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Bill Ashcroft

A Climate of Hope

Abstract I: L'ecocritica postcoloniale è emersa gradualmente nel corso degli ultimi decenni, a mano a mano che le differenze tra postcolonialismo e ambientalismo venivano superate. Tali differenze si sono incentrate sul presunto conflitto sul modo che ciascuna delle due correnti di pensiero ha di vedere il mondo. Tuttavia, le radici coloniali del degrado ambientale e la crescente critica postcoloniale sugli effetti dell'imperialismo hanno determinato una sempre più forte collaborazione tra le due correnti, sfociata nella disciplina dell'ecocritica postcoloniale. La critica postcoloniale e l'ambientalismo hanno trovato un interesse comune nel ruolo giocato dall'imperialismo e dal capitalismo nell'antropocene in rapida distruzione. Tuttavia, la critica non ha portato spesso ad una chiara visione di un mondo possibile. Il presente saggio suggerisce una nuova confluenza tra critica postcoloniale, ambientalismo e utopismo. Tale confluenza emerge dalla consapevolezza postcoloniale che nessuna trasformazione può avere luogo senza la speranza di una visione del futuro. Il saggio si interroga su che cosa la letteratura possa fare in un conflitto ambientale in cui i popoli colonizzati sono tra i più colpiti. Il ruolo della letteratura postcoloniale è quello di fornire un modello per trasformare lo spirito creativo in resistenza politica. Nessuna vera resistenza può avere luogo senza una visione di cambiamento e la letteratura è la più potente sede deputata ad accogliere quella visione – nessuna trasformazione può avere luogo prima di essere innanzitutto immaginata.

Abstract II: Postcolonial ecocriticism has emerged gradually over the last couple of decades as the differences between postcolonialism and environmentalism have been overcome. Those differences have centred on an assumed conflict in the way the two discourses see the world. However, the colonial roots of environmental degradation and the growing postcolonial critique of the effects of imperialism have seen a growing alliance focused in the discipline of postcolonial ecocriticism. Postcolonial critique and environmentalism have found common interest in the role of imperialism and capitalism in the rapidly degrading anthropocene. However critique has not often led to a clear vision of a possible world. This paper suggests a new alliance – between postcolonial critique, environmentalism and utopianism – one that emerges from the postcolonial realisation the no transformation can occur without the hope inspired by a vision of the future. The paper asks what literature can do in an environ-

mental struggle in which colonized peoples environmental struggle in which colonized peoples are among the worst affected. The role of postcolonial literature provides a model for the transformative function of the creative spirit in political resistance. No true resistance can succeed without a vision of change and literature provides the most powerful location of that vision – no transformation can occur unless it is first imagined.

The growing alliance between postcolonialism and environmentalism seems to have overcome several apparent incompatibilities to form what is now called postcolonial ecocriticism. But the discourses of postcolonialism and environmentalism have always been deeply united in the concept of place. Place is not merely physical location, but emerges out of the interaction of language, history, visual perception, spatiality and environment in a people's experience. The importance of one's 'place' in the business of forming cultural identity, the myriad cultural connections it evokes, its importance as a context for cultural knowledge, make it particularly resonant in the experience of colonialism. Similarly, despite the tendencies of some deep ecologists, the environment is not simply there – an a priori that transcends cultural construction, the environment is itself a product of human interaction and representation. Both the postcolonial and the environment hinge on a struggle over the very concept of place.

Postcolonial ecocriticism arose because environmental degradation – what colonisers would call 'improvement', the clearing of land and the creation of property – is one of the most prominent features of colonial invasion. But importantly this critical discourse recognises that the degradation of place and people go hand in hand. If we look to the history of human efforts "to subjugate nature", we find that this is also a history of humans subjugating humans. The "Domination of nature", according to Horkheimer, inevitably "involves domination of man" (1974: 93), such that civilization produces "the alienation" of human beings "from extrahuman and human nature" (169)

As the principle of the self, endeavouring to win in the fight against nature in general, against other people in particular, and against its own impulses, the ego is felt to be related to the functions of domination, command, and organization [...] Historically, it belongs preeminently to an age – marked by a cleavage – between conquerors and conquered (105).

