will end" (Lemire 3, 201). The presence of death at this endpoint of the main conflict is explicitly prefigured as Singh enters Fort Smith: A skeleton can be seen half-buried in the snow (see figure 11). The endpoint haven of the wilderness sanctuary, where the narrative of Gus officially ends, takes instead the form of a long epilogue.

Figure 11. Singh arrives in Alaska (Lemire 3, 201).

Buried below the ice in Alaska there is a cave "where the *gods* went to rest after their earthly bodies had died" (Lemire 3, 44; emphasis in original). In ancient sarcophagi placed around the cave are the skeletal remains of adult hybrids. The Inuit people of Alaska revered these beings as gods and the cave is hallowed ground not to be disturbed.[19]

[19] The history of the cave and its connection to Inuit mythologies is told in yet another of the many analepses in *Sweet Tooth*, this time in the form of the journal entries of British

The cave has been discovered and explored by the U.S. government, and the DNA extracted from the different hybrid skeletons has been used to clone them. It is revealed that Gus is the cloned version of the Inuit god Tekkeitsertok and that six other hybrids were born in the same manner. As a result of their inception, the plague started spreading, first killing most of the staff at Fort Smith and later spreading to kill most of humanity. One of the janitors of Fort Smith, Richard Fox, takes care of baby Gus and leaves Alaska, and becomes the man Gus grows up with as his foster father in the Wilderness Sanctuary in Nebraska.

Fort Smith is not a haven, but it is a point of origin. Gus's chronological beginning in Fort Smith is, however, fused with the beginning of the narrative in the Wilderness Sanctuary by another juxtaposition of panels (see figure 12). Moreover, this merging of starting points takes place towards the end of the novel, thereby further entwining the many beginnings and endings of the graphic novel. Similar to the panels where Jepperd simultaneously leaves and returns to the farm together with his wife (see figure 8), Gus's two beginnings are here placed next to each other. The affordances available to the author of a graphic novel make it possible to set one timeline against another, providing tension as well as communication between different places at different times. While Gus's origin in the cave is revealed, his arrival at the wilderness sanctuary is simultaneously depicted. Thus, Gus's dual beginnings are told concurrently and merged into one.

medical doctor and naturalist James Thacker. On a journey of scientific exploration in 1911, Thacker finds the cave. Despite the native population holding the cave as sacred and taboo, he breaks into the cave and finds the skeletons of the hybrids. He dies from the plague he has released by opening the tomb. Singh finds Thacker's journal when he reaches Fort Smith, and from it he manages to piece together more of the background story of the hybrids and the plague.

