

*We in the Anthropocene: Subscendence, Hyper- and Hyposubjectivity in Galápagos, Oryx and
Crake, and Cloud Atlas*

“It is relevant and even part of wisdom to ask not only are we
being good citizens of the world today, but are we being good ancestors”

– *Jonas Salk*

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Abstract

Taking its point of departure in Jonas Salk's question if we are being good ancestors, this thesis aims to investigate who *We* are as ancestors and how *We*, the inhabitants of the Anthropocene, can be conceptualised and defined through literature. By exploring Timothy Morton and Dominic Boyer's terms *transcendence*, *subscendence*, *hyper-* and *hyposubjectivity*, and considering Morton's theories *Dark Ecology* and *Hyperobjects*, we gain insight into who *We* are in the Anthropocene. While transcendence relates to exceeding one's limits, subscendence relates to the opposite; going backwards and realising that everything is ontologically smaller than the sum of its parts. Moreover, hypersubjectivity relates to traits such as being deliberate, predatory, and unequipped to solve the environmental issues we face in the Anthropocene because it entails waiting until a solution is found, which consequently creates a loop of inactivity. Contrarily, hyposubjectivity entails being subscendent which connotes spontaneity and a trial-and-error approach. This way of navigating the world implies that people who embody these traits are ready to make mistakes and focus on what they want to achieve, thus, their actions are not halted by a need to have a plan.

As Morton and Boyer's terms were developed in 2021, it has not yet been explored if they are applicable as analytical terms. Therefore, we employ the terms to challenge the concepts of the implied reader, narrator, implied author, plot and characterisation. More specifically, we utilise the terms in our analyses of Kurt Vonnegut's *Galápagos*, Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, and David Michell's *Cloud Atlas* to investigate how the novels conceptualise *We* in the Anthropocene as (ir)responsible ancestors. By approaching the novels in this manner, we discovered that the implied authors each illustrate how subscendence is needed to create a *We* that is not detrimental to the environment. Additionally, the implied authors demonstrate how transcendence leads to an inability to be part of a *We*. In *Galápagos*, the implied author employs the ghost Trout as a narrator who observes a small group of humans while they evolve into seal-like people. Because Trout adores the new version of humanity, he highlights how subscendence can positively affect the environment while transcendence is painted as insignificant in a broader perspective. Similarly, *Oryx and Crake* illustrates how hypersubjective behaviour has led to a dystopian society where neoliberalism is unregulated and where there is no opportunity to conceptualise a *We*. This behaviour also leads to the end of society and the human race as Crake annihilates humanity and proves himself a good ancestor to a different *We* than humans, which encompasses a harmonious relationship between the Crakers and the environment. The implied author employs Snowman to emphasise the satirical

nature of hypersubjectivity as Snowman is forced to come to terms with the fact that he is unable to exercise his transcendence except in relation to the Crakers. However, the implied author of *Cloud Atlas* shows that hypersubjectivity is an intrinsic value of humanity that repeats throughout time and criticises it by illustrating how it leads to slavery. Nevertheless, the novel also shows that it is possible for a person with hypersubjective traits to subscend and shed the predatory selfishness in the pursuit of a better world for future generations. The implied author employs Adam Ewing as an example of this as he has a more empathic desire for transcendence. Conclusively, we argue that each novel criticises specific types of hypersubjectivity by either categorising them as insignificant, satirising them, or making them out to be the antagonists. Additionally, the novels each encourage a specific subscendent approach to the environment that conceptualises a *We* that is able to tackle the hyperobjects that threaten the existence of humanity in the Anthropocene. Finally, we argue that the novels illustrate that being a good ancestor requires a subscendent approach to avoid colonising time and removing agency from inheritors.

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Introduction: Who are *We* in the Anthropocene?

Today, the environmental crisis is an ever more pressing matter, emphasised by the naming of the era: The Anthropocene, signifying the era (cene) of humans (anthropos). The name connotes that the era is characterised by how humanity impacts the environment substantially. The environmental issues we face are widely discussed, and in the academic world, it is an ever more critical topic across disciplines. In the words of Salk, it is time that we think about if we are being good ancestors since we are currently the co-authors of our destiny (16). However, while the seriousness of this topic is undeniable, carbon emissions are at an absolute high (IEA 1), and irreversible consequences to our environment are continually occurring (Atkins 1). Most people agree that something must be done and acknowledge that the matter is not taken seriously. Nevertheless, as philosopher and ecocritic Timothy Morton argues, it appears that it is too late to change much of the damage that has already happened as a mass extinction event is currently destroying the biodiversity of Earth (*Being Ecological* xxiv).

As mentioned, our departure in the question of whether *We* are being good ancestors can be credited to the inventor of the polio vaccine, Salk, as he asks us to think about this very question: “It is relevant, and even part of wisdom to ask not only are we being good citizens of the world today but are we being good ancestors” (16). Leading up to this question, Salk asks several other supporting questions that show his thoughts behind this question, all of which point toward the consequences of our current actions and responsibility as ancestors:

We have so altered the conditions of life on the planet, human and non-human, as to become the co-authors of our destiny. Will our actions influence the course of future events in our favour? Will we have the wisdom to perceive the long as well as short-term advantage in the choices we make so as to enhance the quality of our own lives and of the generations to follow? Will future generations speak of the wisdom of their ancestors as we are inclined to speak of ours? (Salk 15-16)

Salk’s questions ask us to consider how our current actions have negatively affected the planet. We need to think about enhancing the quality of life not only for ourselves but for the generations to come. In this sense, we need to be able to consider both the short and long term to the degree that includes imagining how we will be remembered as ancestors. Salk’s questions are supposed to make us consider our current behaviours, which is similar to Morton’s point that we need to learn to talk about a collective *We*. While they agree in this sense, Morton argues that there will be consequences if we do not consider his advice of defining a *We* because others will construct

different kinds of *We*, which he implies might not be constructive (Morton *Being Ecological* xvi). Morton's emphasis on the importance of the concept of *We* points toward the fact that Salk's question is multifaceted in the sense that it inspires the further questions of who *We* are, whose ancestors *We* are, and what it means to be a *good* ancestor. Here, Morton's approach suggests that these concepts are key questions in the Anthropocene that we need to answer to solve the climate crisis. This asks the questions: Who exactly should be addressed when *We* need to do something? Is *We* meant as the people in power, the human species, or, even broader, all living beings?

We as a concept is curious since it appears simple but is incredibly vast when we begin to explore it. Morton notes this in his book *Being Ecological*, where he argues that pronouns, in general, are difficult to use in the Anthropocene era. He uses *We* to highlight how humankind is responsible for global warming. As mentioned, he expresses that we need to learn how to talk about ourselves while encapsulating the last few decades of identity politics and thought, or we will risk succumbing to other less constructive definitions of *We* (Morton *Being Ecological* xvi). In several ways, some of the ideas that Morton and Dominic Boyer provide seem to be suitable for exploring this concept. Their ideas in their book *Hyposubjects: On Becoming Human* are especially relevant in this discussion. This book is presented in a style reminiscent of stream of consciousness and discusses climate change and political issues. The idea of subscedence, in particular, seems to be a central term in this book which is presented as a way to deal with problematic concepts such as climate change, neoliberalism, and other hyperobjects. Generally, it can be related to the classic concept and metaphysical thought experiment of the ship of Theseus, which begs the question if and at which point the ship would stop being the ship of Theseus if parts of the ship were removed or replaced one at a time (Britannica 1). When relating this question to neoliberalism or capitalism, the driving forces of the Anthropocene, it can be quite overwhelming and demotivating to think about how many people would need to change their behaviour in order to combat climate change. Morton and Boyer address these feelings by asking us to think in terms of subscedence, where even the slightest change alters the ship into something different. Following this idea, even a minor alteration in regard to climate change and other hyperobjects makes a difference. In that sense, the the concept is supposed to evoke a sense of optimism that lays the groundwork for more changes.

Morton and Boyer's ideas have not yet been used in literary analysis. Therefore, we investigate whether it can be a useful way to approach literature considering how their terms challenge the concepts of the implied reader, narrator, plot, characterisation, and implied author. In addition, we are interested in knowing whether the application of the theory in literary analysis can

provide new perspectives on how *We* navigate the Anthropocene and how to approach the concept of *We* in this era. To investigate these questions, we will analyse the novels *Galápagos* by Kurt Vonnegut, *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood, and *Cloud Atlas* by David Mitchell using Morton and Boyer's terminology. We have chosen these novels specifically since we believe that each of these novels will challenge and expand Morton and Boyer's terminology and provide new perspectives on the Anthropocene by contributing to a conceptualisation of *We* in this era. Furthermore, the novels are experimental and interesting regarding narrative, plot, and theme, thus, they appear to have significant points to make. Each of these novels illustrates how *We* as a concept can encapsulate a complicated debate, as they demonstrate how specific variations of *We* imply a distinct relationship with the environment. In Morton and Boyer's terms, each of these novels shows the importance of thinking in terms of subscendence and how specific kinds of hypersubjectivity can be problematic. Each of the novels has been analysed by other critics in similar contexts, such as ecocriticism and the Anthropocene and we will consider these readings in our analysis. We believe that our readings will build upon these academic discussions and that our analysis will contribute with a perspective that has not yet been explored. Our reading the novels highlights how Morton and Boyer's approach to ecocriticism is unique as it investigates how people relate to each other and their environment. In his podcast, Morton explains that it correlates because the way we relate to each other is how we relate to the environment (*We're Gonna Do This* 09:30-09:55). These considerations and the question if *We* are being good ancestors lead us to the following thesis statement:

By employing Morton and Boyer's terms *subscendence*, *hyper-* and *hyposubjectivity* in a reading of *Galápagos*, *Oryx and Crake*, and *Cloud Atlas*, unique perspectives on the Anthropocene emerge, which encourage a particular approach to our environment in addition to a new way of conceptualising *We*.

To answer this thesis statement, we will explore what it means to be human in the Anthropocene, which serves as the context for this thesis. Then, we will explain Graham Harman's theory of object-oriented ontology and Morton's theory of dark ecology, including his concept of hyperobjects. These theories will lay the foundation for understanding Morton and Boyer's theory, which we describe afterwards. After that, we will challenge the concept of the implied reader by discussing the idea of reading a text subscendently. This discussion will be our point of departure

before we proceed to our analyses, where we employ Morton and Boyer's terms to analyse the concepts of the implied reader, implied author, narration, plot and characterisation. Finally, we will compare and conclude our findings.

Context: Navigating the Anthropocene as the Perpetrator and the Victim

In this chapter, we will explore the concept of the *Anthropocene* and the questions that emerge from living in a time where our existence impacts the environment considerably. As mentioned, our main questions address the concept of *We* and ancestry, which will be the focal point when we analyse the three novels: *Cloud Atlas*, *Galápagos*, and *Oryx and Crake*. We will consider why and how new types of questions regarding the concept of *We* and ancestry appear in the context of the Anthropocene, why new vocabulary is necessary to describe these new and unique circumstances, and how the ambiguous nature of the Anthropocene affects us. Timothy Clark explains that the term the Anthropocene developed from the declaration of a new geological epoch:

On 29 August 2016 appeared a long-anticipated headline, 'The Anthropocene epoch: Scientists declare dawn of human-influenced age'. At issue was the August report of the so-called Anthropocene Working Group, part of the Subdivision on Quaternary Stratigraphy, itself part of the International Union of Geological Sciences. In the newspaper's summary: 'Humanity's impact on the Earth is now so profound that a new geological epoch, "the Anthropocene", needs to be declared, according to an official expert group who presented the recommendation to the International Geological Congress in Cape Town on Monday. An epoch is a period of deep time on the geological timescale distinct enough to have a designation of its own. (Clark 17)

Although this thesis is not within the scope of geology, the fact that the Anthropocene is considered an entire epoch serves as justification for asking a broad range of questions – some of which we will explore through the field of humanities. The Anthropocene shows how our worldview changed from one day to another. Before, what used to seem significant to us was short-term matters such as stock trading, where the critical timeframe is less than a year considering interim reports, or political elections, where the relevant timeframe is four years. Considering the Anthropocene, we suddenly need to broaden our perspective to thinking long-term. Another noteworthy characteristic of living in the Anthropocene is the contradictory quality that also defines it: Climate change is our

fault, we have demonstrated that we have the power to cause it, but we cannot reverse it, which sparks a feeling of loss of agency which we were not familiar with before.