The process of domination continues today in the consequences of capitalist imperialism. When the 2012 Marikana miner's strike in South Africa was broken up with violence not witnessed since the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, the legacy of colonialism became impossible to ignore¹ (Mason *et. al.* 2014: 2). The continuing degradation, and indeed destruc-

¹ The Marikana platinum mine, owned by Lonmin, a British mining company, employed thousands of workers on very low wages who went on strike on 11th August 2012. South African police fired on the strikers on 16th August killing thirty-four miners and injuring seventy-eight. Astonishingly two hundred and seventy miners were charged with murder under an Apartheid law. The violence directed by white police at Sharpe-

tion of the environment by capitalism and the continuing exacerbation of global inequality are clear enough². But what is the place of literature in this? What can literature do? Surely the reports of the death of coral reefs, of the increase in extreme weather events should make us aware of the urgency of an ever-warming world. Apparently not! Where climate change is concerned human society demonstrates the boiling frog effect. The destruction of the environment seems so gradual that for the majority of the population it goes unnoticed and will continue to do so until we are boiled. So do art and literature have a role to play?

There is a well-worn slogan in postcolonial criticism called “The Book or the Barricade” and this becomes intensified in ecocriticism: what works better, narrative or activism? Are writers only successful as activists? In *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* Huggan and Tiffin ask “to what extent have postcolonial writers, in doubling as cultural and environmental activists been successful in pursuing an anti- or counter-developmental approach?” (2010: 29). Arundhati Roy is an interesting case in point: she is a writer activist and sees her fiction and political activism as being united in the business of telling stories (Barsamian 2001). But her imaginative fiction and political non-fiction are in entirely different registers. The creative imagination anticipates possibilities beyond the present reality in ways that critique the present, not by railing against it but by presenting the possibility of a different world. In the words of Ben Okri “writers are the dream mechanism of the human race” (1990: 77) and social dreaming is a key principle of the creative imagination.

What can Literature Do?

Reading, says Ross Chambers, can change desire and recirculating desire can change the world (1991: 253). He proposes the potential oppositionality of reading that can reconfigure desire by operating in the interstices of the narrative. Working within the system, reading can introduce a degree of play or flexibility into the landscape of desire. The very marginality of literature, like that of the court jester, allows it to call into question the established order of things, and to attempt to recruit the power of the narratee in the interests of the narrator.

The most powerful instrumentality of the literary text may also be its most obscure. Australian critic Kate Rigby argues that it is in moments of revelation of a poem’s very inability to represent the outside world, its representation of the unrepresentable sublime, that the outside world is made manifest in the text. For her,

Only to the extent that the work of art is self-cancelling, acknowledging in some ways its inevitable failure to adequately mediate the voice of nature, can it point us to that which lies beyond its own enframing (2004: 437).

Some ecocritics suggest that it is by such deixis rather than mimesis that the natural world may be best represented. William Howarth writes that:

ville had now been directed by black police at workers, a massacre carried out to protect the interests of multinational capital.

² See Marcuse 1966; Carlin *et al.* 2001; Foster & Brett 2009; Bellamy *et al.* 2010; Harvey 2011; Wright 2015.

Ecocriticism, instead of taxing science for its use of language to represent (mimesis), examines its ability to point (deixis). More developed in Asian than European languages (Liu), deixis locates entities in space, time, and social context. Through deixis, meaning develops from what is said or signed relative to physical space (Howarth 1996: 80).

This suggests a form of knowledge that exists beyond interpretation, one that Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht calls an experience of unmediated Presence. In his *Production of Presence*, he challenges “a broadly institutionalised tradition according to which interpretation, that is, the identification and/or attribution of meaning, is the core practice, the exclusive core practice indeed, of the humanities” (2004: 3). Interpretation is so institutionalised in the Humanities, that we take its core function for granted. But Gumbrecht’s dissatisfaction arose from a sense that ‘materialities of communication’ were completely ignored in the Humanities.