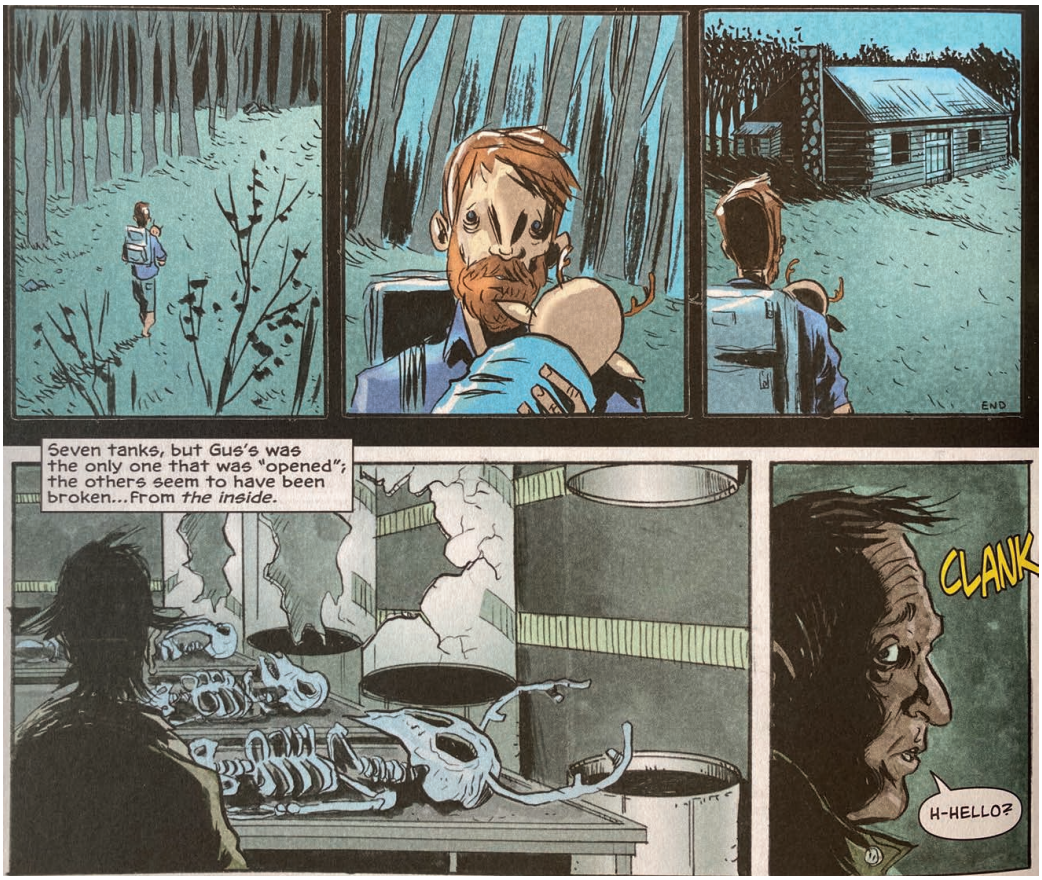

Figure 12. The juxtaposition of Gus's two places of origin (cropped; Lemire 3, 220).

The motives behind the creation of the hybrids are never made clear in the story,[20] making Gus's search for answers by traveling back to the place where he came from unfulfilled. Jepperd tries to help Gus forward by not dwelling on the past: "Look. I know you came here looking for some great answer to everything, but I don't think it's here . . . It's *what happens next* that really matters" (Lemire 3, 252–53; emphasis in original). In effect, Jepperd points to the sense-making power of plot: It is the causally connected sequence of events of narrative that really matters. This realization is quite similar to Furiosa's equally unfulfilling return to the Green Place in *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Both *Sweet Tooth* and *Mad Max: Fury Road* thus seem to indicate that the sense-making potential of the subject's place of birth

[20] In the interview with the author, Lemire says that *Sweet Tooth* "was never about the secret of how the hybrid children came to be or the secret of what the plague was or any of that stuff. That was all way down on my priority list. It was always about where Gus ended up, and the characters ended up" (Lemire 3, 361).

is severely limited. This is in keeping with Brooks's positioning of the end as the primary point of sense-making: "[T]he ultimate determinants of meaning lie *at the end*" (52; emphasis in original).

While the hybrids' cave in Alaska is very much a place of beginnings, it is concurrently strongly conflated with endings and death. Abbott and his militia have tracked Gus and his group to Fort Smith, and the ensuing firefight between the groups is very bloody. While Abbott holds him at gunpoint, Gus realizes that his foster father's attempt to keep him hidden away in the sanctuary was to keep him away not only from living but more importantly from dying:

> Everything ends. And everyone we love has gotta die too. Just like Ms. Lucy and Johnny did… just like my daddy did. I think he thought that if he could keep me hidden away in the deep woods, maybe I'd be safe. Maybe I'd live forever. But I know now that that ain't true. I'll die too. It's just the way things are. That used to make me real sad and real scared. Everything ends…. (Lemire 3, 290).

Jepperd's orientation towards "what happens next" and Gus's realization that death is a necessary corollary to life, "just the way things are," substantiate Brooks's claim that "plot is the internal logic of the discourse of mortality" (22).