As mentioned, in this thesis, we investigate the notion of *We* and consider the question of whether *We* are being good ancestors. Jessica Weir considers similar challenges regarding the connection between *We* as humans and climate change:

Climate change, spectacular in its scale and force, is the cumulative result of intertwined human and non-human agencies. It is perhaps the most profound expression of the earth's agency—the capacity of this world to act, to show its power in all our lives. The Anthropocene throws us a particular challenge to acknowledge those ecological connections that sustain our existence. We live within networks, webs, and relationships with non-human (or more-than-human) others, including plants, animals, rivers and soils. We rely on each other for food and fresh water. We are co-participants in what is happening and what will happen next. (Weir 17)

By pointing out that we are co-participants in both current and future events, she proposes that we must accept a sense of responsibility as we are a direct cause of climate change. Still, she acknowledges that we are not the only ones who influence the present and the future – the underlying question is then, “Who else do this *We* include?”. She mentions networks and webs when she describes our relationship with others, in which she includes both animals, plants, and different components of the earth's surface. This connectedness is consistent with Morton's term *mesh*, which describes how we exist in an interconnected mesh that includes both the living and non-living, which forms an infinite number of connections (*The Ecological Thought* 28). Additionally, Weir argues that climate change is the earth's way of showing its agency, which is an interesting remark since, as pointed out earlier, *We* experience a change in our sense of agency.

Weir's argument that *We* have to recognise our relationship with nature and her notion of agency accompany Deborah Rose's thoughts. In a similar way, Rose draws attention to the idea of agency: “Acknowledging the reality of human agency, we are no longer in the position of being able to sustain the idea that humans are separate from nature” (Rose 1). The way that both Weir and Rose consider the connection between humans and nature entirely disagrees with the dualistic perception of humanity and the natural world, which was common before the Anthropocentric context. Furthermore, their perspective questions the state of human agency in an Anthropocentric context, thus, they conceptualise a *We* that is potentially losing its agency. Additionally, Rose draws attention to Val Plumwood, who argues for a “...need for new ways of imagining, being and

becoming human” (qtd. in Rose 1). Plumwood suggests a way to accommodate this need when he describes that we have “...two major tasks before us at this time: the first is to resituate the human in ecological terms, and the second is to resituate the non-human in ethical terms” (qtd. in Rose 3). The two tasks that Plumwood describes implies that dualistic distinction between humanity and nature need to be dissolved and that humans need to be resituated within nature together with the non-human instead of separate from it. Secondly, she explains that the non-human need to be resituated in ethical terms, meaning that we need to reconsider how we treat the non-human. The initiative to move away from the idea that humanity and nature are separate entities is an ongoing theme in the Anthropocene. In Rose’s definition of the ecological humanities, she depicts this initiative when she describes it as a “... new interdiscipline that has emerged specifically to address the fact that current ecological problems, including extinctions, climate change, toxic death zones, water degradation, and many others, are anthropogenic events” (Rose 1). Her definition both acts as a reminder that we have created our own catastrophe and emphasises how the Anthropocene also encapsulates the fact that *We* colonise time. We colonise time by making the choices we do today because we take away agency to make choices from future generations because we have polluted large parts of the earth.

Plumwood argues that *We* must work towards connectivity that “... calls for its own non-linear recursive logic” (Rose 4). Thus, we need to think out of the box and do so repeatedly. Glenn Albrecht supports the idea that it is necessary to think differently as he suggests that new words are imperative to keep up with the grand-scale and accelerating environmental changes. He clarifies this idea by pointing out that the changes are in stark contrast to what *We* have encountered before: “It is no wonder languages do not contain concepts and words for the lived experience of such shared change” (10). Consequently, he proposed the term *Solastalgia* in 2003 “...to give conceptual clarification to the experience of people whose home environment was being changed in unwelcome ways” (Albrecht 9). Albrecht further explains that the concept captures the relationship between emotions and environment (9), which he elaborates that:

Negative change in both natural and built environments can be a source of distress to one’s sense of place. Due to the increasing pace of “development” and environmental and climatic pressure, human distress connected to disrupted relationships to “home” and landscape has become a defining feature of the twenty-first century. (Albrecht 10)

It is crucial to regard these feelings as a defining feature of the twenty-first century in order to understand what defines *We* in the Anthropocene. Albrecht compares it to being “mixed up”

because it is evident that we are to blame for global warming and mass extinctions, even though we “... do not want such an end state to eventuate” (24). In other words, Albrecht captures the ambiguity of our actions as they are inconsistent with what we should be doing. His description approximates Morton’s analogy with trauma and car crashes.

Morton points out this paradox: “it’s so very clear that “what to do” is drastically to limit or eliminate carbon emissions. We know exactly what to do. Why aren’t we doing it?” (*Being Ecological* xxv). Morton argues that *We* are currently being traumatised by the ongoing climate changes. He illustrates this by considering Sigmund Freud’s dream theory and comparing PTSD dreams to what he calls “... dumping trauma data” (*Being Ecological* xxii), i.e. all the knowledge, data, and evidence about climate change continuously spewed in media. He explains that even though PTSD dreams are unpleasant and potentially harmful, it echoes trauma which Freud touches upon: “Freud argued that there must be some kind of pleasure in such a process, otherwise we wouldn’t be doing it to ourselves” (Morton *Being Ecological* xxii). Establishing a connection between trauma and pleasure, Freud explained that a person who suffers from PTSD dreams achieves safety and security as they can anticipate what will happen by returning to the moment before the trauma took place in a dream (Morton *Being Ecological* xxii). Morton elaborates on data dumping by stating that it “...will never give us the satisfaction we think we want. We spew it and listen to it as if it could, and that’s the problem. We are stuck in the initial stages of going through a trauma—one that is still happening” (*Being Ecological* xxix). Furthermore, Morton clarifies that the fear we experience while anticipating trauma is less intense than the fear we experience while undergoing trauma. Thus, trauma must be defined by:

... things that you find yourself in the middle of—you can’t sneak up on them from the side or from behind, and that’s why they’re traumatic. You just suddenly find yourself in a car crash, for instance. If you had been able to anticipate, you might have been able to swerve out of the way. (*Being Ecological* xxiii)

Morton explains that trauma implies the absence of anticipation and control, which results in the inability to avoid it. Additionally, he argues that the association between PTSD dreams and the information dump mode “... is a way for us to try to install ourselves at a fictional point in time before global warming happened. We are trying to anticipate something inside which we already find ourselves” (Morton *Being Ecological* xxiii). This explanation can be compared to attempting to anticipate a car crash while we experience the car crash. Thus, what we are trying to do seems to be

an impossible contradiction, and consequentially, we are stuck in a place of dormancy. Morton addresses the passive waiting position we are in by explaining:

Right now it's as if we are waiting for just the right kind of data, then we can start living in accord with it. But this data will never arrive, because its delivery mode is designed to prevent the appropriate reaction—we find ourselves in the midst of horribly confusing, traumatic events such as global warming and mass extinction, and we don't have much of an idea of how to live that. (*Being Ecological* xxiv)

The fact that we are stuck in a mode of waiting is also a defining factor in the concept of hypersubjects, which we will unpack in a later chapter. However, Morton argues that we put up too much resistance to realise that climate change is currently taking place; however, we are experiencing this trauma because we do not act (*Being Ecological* xxiv). Consequently, Morton equates the stagnation to "... trying to have a PTSD dream while having a trauma" (*Being Ecological* xxix). Since we are in such a terrifying situation, it becomes difficult to move further than asking what we should do about it as the urgency of information we are receiving feels paralyzing. (Morton *Being Ecological* xxiv). Though, as we will explain later, Morton and Boyer argue that a hyposubjective approach can help us overcome this passive stage. Furthermore, Morton points out that, the implicit message in the manner we encounter the data urges us to anticipate rather than act, which makes the message two-faced. This fact is also why "data dumping" is not working (*Being Ecological* xxiii). Considering this, we can assess whether *We* have any time, energy, or attention left to be good ancestors. To examine this question, we use Morton and Boyer's terms as we believe that they can help unpack who *We* are as ancestors. According to Morton and Boyer, hypersubjects are the ancestors and perpetrators of what they define as the hyperobjective era, while hyposubjects are the inheritors (13-14). By applying Morton and Boyer's terms in literary analysis, we will investigate how to surpass a *We* who are passive sufferers of Solastalgia and ecological PTSD. The fact that the novel can be a useful tool is backed up by Clark, as he argues that we should work towards connectedness through literature and that novels can provide unfamiliar and fresh perspectives:

The novel has long seemed especially suited to the way environmental issues are always and immediately also issues of politics and culture. A novel in particular has the power to be comprehensive in the way that, say, a paper in a scientific or social science journal never could be: for it is free to trace all imaginable scenarios and to survey how prejudice, personal

background, cultural assumptions, scientific research and the complacencies of day-to-day life *all* form part of how people engage or evade environmental questions. (Clark 78)

Clark illustrates how the novel can provide insights into people and their relationship with environmental challenges. Therefore, the novel can help us define what it means to be human in the Anthropocene. Moreover, Clark argues that the novel can illustrate all imaginable scenarios. What follows is that the novel can also help us imagine a *We* as potential ancestors and help to understand both the consequences and responsibility this implies. However, Clark also considers the potential disadvantages and complications when the Anthropocene is represented in an aesthetic form:

The challenge of representing the Anthropocene in aesthetic form is not one that admits easy conclusions. The global scope and counterintuitive scale of key issues seem to pose new problems. One of these may lie simply with the very ambition or expectation that some sort of comprehensive representation of the Anthropocene is possible. Given that the environmental issues often exist on several, different scales at the same time, involving multiple human and non-human factors, then no conceivable representation of some overall, planetary scenario is going to escape claims that it is evasive in some way or another. (Clark 110)

The fact that climate issues exist on several scales simultaneously makes the issues difficult to encapsulate. However, considering the global aspects of the Anthropocene and the fact that Clark defines the extent of key issues as counterintuitive, it can be characterised as what Morton defines as a hyperobject. These objects are defined by five characteristics that we will elaborate on in an upcoming chapter. However, to put it simply, they are "...things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans" (Morton *Hyperobjects* 1). Viewing the key issues as a hyperobject, they are difficult to access and understand, which confirms Clark's argument that no possible representation of a global scenario can avoid being evasive.