To cover the range of textual formations in which this may occur we can call this the ‘material resonance’ of the text (Ashcroft 2014). Material resonance occurs in written, audible and visual texts, but it may be present in other sensory stimuli as well, such as touch and smell. It is obviously most pronounced in the auditory impact of music itself and I am tempted to call this particular quality the ‘music’ of the text, along the lines of Aldous Huxley’s claim that: “After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music” (Huxley 1949: 10). Material resonance illuminates the possibility of a postcolonial aesthetic in a transcultural space. More broadly, the power of literature for conceiving a different world lies partly in the fact that there are ways of experiencing, responding to, of ‘understanding’, the world apart from structures of meaning, that is, apart from the kind of interpretation that can be fixed in language.

But in all this, whether redirecting desire, employing deixis or enhancing the material resonance of the text, the key function of the literary text is to present a different world. This is where I believe a third discourse must be brought into play with postcolonialism and environmentalism – that of utopianism. Utopian theory has undergone a vigorous renaissance during the post-Cold War period of global empire. A curious combination of Marxist theory and science fiction has led the way in utopian thought in the latter part of the twentieth century. The concept of the utopian remains an anchor to any theory of a better world, any hope for social change and amenity. The issue is not what is imagined, the product of utopia so to speak, but the process of imagining itself. Climate change is an ideal topic for the utopian because no change can occur unless it is driven by a vision of a different world. Activism can only operate on the premise of a belief in the possibility of change. Utopia is a vision of possibility that effects the transformation of social life.

Imagination forms the basis of the utopian in literature and the process of imagining – the process of utopian thought – forms the basis of the utopian in postcolonial transformation. Simply by imagining the world differently the creative work shows the possibility of a different world and both utopia and dystopia share a common goal, that of critiquing the present. Any utopianism worth the name, says Zygmunt Bauman “must engage in a significant polemic with the dominant culture” (Bauman 1976: 47). By speaking of a different world this difference is the key to the importance of art and literature in summoning forth

the hope for a better world. Utopia is a vision of possibility that effects the transformation of social life.

But utopia is not only “eutopia”, it also includes dystopian visions of the future, which characterise the growing genre of ‘cli-fi’ or climate fiction, a term coined in 2007 by Taiwan based blogger Dan Bloom. Margaret Atwood’s *Maddaddam Series – Oryx and Crake; After the Flood and Maddaddam* – is among the best known example of this. But when we look closely, the future of the environment has been pervasive in most science fiction, whether utopian or dystopian. The rapid rise of cli-fi has come about as a 21st century phenomenon because of the unprecedented vulnerability and rapid deterioration of the environment. As one commentator put it: “Cli-fi novels humanise the science of climate change” (Johns-Putra 2015). The problem is that the more literature insists the less effective it is. Literature can only inspire change by changing desire with a vision of hope.

In hoping for an environmental revolution we must remember that ‘revolution’ has two meanings: it is not simply a revolt but a revolving, a spiral into the future. Seeing this, we can understand that the belief in the future remains part of the continuous spiralling of hope, a hope that counteracts the apparently depressing downward spiral of climate change. Creative work continues to spiral into the future, continues the revolution, and that movement into the future must first be a movement of the imagination. Art and literature have a particular facility for projecting into the future. For Ernst Bloch, whose magisterial *The Principle of Hope* (1986) defined the utopian as fundamental to human life, literature has a significant utopian function because its *raison d’être* is the imaging of a different world – what he calls its *vorschein* or “anticipatory illumination”. Of course not all creative works are utopian, or even necessarily optimistic, but the anticipatory illumination is the revelation of the

possibilities for rearranging social and political relations to produce *Heimat*, Bloch’s word for the home that we have all sensed but have never experienced or known. It is *Heimat* as utopia [...] that determines the truth content of a work of art (Zipes 1989: xxxiii).