The deadly confrontation between the two groups at Fort Smith in Alaska ends significantly with the deaths of the antagonist Abbott and Jepperd. Campbell's "decisive victory" against "fabulous forces" has been won on Gus's monomythic journey and it is time for him to return "back from his mysterious adventures" to the Wilderness sanctuary in Nebraska (Campbell 30).

Returning to the Beginning One Last Time

In his reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Brooks sees the pertinence to literary analysis of Freud's realization that life is the dynamic interaction between the will to live and the desire to die, that life and death are intertwined and not mutually exclusive. Or put differently: One cannot hope to die without first having lived. Gus's father did not realize this as he aimed for a life in suspended animation in the Wilderness sanctuary followed by death's reunion with his wife.

This "drive toward the end" is according to Brooks operationalized "in the text through repetition" (102), and throughout *Sweet Tooth* there are numerous complex repetitions that exemplify such operationalization. The novel's many nested storylines told through intricate analepses and juxtapositions of different places and temporalities function as reminders of the intimate connections between the beginnings and endings of novelistic narratives. These movements "forward and back, advance and return interact to create the vacillating and apparently deviant middle" that constitutes the narrative-as-life mimesis (Brooks 105). In other words, repetitions in fictional plots help narrative to perform an imitation of life.[21]

The main conflicts of the story have now been resolved: Abbott has been killed, Jepperd has sacrificed his life, and some of the truth behind the hybrid children and the plague has been revealed. Moreover, the narrative reaches full closure by reconnecting with the beginning. The endpoint haven of the wilderness sanctuary is the place where both characters and narrative can rest: "After we discovered the *birthplace of the hybrid* and we had fought what we'd hoped would be the last fight against man, we set out to find a new home. A safe place where we could finally *stop running*" (Lemire 3, 325; emphases in original). When they finally reach the Wilderness sanctuary in Nebraska, now transformed into a post-apocalyptic endpoint haven, they start building a community in the forest. And as a consequence of the numerous havens depicted, the mobility/immobility dynamic explored in the previous chapter is activated in *Sweet Tooth*, and the endpoint haven of the Wilderness sanctuary activates many of the pastoral concerns discussed in the first chapter (see figure 13).

[21] The notion of constant repetition of the end is also present in Kermode, who argues that "already in St. Paul and St. John there is a tendency to conceive of the End as happening at every moment; this is the moment when the modern concept of *crisis* was born" (25; emphasis in original).

Figure 13. The endpoint haven in *Sweet Tooth* (cropped; Lemire 3, 330–31).

In the epilogue titled "Home Sweet Home," the story jumps forward in time and starts much the same way as the entire story begins—yet one more repetition—with a hybrid child that looks like Gus being chased through a forest by two armed men. This serves, of course, to even further underline the cyclical nature of the entire narrative and to emphasize the relationship between beginnings and endings discussed throughout this case study. This time the hybrid child is Gus's son, and he is not alone: "Now there were *two* [children]. And this story is just *beginning*…" (Lemire 3, 313; emphases in original). The narrative thus reconnects with the beginning while pointing forward to a new beginning after the end. Most of the epilogue is told through analepsis, with Gus retelling the main points of how he and his group travelled from and back to the haven of the Wilderness sanctuary.

It is thus fitting that the last panel of the graphic novel depicts a dead but content Gus resting in a chair with "THE END" written in the lower right corner followed by the finality offered by a full stop (see figure 14). Fitting because the novel "invites the reader to a divinatory realization of the meaning of life by writing 'Finis'" (Benjamin 99).

Having finally reached the place of eternal rest, the narration of Gus's life preceding it is charged with meaning. The paradisiacal endpoint haven thus functions here as the spatial answer to the question *where* the narrative of life should end.

Figure 14. The final resting place of Gus (Lemire 3, 350).