Considering how the Anthropocene is a grand term referring to a new geological epoch caused by humans, it is expected that other competing terms will emerge and urge us to revisit the relationship between humans and nature. To illustrate this, Carlos Fonseca lists several other concepts: "... thermocene, thanatocene, phagocene, phronocene, agnotocene, Capitalocene ..." (404). We will not examine all the competing terms since the Anthropocene best encapsulates what we attempt to accomplish with our thesis by denoting how this is the era of humans. However, we will explore the Capitalocene because the concept seems deeply intertwined with the Anthropocene. Thus, to answer our thesis statement, this term appears useful since capitalism is relevant to our

discussion of *We*. The Capitalocene is a term coined by Jason Moore; however, it "... does not stand for capitalism as an economic and social system. It is not a radical inflection of Green Arithmetic. Rather, the Capitalocene signifies capitalism as a way of organizing nature—as a multispecies, situated, capitalist world-ecology" (Moore 6). As we move beyond the common understanding of capitalism, we should understand that the Capitalocene is a way of organising nature. This understanding supports Daniel Hartley's argument that world ecology pushes us to view "...capitalism as producer and product of the web of life" (158). Arguing that capitalism produces the web of life is comparable with arguing that capitalism manipulates the hyperobjective era. By simultaneously viewing capitalism as a product of the web of life it highlights that *We* have invented capitalism. In that case, we can argue that it must be possible to adopt different systems or adjust capitalism to become less harmful. This approach is also mirrored in the way Morton and Boyer describe hyposubjectivity, which we unpack in a later chapter. Clark also mentions the Capitalocene and explains that some might prefer this term because the Anthropocene "... can give the misleading impression of referring to humanity as [a] whole, crudely overlooking huge differences in wealth, impact, and environmental responsibility between people across the world" (24-25). Thus, the Capitalocene differentiates from the Anthropocene by adopting a position on whom *We* are by considering that we are not equally responsible for climate change.

The two terms emphasise slightly different perspectives on nature, as the Anthropocene signifies that we must perceive nature in relation to humans. Conversely, according to Elmar Altvater, the Capitalocene argues that "... "nature" has been transformed into a capital asset. Nature has been reduced to something that can be valued and traded and used up just as any other asset: industrial capital, human capital, knowledge capital, financial claims, and so forth" (145). Therefore, the responsibility for climate change falls on the capitalists who use and trade nature by perceiving it as a capital asset. Altvater further elaborates on the distinction between the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene by explaining that the Anthropocene takes away responsibility from the individual because, as individuals, *We* cannot influence the geological history on a significant scale. Nevertheless, we do not agree with this argument, as Morton and Boyer's theory argues the opposite which we will show in the next chapter. According to Altvater, the Capitalocene can explain how nature has turned into a capitalist commodity and how that leads to climate change. In this sense, it can also assist in our understanding of whom *We* are when investigating who is responsible for climate change. However, by adopting the term the Anthropocene instead of the Capitalocene, we are better equipped to examine the concept of *We* as future ancestors.

Nevertheless, the Capitalocene makes a critical point that *We* cannot and should not blindly include every human on earth but take into consideration various social, economic, and cultural differences when investigating the concept of *We*.

Returning to the Anthropocene and who *We* are in this context, Stacy Alaimo has phrased the question: “Who is the “anthro” of the “Anthropocene?”” (89). Since anthro refers to humans, we will consider the human condition in the Anthropocene. Stephanie LeMenager notes that: “At the core of the humanities lies the question of human nature, a question of “who are we?” that has been reanimated by debates about the proposed geological epoch of the Anthropocene” (473). One of the conceptions of who *We* are concerns the double-edged quality of human life in the Anthropocene, which Dale Jamieson explores:

Never have humans been so powerful. Hence the name “Anthropocene.” Yet, at the heart of the Anthropocene is a widespread sense of the loss of agency ... The main obstacle to taking action on climate change is the deep sense of its inevitability and our powerlessness to affect its course. (Jamieson 15)

Jamieson highlights the ambiguous conditions of life in the Anthropocene by referring to humans as both powerful and powerless, someone who has lost their agency regarding climate change. This contradiction resembles how Morton considers the issue. As we mentioned earlier, he compares it to being in the midst of a catastrophe or undergoing trauma as if we are in the middle of a car crash (*Being Ecological* 145). This trauma leads to a feeling of unreality which “...goes hand in hand with the less you-scaled, more ego-shattering event, which becomes part of you” (Morton *Being Ecological* 145). Thus, according to Morton, the trauma merges with oneself in an introspective process and becomes an integrated part of what it means to be human in the Anthropocene. As mentioned, we do not consider humanity and nature as two distinct entities anymore. However, Jamieson talks about the consequences of the shift from a dualistic understanding of nature to a more nuanced understanding: “Everything seems possible but nothing seems to matter. This leads to a crisis in meaning. Human life has traditionally been lived against the background of a nature that is seen as largely independent of human action” (Jamieson 15). This crisis regarding meaning and the hopeless sensation it brings relate to Morton and Boyer’s claim that “... the Anthropocene is the first truly anti-anthropocentric concept because it is borne out of realizing that you are a weak, fragile entity that could go extinct, that is made of other entities that aren’t you, and that you coexist with these other entities and utterly relate with them” (28). The focus on a crisis that we are responsible for but also victims of generate a clear illustration of the conflict that we should be

responsible ancestors but are victims at the same time: “It’s like Fight Club for the Anthropocene, a battle within the self to reunite with the planet” (Morton and Boyer 40). Thus, to comprehend who *We* are in the context of the Anthropocene, we need to encapsulate the notion that *We* are responsible victims.

Morton and Boyer: Ancestors and Inheritors of the Anthropocene?

In this chapter, we will explore Morton and Boyer’s key theoretical terms in order to investigate how *Galápagos*, *Oryx and Crake*, and *Cloud Atlas* can contribute to the concept of the Anthropocene *We*. Specifically, we will explore the terms hypersubjects, hyposubjects, transcendence, and subscendence. However, before we outline Morton and Boyer’s terms, we will outline the theoretical background, which includes the concepts of *object-oriented ontology* (OOO), dark ecology, and hyperobjects because these terms have laid the groundwork for hyper- and hyposubjects, transcendence, and subscendence. Furthermore, because Morton and Boyer’s concepts can be viewed as a critique of neoliberalism and the liberal humanist subject, we will contextualise their theory by first outlining these concepts.

The word neoliberalism connotes something new (neo) and free (liberal) and according to Nicola Smith, the concept of neoliberalism relates to the economic system and ideology that is commonly associated with the concept of laissez-faire economics, which emphasises that the government should intervene as little as possible in regard to economic and social aspects (Smith 1). Definitions of neoliberalism vary, and it is often used as a pejorative term which, according to William Davies, is attached to “... various forms of anti-democratic or pro-corporate power ...” (310). However, definitions of neoliberalism tend to share certain common denominators, such as the fact that neoliberal policy aims toward the privatisation of “... institutions, and activities which lie outside of the market, such as universities, households, public administrations and trade unions” (Davies 310). These institutions and activities might also be reinvented or disbanded in an attempt to bring them within the market (Davies 310). Additionally, the state must actively participate in this process: “Neoliberal states are required to produce and reproduce the rules of institutions and individual conduct, in ways that accord with a certain ethical and political vision” (Davies 310). Finally, competition is seen as a driving force in this ideology, and inequality is not only seen as a product of this but is viewed positively (Davies 310). Thus, it can be said that individuality and personal freedom are values that are at the heart of neoliberalism.

Similar to neoliberalism as an ideology, according to Rafey Habib, the liberal humanist subject embodies and shares some of the same principles such as nationalism, empiricism, utilitarianism and some of the economic principles such as rationality, laissez-faire economics, and free competition (1). As we mentioned, the word “liberal” connotes freedom, while a “humanist” signifies a person who subscribes to the value of rationality as a way to solve problems and believes that humanity is inherently good. As Meyer H. Abrams explains, humanism counters those who value religion as the truth (144). To aid our understanding of the liberal humanist subject, we will explore some of the characteristics Peter Barry has outlined as the key ideas in liberal humanism. One of the overall assumptions of liberal humanism is the idea that “... literary text contains its own meaning within itself. It doesn’t require any elaborate process of placing it within a context ...” (Barry 17). This idea assumes that literature is independent of its written context and has meaning without the context. In addition, liberal humanists argue that literature should be separated from its context to be understood (Barry 18). Thus, according to liberal humanism, criticism should discover the inherent meaning of a text and mediate it to the reader (Barry 19). The idea that the context is irrelevant mirrors the notion that the liberal humanist subject is free and has an unrestricted opportunity, which denotes that the liberal humanist subject disregards privilege and promotes the concept of having agency despite the situation. Though Hugh Miller argues that the liberal humanist subject is a construction, he describes this type of subject as autonomous and someone who believes “...in liberty and justice for all” (Miller 99). Thus, the liberal humanist subject is independent and idealistic. Ultimately, the liberal humanist subject can be described as free, autonomous, and rational, while having an anthropocentric point of view, which is why Morton disagrees with humanism.

Morton and Boyer challenge some of the neoliberalist ideas concerning the human subject (Morton and Boyer 73). The main reason that Morton and Boyer criticise neoliberalism is that they have contrasting ideas in regard to what degree a person can be said to be rational, free, and autonomous. In other words, the main idea of a liberal humanist subject is that they are able to make rational choices and are given the freedom and agency to do so. However, Morton and Boyer disregard this idea, which is apparent in their description of subjects in the Anthropocene, whom they dub hyper- and hyposubjects. As a critique of neoliberalism, Morton positions himself within the philosophy OOO and specifically the ecological perspective he names dark ecology. This theoretical branch opposes the anthropocentric perspective of liberal humanism by critiquing the way people view and interact with our environment and by putting ‘objects’ at the centre of

attention instead of people. To further explore this, the next section will outline the general ideas of OOO and dark ecology before we unpack Morton and Boyer's theory.

Object-oriented Ontology: A World of Nothing but Objects

Morton states that his theory is inspired by Harman's theory on Object-oriented ontology (OOO). Since dark ecology is based on OOO, it is necessary to understand OOO before it is possible to grasp the main concepts in dark ecology, including hyperobjects, hypersubjects, hyposubjects, and subsistence, which we will outline later in the theory section. OOO is a strain of philosophy that builds upon the phenomenological ideas of philosophers such as Kant, Heidegger, and Husserl. The philosophy itself is distinct from these strains of philosophy because it revolves around objects and treats the world as a collection of objects. While the philosophy can be challenging to understand, Jade Hagan credits Ian Bogost when it comes to giving an overview of the theory (Hagan 20):

If ontology is the philosophical study of existence, then from Harman we can derive an object-oriented ontology ... OOO puts things at the center of being. We humans are elements, but not the sole elements, of philosophical interest. OOO contends that nothing has special status, but that everything exists equally—plumbers, cotton, bonobos, DVD players, and sandstone, for example. In contemporary thought, things are usually taken either as the aggregation of ever smaller bits (scientific naturalism) or as constructions of human behavior and society (social relativism). OOO steers a path between the two, drawing attention to things at all scales (from atoms to alpacas, bits to blinis) and pondering their nature and relations with one another as much with ourselves. (Bogost 6)

Harman argues that objects can be said to be "... the building blocks of philosophy" (*The Quadruple Object* 13), where everything construes as an object. On this basis, Harman argues that this philosophy does not give any special privileges to human beings since it treats everything equally as an object (*The Quadruple Object* 12). This equalitarian outlook on the world is a key concept in dark ecology. Furthermore, it is one of the reasons why it differs from other branches of phenomenology. How Harman's phenomenology differs is best explained when he compares it to Emmanuel Kant's phenomenology. Before comparing his philosophical position to Kant's, Harman outlines what he believes are Kant's two fundamental claims:

1. Human knowledge is finite, since the things-in-themselves can be thought but never known.

2. The human-world relation (mediated by space, time, and the categories) is philosophically privileged over every other sort of relation; philosophy is primarily about human access to the world, or at least must take this access as its starting point. (*The Road to Objects* 1)

Harman explains that OOO agrees with the first principle since OOO argues that objects can never truly be known because they exist withdrawn. Instead, only the qualities of objects can be known, but even if all the qualities of an object were known, they would still not constitute the object. This idea is also Kant's main premise. However, Harman disagrees with Kant's second premise, which is anthropocentric because it privileges human-world relations over the interactions of other beings or non-living objects. Instead, OOO emphasises that all object-to-object relations are equally valid ways of interacting and accessing the world.