Heimat may lie in the future but the promise of *heimat* transforms the present. *Heimat* suggests but is not synonymous with the nation or the democratic state, but as the object of desire it can be foreshadowed by the imagination.

There are a number of ways in which the anticipatory consciousness may work in postcolonial environmental literature, ways that invoke the deep interrelation of people and place. Most of them are not directed at the future but all of them invoke a different world. Three of them are: a) hearing beyond the (indigenous) silence; b) thinking beyond the human world; c) inhabiting the future.

Hearing Beyond the Silence: Colonising Land and People

The link that Horkheimer makes between subjugating the environment and subjugating people has been nowhere more evident, not more catastrophic than in the encounter with indigenous peoples. One form of the utopian process of conceiving a different world begins by penetrating the silence of the disappeared. The expansion of Aboriginal literature is a

significant intervention into this silence. The appropriation of English and the interpolation of literary discourse have led to a revelation way of relating to the land completely different from the oclarcentrism of European culture. The idea that an individual may be connected to country in ways that are inconceivable to the western consciousness is a powerful demonstration of the anticipatory consciousness at work. In Archie Weller's ironically titled "Aboriginal History" he says:

From the bottomless waterhole
calling Pidja! Pidja!
like the illusive wind, you came
and you settled in my hair.
As quiet as a thought
you crept upon my woman's leg
and we both dreamed a dream.
Like a pounding kangaroo
you kicked her to let us know
and then I could remember

And now we watch you crawl, you crawl.
in the ashes of the dying fire
you leave your track.
It is time for your Grandfather to come
to name you from your mother's totem
for now, child, you are a woman (Gilbert 1988: 65).

The belief that human life is conceived by the proximity of a Dreaming spirit is beyond modern experience but not beyond our understanding. This sense of embodiment breaks the silence of Aboriginal oppression with the view of an entirely different world, a view that is utopian in its presentation of a completely different way of being in place. A silenced people and a silent landscape are one.

The Dreaming is perhaps the archetypal demonstration of the infusion of the present and future with the hope of a mythic past, a fusion of time and place, because the Dreaming is never simply a memory of the past, but the focusing energy of the present. The Dreaming is a supreme example of the circularity of time in postcolonial visions of a future that are embedded in a cultural past. The utopianism in Australian Aboriginal novels such as those by Alexis Wright, *Carpentaria* (2006), and Archie Weller, *Land of the Golden Clouds* (1998), owes very little to the western utopian tradition, for the Dreaming is a radical infusion of the present by a myth that encompasses both past and future. But one thing all literary versions of postcolonial hope share is a vision of *heimat* whether in a geographical region, a culture, a local community, a racial identity – all conceived in a disruption of conventional boundaries, a dynamic operation of memory³.

The silence of the land and people has occupied historians and cultural critics for some

³ See Kelly 2007.

time. In a real sense silence is only silence to the colonizing society whose culture of subjugation has brought with them an inability to hear. Studies by scholars as varied as William Stanner, Paul Carter, Deborah Bird Rose and Val Plumwood all suggest that a silent landscape is not only grounded in an inability to speak about the land, but the absence of many of the voices that were once present to articulate it, and ignorance of the presence of those that remain. While historians Stanner and Carter, cultural critics Bird Rose and ecologist Plumwood all speak of the silence of the land, literature has an unmatched capacity to evoke a presence, a knowledge in the silence that cannot be spoken except by the creative imagination.

Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria*, a vast sprawling novel, addresses the range of issues that affect Aboriginal life in the north. But most interesting is the way in which it begins by inserting the Dreaming into the contemporary text as she describes country in terms of the rainbow serpent:

Picture the creative serpent, scoring deep into – scouring down through – the slippery underground of the mudflats, leaving in its wake the thunder of tunnels collapsing to form deep sunken valleys [...] This is where the giant serpent continues to live deep down under the ground in a vast network of limestone aquifers. They say its being is porous; it permeates everything. It is all around in the atmosphere and is attached to the lives of the river people like skin (2006: 1).