Concluding Remarks

> Hope and memory shall live still in some hidden valley where the grass is green.
>
> — J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King*

This dissertation argues that places of rest serve several different and overlapping functions in post-apocalyptic fiction, of which three of the most prominent have been explored in the previous chapters. In the first chapter I argue that havens can function as focal points for the genre's attempts to recover and depict a lost paradise, and I show that the pastoral sensibilities expressed in many post-apocalyptic havens are part of a millennia-long, cross-cultural history of mythologization of paradisiacal gardens. But while the portrayal of such pastoral havens in post-apocalyptic fiction in part draws on humanity's relationship with urbanity and rurality, which has been the case of most literary pastorals since ancient times, situating the green haven in post-apocalyptic fiction within an ecocritical framework reveals a detachment from an explicit urbanity and a shift of attention towards humanity's relationship with nonhuman nature. Also, rather than taking the cityscapes of the fictional world as their counterpoint, I suggest that the pastoral qualities of the post-apocalyptic haven find their dichotomous opposition in the modernity of the audience's situation. The cultural artifact of narrative fiction thus implicates the readers and their sociocultural context in the negotiation and construction of the post-apocalyptic haven. Through this operation, the readers are invited to vicariously join the fictional characters' search for green places of rest, which are hidden somewhere and sometime in remote or ontologically unstable localities, in the far future or the long-

forgotten past, in some hoped-for paradise after death, or in the story worlds of narrative fiction.

In the second chapter, I show how the post-apocalyptic haven can be used as a locus for explorations of the tension between mobility and immobility, between the impulse to move through space and the desire to stay in place. By leveraging the framework of spatial theory as well as insights of post-structuralist thinkers to post-apocalyptic fiction, the chapter exposes a genre bias towards immobility: The use of the haven trope is clearly in favor of the migrants' search for a place of long-term rest. But at the same time, even though the goal of migratory characters is to finally arrive and permanently settle down, leaving the horrors of the wasteland behind, some works of post-apocalyptic fiction also reveal the less travelled route of the nomad. Such narratives interrogate and question notions of place, of belonging, and of what modes of being are available.

In the third and final chapter, I claim that one of the functions of the post-apocalyptic haven is to offer the readers a corrective to vertiginous fears of the endlessness of cosmic time. Within the comfortable boundaries of the haven, anxieties of the spatial vastness and the temporal infinity of the world can be contained and kept in check. This function is intimately tied not only to the genre's examinations of beginnings and endings but also to the form of the plot-driven, novelistic narrative as such. That is, the haven can be found at the center of many of the post-apocalyptic genre's examinations of beginnings and endings, of both societies and eras in the fictional worlds as well as the start and endpoints of the narrative itself. In the chapter, I also draw on narrative theory to explore how the meaning-making potential of the plot-driven narrative in and of itself speaks to the audience's preoccupation with life, death, and the segmentation of time, and how the post-apocalyptic haven can be found at the very center of this discussion.

In sum, I argue that the functions of the post-apocalyptic haven presented in this study are rejoinders to cultural concerns of beginnings and endings, of life and death, of how we relate to nonhuman nature, and of where and when one can hope to find a final and paradisiacal place of rest.

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Index

Places of Rest in Worlds of Ruin

Works of post-apocalyptic fiction describing the end of the world are increasingly popular. With their portrayals of civilization's imminent demise–be it from the effects of global warming, at the hands of zombies, or through the spread of a lethal virus–post-apocalyptic narratives have held audiences captivated ever since the early nineteenth century. This dissertation is the first book-length scholarly study to investigate one of the most fascinating tropes of the post-apocalyptic genre, the haven, a place of tenuous and temporary refuge found in remote corners, hidden vaults and secluded valleys within the dangerous and unpredictable wastelands. By drawing on a wide range of critical theories and by using examples from a number of contemporary post-apocalyptic novels, films, and computer games, this dissertation explores three main aspects of these havens.

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