Furthermore, Harman argues that all objects remain fully ungraspable to their releta and that it is not just humans who are unable to grasp objects (*The Road to Objects* 1). Because of this change in perspective, his ideology appears less anthropocentric because nothing can be centered if everything is equally and object. In this comparison between Harman's and Kant's premises, it becomes apparent that while Kant privileges humans over other species in terms of how we relate to the world, Harman extends these privileges to all living and non-living beings. More specifically, Harman argues that everything exists withdrawn and unable to be fully grasped by anything, which includes themselves (Morton *Dark Ecology* 41-42). To further explain this "withdrawnness" and how we can experience it, it is beneficial to look at how Harman approaches the writings of H.P. Lovecraft.

Harman explains that Lovecraft can depict the phenomenological gap between objects and the thing-in-itself, making the reader able to experience what is otherwise difficult to experience in the real world (Harman *Weird Realism* 14). The clearest example Harman uses to explain why Lovecraft is so significant in this regard is when Lovecraft describes Cthulhu:

Lovecraft hints at an octopoidal dragon while also suspending that literal depiction in three separate ways: (1) he downplays it as merely the result of his own "extravagant imagination"; (2) he evasively terms his description "not unfaithful to the spirit of the thing" rather than as dead-on correct; (3) he asks us to ignore the surface properties of dragon and octopus mixed with human and to focus instead on the fearsome "general outline of the whole," suggesting that this outline is something over and above a literal combination of these elements. (*Weird Realism* 50)

Despite the narrator's best efforts, he is unable to explain the appearance of Cthulhu. Instead, he manages to describe the feeling he gets from experiencing the eldritch being. Thus, it is an example of Kant's first fundamental claim that we are unable to know things fully. It appears as if the narrator doubts his mind when he experiences the being since the being is beyond what people can comprehend. Additionally, Harman points out that the narrator explains his description as "not unfaithful to the spirit of the thing", further illustrating how difficult the being is to describe.

To sum up, OOO is a philosophy that attempts to shift our perspective on the world in a less anthropocentric direction by treating everything as objects. The philosophy is also the basis of dark ecology, a theory that attempts to criticise our anthropocentric approach to climate. To give a more thorough understanding of the main concepts we will employ in our thesis, we will provide a comprehensive overview of dark ecology in the next chapter since our main concepts have emerged from this theory.

Dark Ecology: Nature and Agrilogistics

Dark ecology is a strain of ecocriticism coined by Morton and it distinguishes itself from other ecological theories by eliminating Nature with a capital N as a concept because it denotes that nature is a construct outside the human (Morton *Dark Ecology* 56). In an era where global warming is an urgent problem, Morton's theory attempts to contextualise ecological thinking to put the issue at the centre of attention. He does so by highlighting the fact that ecological awareness means truly realising that we, as humans, are tragic criminals responsible for the crisis of our current era:

The darkness of ecological awareness is the darkness of noir, which is a strange loop: the detective is a criminal. In a strong version of noir the narrator is implicated in the story: two levels that normally don't cross, that some believe structurally can't cross. We "civilized" people, we Mesopotamians, are the narrators of our destiny. Ecological awareness is that moment at which these narrators find out that they are the tragic criminal. (Morton *Dark Ecology* 9)

Morton argues that ecological awareness exists in a loop form that embodies a certain strangeness in the sense that we must truly realise that we are both the cause and solution to this problem.

Morton further explains these comparisons by arguing that the number one leading cause of global warming is the commonly known distinction between nature and culture (Morton *Dark Ecology* 58). The concept of Nature is especially problematic since it creates and reproduces the idea that nature is an abstract entity inherently separate from civilisation and, in that sense, not

interconnected with “our world”: “Mountains, Bruce, mountains: in other words, Nature, a substance “over there,” underneath, just round the corner, despite appearances, out back, behind the surface, comfortingly present, endless, normal, straight” (Morton *Dark Ecology* 56). Morton argues that this way of thinking about nature has caused our current climate crisis. Still, he states that this concept of Nature, or more specifically the nature-culture distinction, has existed since we began dividing nature and agriculture (Morton *Dark Ecology* 58). He dubs this concept *Agrilogistics* and claims that this notion has been the decider when it comes to distinguishing between humans and nature:

Agrilogistics spawns the concept of Nature definitively outside the human. The normative concept of Nature, telling you what’s “in” and what is “out,” as surely as a jaded fashion magazine, is deeply troubled. Normative Nature simply can’t cover absolutely everything because Nature depends on specifying the unnatural. But this is just what we moderns are incapable of doing in advance of the data. (Morton *Dark Ecology* 56)

Here, Morton explains that even if we strive towards making it clear what is categorised as nature or natural, we would not be able to do so, which emphasises the fact that nature is a construct. While it is true that we strive towards upholding the idea of nature, it is, according to Morton, because: “Agrilogistics promises to eliminate fear, anxiety, and contradiction—social, physical, and ontological—by establishing thin rigid boundaries between human and nonhuman worlds and by reducing existence to sheer quantity” (Morton *Dark Ecology* 43). Thus, Morton argues that the reason we created Agrilogistics was the promise of safety and stability, and consequently, we still uphold the idea of the natural, even though it is harmful because it damages the environment.

Relating Agrilogistics to the notion of the Anthropocene, Morton argues that the Anthropocene is not a term used to describe how we as humans are destroying nature but rather that the Anthropocene is, in fact, nature:

The Anthropocene doesn’t destroy Nature. The Anthropocene is Nature in its toxic nightmare form. Nature is the latent form of the Anthropocene waiting to emerge as catastrophe. Agrilogistics is a strange loop because its very attempt to smooth out the physical world and to smooth out anxiety doubles down on that physical world and on anxiety itself, just like washing your hands forces bacteria to adapt. (Morton *Dark Ecology* 59)

Morton explains that Agrilogistics has created a self-enhancing loop that has led to global warming despite its attempt to provide safety and control the environment. This domestication of nature is a

phenomenon that Morton further illustrates by referring to John Muir when explaining how Nature as a concept is equally as problematic as industrialisation:

The concept Nature is a flicker of resistance to the oncoming metal army of industrialization, like a fake medieval sword made of rubber. A fake medieval sword that heightens the fire risk in California's Yosemite National Park: John Muir, architect of the parks and believer in Nature, favored the growth of trees that covered the slopes in attractive (and flammable) swaths of dense green, to the chagrin of the Native Americans. (Morton *Dark Ecology* 57)

In this quote, Morton clarifies that the ideas of nature are unhelpful and dangerous, which in this example, is literal. He argues that what John Muir and many others are doing is called *ecomimesis*, which, at its core, is a way of upholding the illusion of nature that agrilogistics created (Morton *Dark Ecology* 57). According to Morton, a great example that illustrates the paradoxical nature of *ecomimesis* is found in nature writing:

The core of *ecomimesis* is a sentence such as "As I write this, I am immersed in Nature." *Ecomimesis* tries to fuse the layer of narrative and the layer of narration, creating a paradoxical loop about whose contradictory and loopy qualities *ecomimesis* is perpetually in denial. (Morton *Dark Ecology* 57)

This type of sentence, which is often found in nature writing, is just one example of trying to uphold the paradoxical term Nature. In addition, Morton argues that nature writing is paradoxical and contradictory because it gives the idea that we are not inherently part of nature but that it is separate from civilisation and can be entered and exited.

As illustrated in this section, the main premise of dark ecology is to problematise the notion of nature and highlight the consequences of upholding the idea. This critique of nature as a concept separates dark ecology from more traditional strains of ecocriticism such as Greg Garrard's theory concerning portrayals of nature, which instead discusses and identifies different tropes regarding the way that nature is portrayed (Garrard). Instead of the concept of "nature", Morton proposes that we think about our environment differently. Specifically, he proposes the concepts of *hyperobject* and *mesh* as terms that can help us in this transition, which we will introduce in the next section.

Hyperobjects: Perceiving the Unpercievable

Today, a hyperobject is a concept that everyone has felt due to Coronavirus (Morton and Boyer 11). However, before the global pandemic, the phenomenon was not common knowledge. To expand on what it implies, we will focus on global warming as an example of a hyperobject. Global

warming has become increasingly relevant due to multiple natural disasters caused by climate change and because it is the cause of the currently ongoing mass extinction event we experience (Morton *Hyperobjects* 191). Thus, global warming is a serious and important way to make hyperobjects known. In the following excerpt, Morton summarises the concept:

Hyperobjects have numerous properties in common. They are *viscous*, which means that they “stick” to beings that are involved with them. They are *nonlocal*; in other words, any “local manifestation” of a hyperobject is not directly the hyperobject.² They involve profoundly different temporalities than the human-scale ones we are used to. In particular, some very large hyperobjects, such as planets, have genuinely *Gaussian* temporality: they generate spacetime vortices, due to general relativity. Hyperobjects occupy a high-dimensional phase space that results in their being invisible to humans for stretches of time. And they exhibit their effects *interobjectively* ; that is, they can be detected in a space that consists of interrelationships between aesthetic properties of objects. (Morton *Hyperobjects* 1)

Morton outlines five characteristics of a hyperobject, which he labels viscosity, nonlocality, temporal undulation, phasing, and interobjectivity, which we will unpack and detail in this section. The characteristics are all neologisms; however, they are familiar because they are similar to known words, which gives us a way to relate to the concepts.

The fact that Morton has chosen the term viscosity is interesting because the concept is familiar. Because of this, it aids in understanding hyperobjects as it can otherwise be challenging to grasp due to its abstract nature and size. However, the idea that something physically sticks, that something is viscous, is easier to comprehend. The term becomes a metaphor, which turns something abstract into something accessible:

Some days, global warming fails to heat me up. It is strangely cool or violently stormy. My intimate sensation of prickling heat at the back of my neck is only a distorted print of the hot hand of global warming. I do not feel “at home” in the biosphere. Yet it surrounds me and penetrates me, like the Force in *Star Wars*. The more I know about global warming, the more I realize how pervasive it is. (Morton *Hyperobjects* 28)

The pervasiveness that Morton describes is fundamental for hyperobjects. Global warming exists everywhere on Earth, and its effects stick to people no matter where they go, making it viscous. Furthermore, when Morton compares this quality to the Force in *Star Wars*, it further familiarises the concept of viscousness. However, even though it is always there, global warming is not always something that humans can observe or sense. The natural disasters caused by climate change, such

as famine, forest fires, and floods, are more tangible than global warming as a concept, though both are equally real. Nevertheless, we need to consider that human lifestyles are an inherent contributor to global warming. When humans drive to work, farm, or heat their apartments, they all contribute directly to climate change. The intrinsic nature of most lifestyles in the Anthropocene means that it becomes unavoidable to not contribute to global warming, and it can be argued that this is another example of viscosity. Even the steps taken to mitigate the damages of climate change, such as green energy and lowered CO₂ emissions, are examples of the viscosity of global warming because they are expressions of the pervasiveness of the hyperobject, as they serve as a reminder that global warming exists everywhere. This idea leads to the following criterion, which is nonlocality.