The description includes no concessions to the contemporary reader for the passage simply interpolates Aboriginal reality into the contemporary English text, breaking the silence with a transformative account of the environment as the place of the Dreaming.

One of the most resonant voices in breaking silence of place and people is that of Australian poet/activist Judith Wright. Wright's awareness of the indigenous silence comes very early in her childhood when she sensed the presence of the disappeared as she walked across her father's sheep station: "old men, dark-skinned and shadowy, standing with spears in their hands among the few trees left standing on our sheep-ridden land" (Wright 1999: 296). In the poem "The Bora Ring" she describes a squatter coming upon an abandoned bora ring. The "grass that stands up/ to mark the bora ring" the only physical remnant, still haunts the landscape. Tragically "the earth-sky- water-tree-spirit-human complex existing in space- time" is a spectral presence, overlaid with a concept of place as property, commodity and landscape. The poem implicates the squatter in the history of colonialism's "whirlwind destruction" and at the end

The song is gone; the dance
is secret with dancers in the earth,
the ritual useless and the tribal story
lost in an alien tale [...]
Only the rider's heart
halts at a sightless shadow, an unsaid word
that fastens in the blood and the ancient curse,
the fear as old as Cain (Wright 1994: 2).

For Wright the ideology of progress and economics destroyed not only the indigenous population but also the environment and the poetic impulse it inspires. In “Two Dream-times” written for Aboriginal poet Oodjeroo Noonuccal she writes:

are you and I and a once loved land
peopled by tribes and trees;
doomed by traders and stock-exchanges,
bought by faceless strangers.

And you and I are bought and sold
our songs and stories too,
though quoted low in a falling market
(publishers shake their heads at poets) (Noonuccal 1994: 315).

The poet sees her role to expose the silence that falls across the indigenous presence. In “Space Between” she says:

however close our touch
or intimate our speech,
silences, spaces reach
most deep, and will not close (1994: 315).

Silence, in Wright’s poetry is not simply absence but an opening to Presence as the poetry offers its version of material resonance, intimating “an interruption of the silenced colonial landscape by voices and beings that Wright is in turn unable to convey” (Kankahainen 2015: 2). In reading the silence Wright sees the possibility that indigenous culture might in time affect the settler’s relationship with place. Like Arundhati Roy, Wright’s imaginative writing intersects her activism and in her case the penetration of the silence, the ability to imagine the silenced world offers the possibility of a changed consciousness:

In Australia we could become something new in the world, “people who have seized the chance to make a new kind of consciousness out of new conditions” (*Preoccupations* xvii). In “Landscape and Dreaming”, she outlines what such a “new consciousness” might entail. In her desire to “live [her] own meaning”, as opposed to that of the Aboriginal meaning, the essay blends evolutionary ecology, archaeology, and reflections on conservation and indigenous rights. It is a contemporary form of inhabiting the land, which is radical in both its social and ecological import, dealing with environmental deterioration, the problematics of ownership, and the political insurgency of indigenous Australians (Clark 2006: 159).

So out of a deep sense of grieving for what has happened to Aboriginal society Wright generates the vision of a different world, a different form of habitation.

Thinking Beyond the Human World

The inability to hear the indigenous world characterises the relationship with the non-human world as well and this area offers remarkable potential to imagine a very different way of being. In his environmental history of the Monaro, Keith Hancock quotes from the unpublished eulogy written by a forester Baldur Byles who was passionate about retaining an unspoilt environment and challenged people to think like a snow gum. We cannot “appreciate anything fully unless we understand it” says Byles:

until we pick up its wavelength so to speak, until we learn to think in the way it thinks [...] So, if we wish to understand this particular Australian tree we must try to understand its point of view, realising that it is a living organism just like you and me [...] We must try to understand its manner of living, its philosophy of life, its place in the world of natural things and the spirit that keeps it going in spite of great adversity (Griffiths 2016: 47).