The world has grown smaller because of globalisation, which has led to terms such as *globality* which refers to “... the circumstance of extensive awareness of the world-as-a-whole, including the “species” aspect” (Haferkamp and Smelser 403). The term globality and the idea of the world-as-a-whole have certain aspects in common with hyperobjects. However, Morton avoids the term by employing the term nonlocality instead. While hyperobjects are global and fit the notion of the world-as-a-whole, they also exist in time and space outside of human perception:

When you feel raindrops, you are experiencing climate, in some sense. In particular you are experiencing the climate change known as global warming. But you are never directly experiencing global warming as such. Nowhere in the long list of catastrophic weather events— which will increase as global warming takes off— will you find global warming. But global warming is as real as this sentence. Not only that, it’s viscous. It never stops sticking to you, no matter where you move on Earth. How can we account for this? By arguing that global warming, like all hyperobjects, is nonlocal: it’s massively distributed in time and space. (Morton *Hyperobjects* 48)

According to Morton’s theory, humans are only experiencing parts of the hyperobject. Germany experiences floods due to a record-breaking amount of rain, while wildfires plague North America due to heat and drought (*What Is Climate Change?* 1). While the two types of disasters are opposites, both are parts of global warming, but neither country is experiencing global warming directly. When one experiences a flood or drought, they are only experiencing an effect of global warming and not the hyperobject in its entirety. Furthermore, global warming does not discriminate, and it has an interspecies effect worldwide because it does not affect humans alone but also animals and vegetation. However, there is an inherent connection between humans and climate change, as humans are the primary cause of global warming. Thus, humans can also be considered a

hyperobject, as they have the means to influence and create hyperobjects which Morton also states: “The human hyperobject (the human as geophysical species) became a machine for the generation of hyperobjects” (Morton *Dark Ecology* 45). It can be argued that global warming is not a hyperobject itself but rather a part of the hyperobject that is humanity. However, this idea presents a problem because it denotes that hyperobjects are entities rather than a way of perceiving something. Instead, we interpret global warming as a hyperobject because its connection to humanity is explained as everything is inherently connected as they are part of the mesh, which we will explore before the next chapter.

Global warming results from hundreds, if not thousands, of years of human evolution and technological advancement. While the term global warming is relatively recent, the concept is not, which both speaks to its nonlocality and the fact that hyperobjects are distributed in time and space, which is the third criterion. Morton named the third criterion *temporal undulation*, and it refers to its spatial qualities. The word undulation denotes a wavelike structure, which Morton relates to time by adding the adjective temporal: “Time bends them and flattens them, the same way that an electromagnetic wave front shortens at its leading edge” (Morton *Hyperobjects* 55). Thus, the quality of temporal undulation reinforces the notion of the pervasiveness of hyperobjects, as they exist everywhere, even in a temporal sense. As mentioned, global warming is a relatively recent phenomenon as signs of human-induced climate change have only appeared within the last 200 years. This timeline is minuscule compared to some of the thousand-year-old habitats currently being destroyed by global warming. Morton considers the issue of time and argues that we are confronted with inconceivable periods of time through hyperobjects:

But one hundred thousand years? It’s unimaginably vast. Yet there it is, staring me in the face, as the hyperobject global warming. And I helped cause it. I am directly responsible for beings that far into the future, insofar as two things will be true simultaneously: no one then will meaningfully be related to me; and my smallest action now will affect that time in profound ways. A Styrofoam cup will outlive me by over four hundred years. (Morton *Hyperobjects* 60)

These observations regarding the significance of our actions are interesting because even though it is uncertain what the world will look like one hundred thousand years in the future, we know that it will have an impact. A pessimistic outlook would present a future with low biodiversity and increased humanitarian crises caused by climate change. In contrast, a positive outlook would present a future where global warming has been halted or even negated, as future technology and

research could make this possible. According to Morton and Boyer, this thought is a defining factor in what it means to be a hypersubject, which we will outline in the next section. However, the fact that global warming has already destroyed habitats and caused animal extinctions are likely to stay and act as a reminder, which makes the hyperobject of global warming visible for a while. Additionally, hyperobjects are in a high-dimensional phase space, which is indicated by the fourth characteristic: *Phasing*.

Phasing is defined as something that is arranged to be done gradually, in different stages, over a period of time. It is also a phenomenon that has become increasingly familiar during the global pandemic as several different restrictions have been phased in and out across the world. However, Morton uses the term to describe the fact that hyperobjects can exist outside of human perception, phased out in a higher dimension, and become visible to humans when they phase in:

Hyperobjects seem to phase in and out of the human world. Hyperobjects are *phased*: they occupy a high-dimensional *phase space* that makes them impossible to see as a whole on a regular three-dimensional humanscale basis. We can only see pieces of hyperobjects at a time. The reason why they appear nonlocal and temporally foreshortened is precisely because of this transdimensional quality. We only see pieces of them at once, like a tsunami or a case of radiation sickness. (Morton *Hyperobjects* 70)

Phasing can be viewed as an extension to the concept of nonlocality, as it further emphasises the scale and unimaginability of hyperobjects. While nonlocality encompasses the three-dimensional humanscale basis where parts of a hyperobject can be perceived locally, the theory also presents that hyperobjects are massively distributed in time and space. Phasing introduces the aspect of space and a higher-dimensional phase space, which cannot be perceived directly by humans. Phasing and nonlocality are intrinsically linked, making it difficult to distinguish them from each other. However, the idea of a higher-dimensional phase space conceptualises the human inability to perceive hyperobjects fully. The only way humans can perceive the high-dimensional phase space is through computer-generated data. However, as Morton explains: “The trouble is that we cannot help but fail to see such high-dimensional entities when they are plotted in this way. Software “sees” them for us, then we see data or slices of that phase space, rendered in some way to make it usable” (*Hyperobjects* 73). Therefore, our current access to hyperobjects is incomplete, as we are incapable of comprehending high-dimensional entities even with the help of computers. Furthermore, it means that we, as humans, are unable to fully perceive the hyperobject *humanity*, which insinuates that we cannot comprehend what a *We* encompasses on a large scale that involves

all of humanity. However, the consequences of incorporating the idea of a human hyperobject into the conceptualisation of *We* implies that it is impossible as we would be unable to perceive ourselves on a humanscale basis. Alternatively, this limitation and how we are connected with other hyperobjects could serve as a common denominator that defines the *We* that includes all humanity. Morton further elaborates on this connection through the fifth and final characteristic which he labels *interobjectivity*.

Interobjectivity denotes a particular connection between objects and subjects, which distinguishes it from the term intersubjectivity, which instead is centred around interaction between humans. The idea that objects and subjects are connected presents an interesting point concerning phasing because humans cannot directly perceive the higher-dimensional phase space, even though it is connected to the three-dimensional humanscale basis. Morton explains that nothing is experienced directly through phenomenology:

Hyperobjects provide great examples of interobjectivity—namely, the way in which nothing is ever experienced directly, but only as mediated through other entities in some shared sensual space ... This means that for every interobjective system, there is at least one entity that is withdrawn. (Morton *Hyperobjects* 86)

Following this idea, global warming is never experienced directly, but rather it is mediated through other entities such as floods, heatwaves, and storms. Furthermore, floods, heatwaves, and storms are not experienced directly either but are mediated through another set of entities such as such as damage to property, drought, and landslides. Furthermore, Morton equates interobjectivity to another concept, which he calls the mesh:

Likewise, the houses in my street form an interobjective system with the street itself and vehicles, stray dogs, and bouncing basketballs. We may scale up like this as far as we like. We will find that all entities whatsoever are interconnected in an interobjective system that elsewhere I call *the mesh*. (Morton *Hyperobjects* 83)

Morton compares the interobjective systems to his concept of mesh which includes everything in the universe. However, there is a point to be made that this concept, while it explains interobjectivity, seems redundant. If everything is equally part of the interobjective system, which Morton describes as the mesh, it does not set hyperobjects apart from non-hyperobjects. Therefore, it can be argued that it does not make sense to equate the mesh to the interobjective characteristic. However, Morton explicates that hyperobjects stand out in terms of how they are interobjective:

My body, the glacier, the freezing water, my brain, and my boots form an interobjective system, a little eddy of metastability in the mesh. But it's hyperobjects that give us the most vivid glimpse of interobjectivity. Since we only see their shadow, we easily see the "surface" on which their shadow falls as part of a system that they corral into being. We see a host of interacting indexical signs. (Morton *Hyperobjects* 85)

This elaboration provides an argument that even if the interobjective system of the mesh is universal, it is still a defining trait of hyperobjects as they display interobjectivity more vividly than non-hyperobjects. Generally, the concept provides insight into the world that *We* inhabit as it aids our understanding of global warming: a global catastrophe caused by the collective *We*. This conceptualisation of global warming illustrates that *We* are both the perpetrators and victims, as we pointed out in the chapter "Context: Navigating the Anthropocene as the Perpetrator and the Victim". Though hyperobjects cannot be perceived directly on a regular three-dimensional humanscale basis, it is always there. Furthermore, the idea of humanity as a hyperobject provides an outset concerning a collective *We*, as it establishes common denominators. Therefore, it can be beneficial to reflect on the nature of hyperobjects as a theory. As mentioned earlier, hyperobjects should not be seen as entities but rather as a way to perceive something and consider the encompassing nature of hyperobjects. Thus, it is hard to envision a non-hyperobject, as any object or subject can be approached as either a hyperobject or part of one. The issue of finding non-hyperobjects further cements the idea that it is less important to define something as a hyperobject and that the term should instead be used as a tool to investigate the hyperobjective nature of something and consider what effects or consequences that cause. While we have provided insight into how we can talk about the world that *We* inhabit, we will investigate the concept of *We* by elaborating on Morton and Boyer's terms of hyper- and hyposubjects in the next section.

Hyper- and Hyposubjects: Two Ways of Being Human

Morton and Boyer argue that we have now entered the hyperobjective era and that "...hyposubjects are the native species of the Anthropocene" (14). This idea is based on Morton's theory of hyperobjects, which was explicated in the previous section. Although the theory of hyperobjects is the point of departure in Morton and Boyer's description of humanity in the Anthropocene era, they argue that Morton's book concerning it has become irrelevant:

The book *Hyperobjects* is now in a way irrelevant—everyone knows, everyone intuitively feels (which is much more important) what a hyperobject is. Coronavirus is everywhere. You

can't see it. It operates on all kinds of different scales—terrifying interpersonally or if you're being forced back to work or school; weirdly amazing at demonstrating a world with less or no neoliberal churning, and fomenting planet-scale collective awareness and action. (Morton and Boyer 11)

Hyperobjects are all around us in the form of the Coronavirus, global warming, humanity as a species, etc. However, since people have gained a collective awareness and intuitively feel what a hyperobject is because of Coronavirus, there is now less need to read books about it. Furthermore, Morton and Boyer note that this awareness can aid in imagining society beyond neoliberalism: In a way, the collective awareness has awakened a subset of the population to the idea that society must change fundamentally to avoid disaster. In contrast, another group has become painfully aware that their current way of life is near its end because it contributes to the problem rather than solving it. Morton and Boyer have created two terms that encapsulate the characteristics of these groups, and in this section, we will attempt to expand on what they entail. The terms are *hypersubject* and *hyposubject*, and they appear as each other's opposites. Hypersubjects are responsible for the hyperobjective era, whereas hyposubjects are born into and inherit the hyperobjective era. Thus, hypersubjects involve both recent ancestors and a quantity of those who inhabit the earth currently. Conversely, hyposubjects include a portion of earth's current inhabitants and those yet to come, which is why they are the inheritors. This divide also connotes how hypersubjects have the opportunity of choice and agency, opposite to hyposubjects who have no choice and limited agency. However, this presents an issue regarding the concept of a collective *We*, as it potentially divides the population into two distinct groups. However, we will outline the concepts to understand and move closer to a conceptualisation of *We*, the inhabitants of the hyperobjective era.

Interestingly, the language Morton and Boyer use to describe the hypersubjects is more exact than the language they use to describe hyposubjects, as they are defined as: "... typically but not exclusively white, male, northern, well-nourished, modern in all senses of the term" (Morton and Boyer 15). The fact that they add "typically, but not exclusively" denotes that the description is not a rule but rather what is commonly the case. While it becomes clear that they are typically from a privileged background, Morton and Boyer emphasise that they are not all born into wealthy or powerful families. Instead, they are born into the middle-class of primarily Western countries, where the standard of living far exceeds that of less prosperous countries (*Standard of Living by Country*). Thus, we understand that there are no definite requirements for being a hypersubject. Consequently, anyone can become one if they embody some of the traits, behaviours, and principles

which we will outline later. Conversely, the description of hyposubjects is presented as a list of qualities: “Hyposubjects are necessarily feminist, antiracist, colorful, queer, ecological, transhuman and intrahuman” (Morton and Boyer 15). In this description, Morton and Boyer use the word “necessarily”, which denotes that these are requirements rather than suggestions for how hyposubjects must approach the world. As mentioned in the chapter “Context: Navigating the Anthropocene as the Perpetrator and the Victim”, Plumwood and Albrecht argue that new words are necessary to describe new phenomena in the Anthropocene because this era requires us to think differently. This is what Morton and Boyer attempt, which is apparent as certain aspects are kept vague and up to interpretation, which they acknowledge by stating that: “... if you are looking for something like a “theory of the hyposubject.” Good luck finding it in this heap. A lot of what is happening here frankly doesn’t make very much sense” (Morton and Boyer 13). From a theoretical standpoint, they lay the groundwork for both terms but leave the finishing touches and interpretation up to the reader (Morton and Boyer 20). Some of the defining aspects of hypersubjects are that they: “... wield reason and technology, whether cynically or sincerely, as instruments for getting things done. They command and control, they seek transcendence, they get very high on their own supply of dominion” (Morton and Boyer 14). This dominion over others is described as predatory, which Morton and Boyer exemplify through *Attack on Titan*: “This is what I like so much about *Attack on Titan*, the image in particular of the small hunted hyposubject looking out at the massive predatory hypersubject self” (20). Therefore, we will also refer to them as predators, and hyposubjects as prey.

Furthermore, to distinguish the two types of subjects, the notions of transcendence and subsurgence play an essential role. We will further detail these terms in the next chapter, though, in short, transcendence refers to the aspiration to overstep the usual limits of humanity, and subsurgence indicates the inverse and to understand that the whole is less than the sum of its parts. However, the hypersubjective traits all tie together. Thus, the Anthropocene can be considered an epoch of continuous transcendence, as agrilogistics, Coronavirus, global warming, and many other hyperobjects are direct results of humanity transcending. Therefore, in our analyses, hypersubjects will also be described as connected, deliberate, predatory, coloniser, and more-than-subjects because they seek transcendence. Furthermore, they also seek to solve the environmental issues we face through further transcendence:

The other side of it is that we still have to cope with the fact that we have this sort of massive, narcissistic attachment to our own sense of distinctiveness as a species, and this sense that

we're at the top of a great chain of being, and that we are the ones who may have gotten ourselves into the Anthropocene but we're also the saviors, the only ones who are going to get us out of this situation. Those attachments are hyperobjective as well. That mass overestimation of what humanity, capital H, can achieve. (Morton and Boyer 19)

The notion of having a narcissistic attachment to their distinctiveness and the overestimation of humanity's capabilities further define the traits of the hypersubjects and their goal of transcendence. However, hyposubjects approach the environment differently. Instead of seeking transcendence through a system of dominion, knowledge, and technology, they are content to live outside that system and accept their limitations and lack of knowledge. This distinction makes both the actions and motivations of hyposubjects unpredictable, which is another antithesis to the hypersubject:

Like their hyperobjective environment, hyposubjects are also multiphasic and plural, not-yet, neither here nor there, less than the sum of their parts. They are in other words subscendent rather than transcendent. They do not pursue or pretend to absolute knowledge and language let alone power. Instead they play, they care, they adapt, they hurt, they laugh. (Morton and Boyer 14-15)

The fact that hyposubjects share qualities with hyperobjects gives rise to the conception of them as "... too massive and multiphasic in their distribution in time and space for humans to fully comprehend or experience them in a unitary way" (Morton and Boyer 14). This ties to the idea that hyposubjects, like hyperobjects, are challenging to define. Furthermore, Morton and Boyer argue that they are multiphasic, thus existing on other dimensional planes, which makes them impossible for us to fully comprehend, similar to how we are unable to perceive those yet to come. This elaboration also sets the two types of subjects apart, establishing how they are ancestors and inheritors, respectively.

Furthermore, hypersubjects are only described as human, whereas hyposubjects can be both human and non-human. While subscendence can be seen as a choice in some instances, Morton and Boyer also consider that: "Maybe the whole idea of hyposubjects is [a] being that can't actually transcend itself" (Morton and Boyer 62). This is particularly illustrated when they point out: "The hyposubject is the bacteria in your gut ... It's not just about humans" (28). Thus, some hyposubjects are unable to transcend because they lack that privilege which illustrates that only beings with resources and access can obtain the necessary means to achieve transcendence. Hyposubjects are in opposition to hypersubjects, which is why, in our analyses, we will describe hyposubjects; unplugged, spontaneous, prey, colonised, and less-than-subjects because they are subscendent.

Since the definition of hyposubjects contains both humans and non-humans, it is intriguing to consider our use of the pronoun *We* in the sense that it needs to be rethought to encapsulate how we understand who *We* are in the Anthropocene. This thought is also necessary to consider since life in the Anthropocene presents new phenomena faster than humanity has experienced before, which requires us to continuously evolve our language to be able to talk about our new and constantly changing circumstances. As implied in the chapter “Introduction: Who are *We* in the Anthropocene”, we need to learn to talk about a *We* that does not ignore identity, uniqueness, and individuality. Such a conceptualisation of *We* would allow us to feel a sense of connection and responsibility, a shared *We* that also encapsulates other beings than humans. However, if the non-human is included in *We*, it is important not to define it through human subjectivity:

But what I'm never certain about is where the impulse of dyslocating human subjectivity leaves off and where the impulse of occupying, colonizing even, non-human subjectivity begins. I think we need to be alert to the presence of the cunning of predator reason even within projects of implosion, dyslocation, multispecies alliance building. (Morton & Boyer 67)

The impulse colonising non-human subjectivity can be easily become predatory and adverse. Therefore, by applying human qualities to non-humans, we risk approaching them in a hypersubjective manner, which is disadvantageous if want to move away from being anthropocentric. The act of dividing humans and other beings into categories of hyper- and hyposubjects can seem counterproductive if the goal is to conceptualise a *We* that involves all inhabitants of the hyperobjective era. Therefore, we find it necessary to explicate how we will employ the terms in our analyses. Rather than applying the terms to define who is more-than or less-than subjects, we will use these terms to examine different traits, behaviours, and approaches to the environment and other beings. Thus, we regard hyper- and hyposubjectivity as a spectrum where it is possible to exhibit traits from both categories to different extents, rather than a binary where one is defined as either-or. This approach means that we will differentiate between hyper- and hyposubjective traits and approaches such as deliberate planning against spontaneous action, rationality against trial-and-error, choice and agency against limited choice and limited agency, predator against prey, ancestors against inheritors, egoism against modesty, individualism against collectivism, coloniser against colonised, and finally, transcendence against subsistence, which are terms we will unpack in the next section.

Subscendence: An Antonym for Transcendence

As mentioned, hyper- and hyposubjects exhibit the qualities of transcendence and subscendence, respectively. *Transcendence* denotes an experience or ability to go beyond normal limits. In contrast, the term *subscendence* has not yet found its way into the dictionaries. However, it is an important concept related to both OOO and hyposubjectivity. Like OOO, subscendence can appear difficult to understand since it requires us to think in terms of objects without privileging specific concepts by viewing them as more than objects. Instead, the idea of subscendence asks us to realise that the whole is ontologically less than the sum of its parts:

So, holism says that the whole is always greater than the sum of its parts, but this ontology we are discussing is actually claiming that the whole is less than the sum of its parts, which is why things that emerge from other things are very hard to locate, because we keep looking in the wrong direction. (Morton and Boyer 73)

Morton and Boyer highlight their main premise by rewriting holism as, instead of approaching the world from a holistic perspective, we need to realise that every “whole” subscends. From this perspective, Morton and Boyer make their OOO inspired perspective clear because we must treat every object as a set of other objects that potentially recedes indefinitely (Morton and Boyer 73). Furthermore, they argue that the idea of holism is, in fact, a societal problem in the sense that it disables us from acting:

Ideologies of holism and naturalism ask us to accept thingness on empirical grounds—this is a thing, a whole thing, because I can pick it up and manipulate it in a certain way—and then, with a sleight of hand, extend that thingness to invisible or imaginary wholes like Gods and Old Ones. But the cruelest trick of all may be that the very critical categories we might wish to deploy to draw attention to the sources of our hyperobjective condition—like “capitalism” or “global warming”—also participate in that greater-than-the-sum-of-its-parts ontology. More holisms disabling us! As if they transcend, but what they really do is subscend. (Morton and Boyer 74)

Here, Morton and Boyer point out that the way we treat the world holistically is paradoxical since particular objects receive special privileges while others are subjected to a naturalistic approach. Additionally, when treating concepts such as global warming as if they are holistic, they seem incomprehensible and unchangeable. The point that Morton and Boyer try to explain is that while an object or concept can seem incredibly small and simple to grasp or even so large that it seems beyond our comprehension, everything subscends so that they are, in fact, ontologically smaller

than the parts they consist of (Morton and Boyer 73). In order to illustrate their point, Morton and Boyer use the example of highways:

A set of things is one thing, but the things that it comprises are potentially an infinite regress. For example, highways are made up of concrete blocks that are just as real and important as the highway; those blocks are in turn made up of all sorts and sizes of aggregates that are just as real and important as the blocks. And so on and on. We then have a set that actually has more in it than the set itself as a concept. The insight is that a given concept set is actually ontologically smaller than the things it's drawing a line around. (Morton and Boyer 73)

Morton and Boyer argue that by understanding that objects and concepts subscend, we will realise that the parts of a sum are equally as important as the sum the parts construct. This understanding will, in turn, help us come to terms with the fact that since we are part of concepts that seem greater than us, we are able to change these concepts because we "... might easily overwhelm them ontologically" (Morton and Boyer 73). However, Morton and Boyer also explain that while this approach can appear reductionistic at first glance, this is not the case since they recognise both the parts of a sum as well as the sum: "We're saying there is society, and it's physically very big actually, but it subscends; it's ontologically smaller than its members" (Morton and Boyer 75). Thus, Morton and Boyer explain that while the sum can be broken into smaller parts, the sum still exists and is just as relevant as its parts. Therefore, they emphasise how everything subscends to show that no object or concept has special privileges.