We might raise an eyebrow today at such anthropomorphism but Byles’ admonition was very much like that of American forester and conservationist Aldo Leopold who, in the 1940s advocated ‘thinking like a mountain’ in order to understand the holism of ecology. And where is the most powerful, most strategic place for the exercise of such imagination, but literature. To think like a tree, a mountain or an animal we must find a place completely outside ourselves, we must find a future in which humans are one part of a complex environment. Perhaps only by imagining a world in which humans are not the beginning and end of all meaning can the catastrophe of the anthropocene be diverted. The literary imagination is not the only way but it is a powerful one.

Huggan and Tiffin give prominent place in postcolonial ecocriticism to zoocriticism, which, among other things, overturns the habit in literature for animals to represent humans, as in Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. Canadian writer Barbara Gowdy’s 1998 novel *White Bone* addresses this problem by telling the story from the elephant’s point of view. As she says “The White Bone is an attempt, however presumptuous, to make a huge imaginative leap [...] imagining what it would be like to be that big and gentle, to be that imperilled, and to have that prodigious memory” (Huggan & Tiffin 2010: 150). Gowdy’s techniques include lexical shifts that replace “he said” with “he rumbled”, descriptive language that imagines what it would be like to inhabit an elephant’s body.

But it may be the particular province of poetry to extend this level of imagining. In literary writing, poetry is one of the most obvious examples of the importance of materiality, producing a simultaneity of presence effects and meaning effects, for, as Gumbrecht says, “even the most overpowering institutional dominance of the hermeneutic dimension could never fully repress the presence effects of rhyme and alliteration, of verse and stanza” (Gumbrecht 2004: 18). Australian poet Les Murray describes his dialogue with nature in his Presence sequence as a shamanistic one, when he states in an interview that the animals ‘spoke through me’. In “Migratory” the words are justified along right-hand margin as though they themselves had migrated across the page, and Murray’s language seems to enter the consciousness of the bird:

I am the right feeling on washed shine,
 in wing-lifting surf, in running about
 beak-focussed: the feeling of here, that stays
 and stays, then lengthens out over
 the hills of hills and the feedy sea

I am the wrongness of here, when it
 is true to fly along the feeling
 the length of its rightness, while days
 burn from vast to a gold gill in the dark
 to vast again, for many feeds
 and floating rests, till the sun ahead
 becomes the sun behind (Murray 2002: 377).

The poem articulates the instinctual life of birds, particularly the impulse to migrate, where “I am the wrongness of here, when it is true to fly along the feeling the length of its rightness”. Importantly, the poem’s language makes no concessions to human consciousness or human experience. Understanding must bridge the huge space between us and the other.

A similarly adventurous imagining a different consciousness occurs in “The Cows on Killing Day” which attempt to view the world from the cows’ perspective:

All me are standing on feed. The sky is shining.
 All me have just been milked. Teats all tingling still
 from that dry toothless sucking by the chilly mouths
 that gasp loudly in in in, and never breathe out.

All me standing on feed, move the feed inside me.
 One me smells of needing the bull, that heavy urgent me,
 the back-climber, who leaves me humped, straining, but light
 and peaceful again, with crystalline moving inside me (Murray 2002: 367).

The cows experience is not rendered in terms of the lack of human qualities and therefore less important. The cow’s consciousness has its own poetic vision. In his essay “The Human-Hair Thread” Murray states that:

my abiding interest is in integrations, in convergences. I want my poems to be more than just national Parks of sentimental preservation, useful as the National Parks are as holding operations in the modern age. What I am after is a spiritual change that would make them unnecessary. And I discern the best hope for it in [...] convergence (1977: 569).

After suggesting that such convergence between Aboriginal and European “is a fact, a subtle presence, hard to discern often”, Murray states that the Jindyworobak poets “were

on the right track, in a way; their concepts of environmental value, of the slow mounding of all people within a continent or region towards the human form which that continent demands, that is a real process" (569). There is no expectation that we will or need to experience the animal's way of being in the world but the capacity of poetry to engage that way of being is a profound demonstration of possibility. More pertinently it engages with the reality of the human animal's way of being in then world by offering a presence, a material knowledge that exists beyond understanding.