Following the concept of subscendence, it is interesting to explore how people are able to subscend specifically in the context of hyperobjective concepts such as capitalism and global warming. On a basic level, subscendence occurs "... when a set of things begin to exit its concept and becomes its own entities ... [and] ... emerges as downwardly causal on its components ..." (Morton and Boyer 74). However, while this is the definition that Morton and Boyer provide regarding what it means to subscend, it is still difficult to imagine what it is like as a person and how this changes how *We* approach the world. Morton and Boyer attempt to make this clear by further explaining the concept while relating it to what it means to be a hyposubject:

If we take subscendence as a museword, then what do subscendent politics look like? What does a subscendent life look like? What is it to be less than the sum of your parts? I feel as though this whole process of trying to figure out a few things to say about hyposubjects has been training ourselves to subscend. Oh very much so. It's been a kind of wandering, testing things out. Diagnostics. But in a highly unscientific way. A fumbling diagnostics of the

contemporary. Trying to figure out what it is that we are now. We're basically Roombas. (Morton and Boyer 71)

The questions that Morton and Boyer ask about what it means to subscend in different contexts help elaborate on what it means to embrace the concept and provide an idea of how we can imagine ourselves subscending. As mentioned, Morton and Boyer explain that the ability to subscend is a crucial part of what it means to be a hyposubject, though it is still unclear exactly how they relate to subscendence. However, Roombas are, in fact, a helpful analogy:

Roombas? Roombas of the philosophical. Actually that's quite perfect. It's the ultimate hyposubject isn't it? The Roomba is the perfect inverse to the Skynet/Matrix, transcendent hyperobject. A Roomba is always struggling to come into its agency. It probably feels quite imploded, it's got very limited programming. It knows it wants to get dirt inside of itself, everything else it has to figure out as it goes along, with a fairly limited sensory apparatus. So it sort of trundles along, bumping into walls and furniture, staying very close to the earth. Always less than itself. (Morton and Boyer 71)

Morton and Boyer clarify that a Roomba appears to embody what it means to be a hyposubject. At the same time, it subscends by its trial-and-error approach to its environment as it attempts to figure out how to exhibit its agency. As mentioned, subscendence is an antonym for transcendence. Thus, transcendence denotes that someone tries to become part of something bigger than themselves instead of trying to come into agency: "The transcendence narrative has to do with inhabiting some gridlike structure that's much bigger than me, in a much better way, that enables me to be much more powerful" (Morton and Boyer 70). Morton and Boyer describe that contemporary society is built with a gridlike structure. This gridlike society is explained throughout their theory, as they use an energy grid as an example. The idea of a grid is essential to keep in mind, as it is one of the cornerstones of hypersubjectivity: "... a grid is composed of an almost infinite number of elements. It looks like a very big and impressive piece of transcendent machinery. But it is only that kind of machine to the extent that an enormous amount of labor is marshaled to constantly make it transcend" (Morton and Boyer 74). Everything must be structured within this grid for society to function and transcend. Therefore, to unplug from the grid, one must subscend. For this reason, we will also refer to hypersubjects as someone who is part of this type of grid, and vice versa; we will refer to hyposubjects as someone who has exited or are not part of the grid. Furthermore, it is explained that subscendence is the starting point before it is possible to unplug: "For example, the energy grid subscends the uses and components of that energy grid. So it's perfectly possible for a

small German town to switch off its part of the energy grid locally and become something else” (Morton and Boyer 74). Even though Morton and Boyer advocate for subsistence and unplugging from the grid, it is difficult to see how striving to become part of something bigger could be considered harmful. However, to illustrate how it has negative consequences, Morton and Boyer continue the grid metaphor by relating it to the movie trilogy *The Matrix*:

There’s a funny moment at the end of *The Matrix* where Neo plugs himself in to the energy system and completes some kind of circuit that allows everyone to have a much nicer time in the Matrix. I can’t help but think that’s a sort of circle-squaring, Vitruvian man, sweet spot fantasy in which we have transcendence of the human without catastrophe. The singularity folks talk as though transcendence is going to be really benign. This is not going to be a Terminator scenario. This is going to make us so much wiser and better and smarter. And then, we’ll be able to look after the animals. But it’s like, when’s that then? As if to say, once we white guys get our shit worked out, then we’ll be able to help out everyone else. (Morton and Boyer 70)

Morton and Boyer explain that subsisting is comparable to unplugging from the metaphorical grid in *The Matrix*. However, the key observation points toward the “singularity folks”, which encompass people who expect “the singularity” to solve their problems. The singularity refers to a hypothetical point in time where exponential technological growth will lead to technology becoming uncontrollable, which, according to the singularity folks, will create a new situation for humanity to transcend. Morton and Boyer exemplify this by describing how Neo transcends when he plugs himself into the Matrix and becomes part of something bigger, which becomes better because of his involvement. Morton and Boyer point out that there are some issues with this train of thought because it encompasses an inactive “wait until we are ready to handle the problem” ideology where the main point of interest is to make sure that *We* are well before thinking about anyone else. Thus, this approach highlights how hypersubjects prefer planning over spontaneously trying out different possible solutions. Additionally, this encompasses that the most hypersubjective and privileged individuals will first and foremost take care of themselves before considering any less privileged person, animal, or non-living entity, which stresses their selfishness. A second problem with this thought is the belief that we will figure everything out if humans solve all issues with the help of our technological advancements. Thus, the transcendent ideal is in stark contrast to the goal of subsisting, which Morton and Boyer illustrate by showing how it influences the behaviour of hypersubjects:

So along with transcendence, there's a deferral of the political. Literally. I'm going to wait until I'm as great as I can possibly be before I figure out what to do. Which will probably have something to do with going to Mars, in some virtual form, and then downloading myself into something Martian. Whereas the hyposubjective counterpart to this strategy of delaying action until transcendence is beginning things too quickly without a fully understood aim and a proper plan, and just trying to fumble through. I think hyposubjects are prepared to make a lot of mistakes. (Morton and Boyer 71)

In this quote, Morton and Boyer clarify that being a hyposubject entails the opposite of hypersubjectivity: Being prepared to make mistakes, focusing on what they, as an entity with agency, want to achieve, and attempting to accomplish this by trial-and-error. In this sense, hyposubjects subscend since they do not allow holism to disable their actions, which Morton and Boyer also referred to when they argued that a Roomba is the ultimate hyposubject. Similarly, the Swedish environmental advocate Greta Thunberg distances herself from the hypersubjective approach because she urges politicians to act now to combat global warming. Thunberg argues that "cathedral thinking" is necessary, which may refer to the fact that "... we need to address this problem over many decades, in the same way the cathedrals of Europe took many decades to build" (Zakaria 48). However, Damian Thomson explains that Thunberg's stance is "... a reference to the huge and immediate mobilisation of empathy, panic and money at the sight of the Notre Dame in flames" (1). Nonetheless, Thunberg's method is similar to what Morton and Boyer argue that a hyposubject does, which is demonstrated as she states: "The real panic ... should be about the "house on fire" – the planet – leading to a mobilisation of funds, emergency emissions reductions and state-led direction of the transition" (Thomson 1). Though it seems that she is aware of what needs to be done, she does not have a deliberate plan, but instead, she fumbles through to make a difference.

To highlight the importance of subscendence, Morton and Boyer argue that this term can be a recipe for change and that it is, in fact, key in "... some kind of toolkit for how to change, how to unplug" (Morton and Boyer 74). To emphasise their point, Morton and Boyer provide an example of an idea where the essence is subscendent thinking, and they elaborate by showing how it could change things:

The United Nations released something this summer that asked, "what if we shifted to small organic farms?" That would solve a lot of the emissions problem, and then another group is researching how if you devoted just ten percent of your farmland to indigenous species, you

would help a great deal with the problems of energy throughput and species loss and pollution and the use of pesticides. Thinking that way acknowledges that the system you are trying to change is very big—look at the giant farms in Iowa!—but when you subscend ten percent of their fields and allow the little creepy crawlies to do their work, that “system” begins to look like something rather different. The point is we don’t have to have an apocalyptic solution to an apocalyptic problem. We can dismantle the apocalypse. (Morton and Boyer 74-75)

In this example, Morton and Boyer illustrate how seemingly small and easy changes in how farms operate could amount to changes that make a significant difference in the hyperobject that is agrilogistics. In this example, they illustrate how the sum of the parts of a system is larger than what they comprise. Thus, on an overall level, this example demonstrates that subscendent thinking should inspire optimism since concepts which seem incomprehensibly large are smaller than the parts of which they consist of. Thus, they emphasise that *We* have the option to make a difference in regard to hyperobjects, even though we can only access the smaller parts of it. This is a key point that Morton and Boyer further elaborate on in this quote:

But if we say that neoliberalism is actually much less than what it appears to be, that its elements can be commandeered or commandeer themselves in subscendent actions, then all of sudden the situation appears much less bleak. Because every small action of unplugging starts to matter so much more. (Morton and Boyer 74)

Here, Morton and Boyer argue that concepts we otherwise would think are extremely vast and incomprehensible, such as neoliberalism or global warming, will be more approachable when we realise that they are less than they ontologically appear to be. Thus, a subscendent approach makes us realise that our agency as individuals matters more than we would be able to imagine as transcendent hypersubjects who are stuck at the planning phase before they can even attempt to tackle the hyperobjective era. In that sense, subscendence can inspire us to act instead of feeling powerless against the hyperobjects that threaten our existence as humans in the Anthropocene. To summarise, subscendence is a crucial part of a hyposubjective approach that entails becoming unplugged, acting by trial-and-error, coming into agency, and being spontaneous. Contrarily, transcendent hypersubjects are defined by the fact that they are part of the grid, not acting but planning, having agency, and being egoistic.

Challenging The Implied Reader: If a Roomba Reads a Book

Because Morton and Boyer's terms subscedence, hyper-and hyposubject are new, the way that these terms can be utilised in literary analysis has not yet been explored. According to Morton, the term subscedence is central (*The Radical Experimental Form of Hyposubjects* 1). Therefore, we will attempt to relate this aspect of their theory to the concept of the implied reader, which is commonly used in literary analysis. We are especially interested in exploring subscedence in relation to the implied reader, which we will refer to simply as "the reader" from this point on, not with respect to any specific or existing reader, but instead the reader the authors had in mind as they wrote the book. In our analysis of the three novels: *Galápagos*, *Oryx and Crake*, and *Cloud Atlas*, we will examine how Morton and Boyer's terms can be utilised in a broader sense. However, first, we will consider how the term subscedence impacts the concept of the reader.

This thought experiment prompts us to questions whether a subscedent reading of a novel is possible and what such a reading would entail. Traditionally, a novel would be read hermeneutically so that parts are inspected in relation to the whole text, leading to a deeper understanding. However, this method implies that the reader constantly seeks to exceed their limit in terms of knowledge, i.e., they are transcending. Therefore, a subscedent approach to reading should be different. Since Morton and Boyer compare this kind of reading to a Roomba's trial-and-error approach, it is difficult to imagine how it would be possible to read a novel in that manner. Instead of being spontaneous and turning to any page in a novel, the reader would typically read through a novel page to page. In this sense, it is dissimilar to how a Roomba would approach the task of reading a novel. As a hyposubject, a Roomba operates by trial-and-error, meaning that it glides around rooms and bumps into walls and objects, with no other goal than to clean up any dust or dirt it encounters. If we apply this to literature reading, it becomes apparent that such a reading is far from hermeneutical. We argue that such a reading would not produce any meaningful results because novels are structured with an intended way of reading and diverting from the structure would only present fragments of a narrative that would perhaps even be nonsensical. Thus, in order to read a novel like a Roomba, the narration would need to be without a clear beginning, middle, or end. However, it would perhaps be beneficial to employ stream of consciousness as a narration technique.

Nonetheless, we imagine a subscedent approach is significantly more meaningful through other mediums, such as video games. While some video games create a structured narrative with a clear beginning, middle, and end, others present the player with a world that is open for exploration

in any manner they might wish. Furthermore, mediums that present information in an open and disjointed way, such as platforms like YouTube or TikTok, can be considered subscentent in the way we use them. In extension, we argue that the way we generally approach media is becoming more subscentent as options such as the internet are getting standardised. However, while a subscentent reading of a novel might not be propitious, we argue that the reader can be made aware of the concept of subscentence through a novel, which we will demonstrate in our analyses.