Living Beyond the Present: Inhabiting the Future

The vision of the future is in some respects the least of the utopian functions of literature, for *Vorschein* is captured in the resonance of the artistic or literary work itself. But with the question of climate change there is a very urgent need to disrupt the boiling frog syndrome. Despite the growing number of climate records being broken, the actual rate of climate change is almost imperceptible to the experience of ordinary people. Add to this the pernicious bombardment of anti-climate rhetoric and the result is deafness to any form of alarm or critical warnings. We can probably all confess to moments of helplessness in the face of our society's stupidity. But this is where the utopianism of the aesthetic work is most crucial, because no change is possible without social dreaming, the belief in the possibility of a different world.

Australian author James Bradley's *Clade* set in the late 21st century traces the lives of a family over three generations as collapsing family relationships mirror the collapsing environment. "Clade" is the biological term for an ancestor organism and all its descendants, and that ancestor is a scientist named Adam. Each chapter moves forward in time telling the story of a successive generation observing the intense personal upheaval of the characters against the backdrop of gradual global catastrophe.

The key strategy here is to record the human experience of a world in which extraordinary environmental tragedies become a matter of everyday experience, relentlessly worsening over the generations. Perhaps this is why the urgency of action is deferred. Early in the novel Adam identifies the problem in human consciousness:

One of his colleagues sometimes talked about the deep structures of intelligence, the way in which human brains had been shaped by evolution, "We don't change because we don't believe in the problem", he would say, at least not at that deep intuitive level we need to. We can see it when it's in front of us [...] we know we have to change [...] but as soon as we're away from it our old thinking asserts itself, our desire to reproduce, to build power (Bradley 2015: 14).

Knowing something has to be done does not lead inevitably to action. In many respects the novel's record of a collapsing world as everyday experience provokes the imagination. This is starkly revealed late in the novel when sixteen year old Li Lijuan keeps a diary in which she simply records:

These are the things we've lost
Birds

Bananas
Tigers
Frogs
Bees
Coffee
Polar Bears
Coral

These are the things we've saved

Seeds
Elephants
Dolphins
Each other (Bradley 2015: 163-164).

The simplicity of this is chilling. The future of this novel is uncompromisingly dystopian. In India "the rains that usually arrive in July or August failed to appear, leaving the subcontinent to bake in record heat. Crops failed, leading to food shortages and starvation. Then in November torrential rain and massive floods killed more than a million and left another hundred million homeless. And finally, in the aftermath, the economy collapsed" (Bradley 2015: 25). The disjunction between knowing and experiencing speaks directly to the present. Watching the television one night, reports of power cuts, stalled climate talks and unexplained fish deaths in Tasmania and Victoria are replaced by an interview with a newspaper columnist who has just published a book arguing that evidence for the planet's warming is flawed. This is a sobering thought: even when the environment is visibly collapsing the climate deniers will still be operating and still be given air time as they are now. The treatment of refugees in the time of the novel is a continuation of our contemporary neglect and abuse of refugees:

Where, after all, are those who have sought refuge here meant to go? The islands of the Pacific are disappearing, Bangladesh is gone, as is much of Burma and coastal India; hundreds of millions have been displaced and are in need of assistance. Yet in the face of their suffering, politicians do little more than posture and parrot slogans (Bradley 2015: 131).

In the chapter "Boiling the Frog" the frog is finally boiled when massive storms and floods in England nearly lead to Adam and his daughter Summer's death. The novel goes on to record the gradual deterioration of the planet as heatwaves, storms, the disappearance of birds, the expulsion of refugees show the collapsing world as linked to the present. Adam is plagued by the 'sense that things are breaking down, spiralling out of control', and he is powerless to do anything about it. On the face of it there is nothing optimistic about this record of environmental collapse. The different world of this future is a warning of the present. But the utopianism of the novel lies beyond the dystopian litany of disasters, as the novel not only inhabits the future, but seems to inhabit the flow of time itself, thinking beyond

the non-human world. A sense of possible survival emerges when Ellie comes across a hive of bees hidden away to avoid catastrophic disease. Tasting the honey the beekeeper Amir gives her Ellie is amazed by the taste “so sweet and rich and impossibly deep that without thinking she closes her eyes” (Bradley 2015: 125). There is something fascinating, about the idea of a substance that changes with the seasons in this way, a reminder of the time when the planet still moved on its own cycles.

The hope in this account of a collapsing human world destroyed by its own stupidity and greed is a planetary one and part of the hope of the novel is the vision of a planet outside human intervention. This is where the novelist, like the poet thinks beyond the human world. Adam first senses this on a research trip to the Antarctic where he realises ‘he is in a place of the infinite, a place that exists without reference to the human’. But the future belongs to Adam’s autistic grandson Noah. The gardens in which he stood as a child to look at the stars:

are gone now, vanished beneath the sea, yet still they exist somewhere, in some possible world. As a scientist he knows that experience of time is an illusion, that all times exist equally, all possible worlds are present in every moment. That in another universe those gardens are still there, he is still there the past never ended (223).

For Adam’s grandson, the astronomer Noah, hope for the planet lies far beyond it in other galaxies and when he receives a signal from outer space in what is clearly language we sense that a future beyond the disaster of a collapsing world might lie in different worlds, worlds beyond the human world.

In a larger sense it is remarkable to Noah that language should persist in this way. Being autistic language had always appeared atomised to him. But in reality it connects him, connects everybody, not just to each other but to the distant past. Yet what of the future, he wonders:

What will be here eons from now? The ice is almost gone, but while it may take millions of years, there is little doubt that one day it will return, creeping back to cover the land, and the world will change once more, the turmoil and destruction of the past century being little more than a spasm, an interregnum in the great cycles of the planet’s existence. Perhaps there will still be humans then [...] some of them will have spread outward, to the stars [...] Either way they will carry within them the memory of this time, this past [...] just as he bears the memory of those ancient travellers in him (224).

The hope for humanity lies not only in connection but also in the flow of time itself. They are all “part of a movement in time, a river flowing ever on, bearing them away from the past. They have lost so much: Shanghai and Venice, Bangladesh, all those millions of live”. This is a strange form of hope, the anticipation of a time beyond the anthropocene but what the novel celebrates is the undefeated utopianism of the human spirit

People sometimes describe *Clade* as a hopeful book, but I've never been sure that's quite right. For while it deliberately resists the seductions of despair, emphasising instead contingency and the depth of time ahead of us as well as behind, it is still a book that is suffused with grief (Bradley 2017).

Yet all that seems to fall away as Li Lijuan's daughter Izzie, many years after Adam's death, watches the Shimmer. The 'Shimmer' is an aurora caused by the incremental changes to the earth's rotation caused by the melting of the ice and the shifting of the crust as it adapted to its loss have destabilized the fields in new and unpredictable ways:

She has seen footage of satellites moving through the aurora, the way it breaks across them like water, rolling on and over, and as she watches the eaves of light she can feel herself moving with them, lifted up and on into a future that may be wonderful or terrible or a thousand things in between. And she realises that whatever else happens, this is not an end but a beginning.

It is always a beginning (Bradley 2015: 237).

Here then lies the vision of *Heimat*. Home is always up ahead, and the literary work generates that feeling of promise without which change cannot occur. The utopian power of the text lies not in the realisation of *Heimat* nor in the warning about a collapsing world, but in the process of imagining, of thinking – both ahead of and beyond the human. Only by thinking beyond global warming imagining different world can that world come about.

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Bill Ashcroft is a renowned critic and theorist, founding exponent of postcolonial theory, co-author of *The Empire Writes Back*, the first text to offer a systematic examination of the field of postcolonial studies. He is author and co-author of seventeen books and over 180 articles and chapters, variously translated into six languages, and he is on the editorial boards of ten international journals. His latest work is *Utopianism in Postcolonial Literatures*. He teaches at the University of NSW and is fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

b.ashcroft@unsw.edu.au