Reading *Galápagos*: A Thousand Years Beyond the Anthropocene

As stated in the introduction and the thesis statement, our reading of *Galápagos* by Kurt Vonnegut will concern how Morton and Boyer's terms can be used as analytical terms to provide insights regarding who *We* are in the Anthropocene and who *We* are as ancestors. In this chapter, we will account for and discuss the reception of Vonnegut's novel by considering critical readings by Dominika Oramus, Shiela Pardee, Leonard Mustazza, Charles Tedder, and David Fevyer. These different readers introduce a broad range of relevant thoughts and questions regarding humans within nature, *We* as ancestors, the human brain as a metaphorical symbol, who and what the construct of *We* includes, and how Vonnegut's novel can offer insights into how we navigate climate change. By relating these questions to our analysis and using several of Morton and Boyer's terms, we will produce new perspectives on the conceptualisation of *We* and ancestry in the Anthropocene.

Galápagos was published in 1985, and since then, it has been contextualised and interpreted in multiple ways. Because the novel contains numerous overt references to Charles Darwin's discoveries and theories, which includes the fact that the ship is called Bahía de Darwin, several readers have applied literary Darwinism in their analysis of Vonnegut's novel. These Darwinian readings are relevant because they show how *We* carry a strong connection to our ancestors, other species, and the course of nature. In her comparative analysis, Oramus compares Vonnegut's novel to Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* and points out: "Although neither Dillard nor Vonnegut have a conspicuously political agenda they both consider the theory of evolution a heavily ideological subject and both apply the Darwinian paradigm to describe nature and the human race within nature" (20). We do not intend to disregard Vonnegut's emphasis on evolution. However, we argue that Vonnegut's novel demonstrates an agenda regarding climate change and how a specific approach to nature is damaging. We will show this by introducing Morton and Boyer's terms hyper- and hyposubjects, transcendence and subscentence. Moreover, Oramus' argument that *Galápagos*

describes the “human within nature” approximates our anthropocentric reading as it hints that *We* are interconnected with nature. Furthermore, Oramus concludes that: “Dillard and Vonnegut being evolutionary theorists attempt to re-shape the paradigm within which the research in all possible fields of learning is conducted in order to achieve a consilient picture of how the universe works and how its nature can be studied” (26). Like Oramus, we hold that Vonnegut’s novel has the potential to support new understandings of human nature. However, we do not necessarily agree that viewing Vonnegut solely as a Neo-Darwinist writer is enough to develop a new understanding.

Like Oramus, both Pardee and Mustazza emphasise the evolutionary aspects of *Galápagos*. For instance, Mustazza focuses on how Vonnegut addresses the human brain: “Ironically, Vonnegut here treats the brain -- the most complex of human organs and, for that matter, the most sophisticated organ found in the mammalian kingdom – as what Darwin would call an “organ of little importance.”” (Mustazza 58). Mustazza points out that it is both serious and comic that Vonnegut insinuates that the human brain is damaging to such a degree that it must be confronted by the process of natural selection (Mustazza 58). The fact that the human brain is made out to be the villain calls for an allegorical reading to investigate what the brain represents for Vonnegut, which we will carry out by employing Morton’s terms hyper- and hyposubjects. Furthermore, we will consider who *We* are with and without what the human brain symbolises.

Conversely, in Pardee’s literal reading of Vonnegut’s novel, she investigates discourse and “...demonstrates Vonnegut’s awareness of the conditions necessary for rapid evolution as he exploits every possibility for genetic mutation in the service of his satire” (249). She notes that Vonnegut’s account of the evolutionary development the characters undergo is realistic: “Vonnegut allows his imagination full range to exaggerate human folly, but his optimistic presentation of evolutionary power is supported by an updated scientific understanding of natural selection, especially the circumstances under which evolutionary change can be accelerated” (Pardee 250). The fact that we know that this could happen emphasises the concept of *We* as ancestors as it becomes evident that our choices and actions will have consequences for generations one million years into the future. Following this revelation, Pardee explains how Vonnegut combines science and humanities to insinuate a seemingly implausible solution to the problems that threaten humanity:

Vonnegut weaves solid science and humanistic optimism to sketch a scenario where an imperfect crew of mixed nationality survives the catastrophic meltdown of the modern world to evolve into a healthy, well-adapted population. Their superiority to previous humans is

emphasized, but it is never equated with social Darwinist dominance. He demonstrates how natural selection uses chance mutations and extreme conditions, theoretically possible under similar circumstances, as they adapt to local conditions, and shows how we might be forced to survive the flood by jumping off the artificial ark of technology and returning to the sea. (265)

Considering the fact that Pardee mainly focuses on how the plot could potentially play out in real life, in this quote, her argument becomes more allegorical as she talks about surviving the flood. Here, she refers to mass extinction, and by using flooding as a metaphor, she also hints at climate change. The artificial ark of technology symbolises what we are currently doing to prevent our own extinction, and the fact that Pardee adds the word artificial alludes to something that is not real or natural and something created by humans. Essentially, she argues that Vonnegut suggests that we find an alternative way of handling the crisis, which is a point we agree with. However, we will make the same argument using Morton and Boyer's terms. Furthermore, Pardee notes how "Santa Rosalians" are still labelled human, even though they are remarkably distinct from what is considered human today (Pardee 265). This makes us contemplate whether their development should be interpreted as utopian or dystopian since Vonnegut both accentuates significant achievements and sacrifices. For example, he brings up the many benefits of having a smaller brain and, on the downside, the loss of art and culture: "He certainly wasn't going to write Beethoven's Ninth Symphony" (Vonnegut 262-263). Beethoven's ninth symphony is mentioned multiple times throughout the novel and is used as a metonymy for all art. Following Pardee's literal reading, *Galápagos* can be read as a warning against the course of human development and the potential consequences of our relationship with nature. However, while we agree with this interpretation, we also believe that the narrative puts forward a solution that makes it unnecessary to jump off the ark and return to the sea. Concerning the ark, it is also notable how Vonnegut's references to Christianity and biblical imagery have drawn the attention of scholars.

Pardee observes that Vonnegut's novel includes multiple biblical references (253). However, to further examine this aspect, we will return to Mustazza, who explore the implied author's use of Darwinian and biblical references. In his article "A Darwinian Eden", he asks the question: "Has nature replaced God as the prime creator?" (Mustazza 61). Mustazza suggests that nature has replaced God to a certain extent. However, he also points out how the narrative is bidirectional: "... progressive in that it applies a Darwinian solution to the problem of moral error, retrogressive insofar as the state of innocence that is ultimately achieved is allusively linked to

primal mythic innocence” (Mustazza 55). By making this argument, he brings attention to how Vonnegut has managed to join the scientific and mythic (Mustazza 61). The biblical references include Noah’s ark, Genesis, and Virgin Mary. Mustazza explains that the references to Noah’s ark discontinue when the characters arrive on the island: “Instead, all of the allusions now turn toward the story of Eden” (Mustazza 60). Following Mustazza’s interpretation, it can be concluded that the characters in *Galápagos* “... thus become the Adams and Eves of the new humanity” (Mustazza 60). This contextualisation is relevant because Mustazza shows how the plot offers a solution to the ecological crisis that involves going backwards or moving forwards in an immensely different manner. His reflections are beneficial because they stress that *We* need to reconsider how *We* approach climate change, which our analysis agrees with, albeit we will illustrate this through a different contextualisation.

To consider a way of reading the novel that touches upon the concept of *We*, we include Tedder’s analysis of post-Cold War utopian discourse. His thoughts are distinct from the focus on Darwinism and biblical imagery, which is apparent as he notes that: “... not only is there no sentient divinity guiding human destiny, there is also no “lasting truth” that can be shaped, appealed to, or invoked as a criterion for good behavior” (Tedder 210). Instead, he argues that Vonnegut’s novel is relevant by relating its depiction of the end of humanity to the “...inflection of the threat of nuclear war that shadowed the second half the twentieth century ... and so, in an indirect sense, *Galapagos* is the imagination of post-Cold War life if not a novel of the post-Cold War era” (Tedder 205). By making this connection, Tedder also argues that the novel has a political agenda, contrary to Oramus’ viewpoint. By considering Vonnegut’s literary work after *Galápagos*, he makes the point that Vonnegut’s position was:

... vitally outspoken against the hubris of the post-Cold War “New World Order,” and harshly critical of the “neo-Conservative” position in American politics. It is a voice that offers ... an important piece of evidence for the emergence of a postethnic utopianism in American literature and culture in the wake of the Cold War. (Tedder 205-206)

Considering Tedder’s observation, we notice the term postethnic utopianism, which is rather interesting because he defines it as something that: “Ecologically speaking ... sees human life as a single node in an interconnected web of living systems” (Tedder 215). We believe that this definition resembles Morton’s notion of interobjectivity. However, for Tedder, this means a dismissal of anthropocentrism (211), and he acknowledges that we can only rely on each other to make good choices (214), connoting that we need to be responsible. Furthermore, it leads to the

interpretation that "...Vonnegut must be critiquing one kind of intelligence, the kind that builds and deploys firebombs, while at the same time recommending another, the kind that writes left-handed novels" (Tedder 208). Tedder's idea that Vonnegut recommends one type of intelligence over another is something we will elaborate further on, however, we believe that it should be determined by more elements than the criteria Tedder presents. Instead, we will employ Morton's concepts of hyper- and hyposubjects to differentiate between beings to make a point regarding how *We* approach our environment. As a final but essential question, Tedder asks: "... how to use sentience in a way that *commits* to the future in a way different from the sentience that would seek to *determine* the future" (Tedder 216). He argues that we will always try to determine the future in an ethnocentric context because *We* only include the living. Therefore, to commit to the future, writing must be post-ethnic, i.e., it must include "... those who have yet to come, those who are still arriving, the unmet and the unborn" (Tedder 216). In *Galápagos*, these beings are part of the story, and in our analysis, we will discuss how they constitute a different *We*. In this regard, our analysis is comparable with Tedder's, as his perspective is closely related to the context of the Anthropocene, which acts as the framework of our analysis.

Since we will use several of Morton and Boyer's terms in our analysis, it is relevant to consider Fevyer because he also refers to Morton in his analysis of Vonnegut's novel (144-146). Fevyer's reading is within the context of the Anthropocene and focuses on the narrator Trout. He is interested in Trout's opinion on brains which we will also touch upon in our analysis. Fevyer emphasises how Trout views the big brains as more than a biological characteristic:

... for Trout the brain also stands in for the human intelligence through which contemporary cultures of modernity enact damaging actions upon each other and the biosphere, and for the ideological processes by which humans reproduce and obscure these destructive actions. And it is through this metonym of the brain that Trout calls attention to what he views as the historical and biological causes of what we might now describe as the Anthropocene. (Fevyer 139)

Through Fevyer's standpoint, we can see how the narrator's "... account of how the humans of the late twentieth century no longer fit in with this 'clockwork' also suggests that Trout considers these humans as living in a way that is dangerously incompatible with this biosphere" (Fevyer 138). While we agree with Fevyer, we will also investigate what define "humans of the late twentieth century", how they relate to the notion of ancestry and how their incompatibility with the environment unfolds. Additionally, Fevyer points out that damage caused by the big brains is an

industrial rather than environmental problem. He also argues that the narrator describes the big brains so that it becomes apparent that they are "... a collective pathology repeated by all individuals ... which also suggests that this pathology is being repeated throughout history" (Fevyer 138). As a result, Fevyer argues that the narrative emphasises "... a difficulty in attempting to mobilise scientific knowledge claims about humans and the biosphere as a means of responding to anthropogenic climate change" (142). This difficulty mirrors Morton and Boyer's concern regarding hypersubjects who are unable or unwilling to act on the climate change before they have a definite plan for a solution. Furthermore, it reflects the notion of being paralysed by information dump and experiencing trauma, as Morton compares to being in a car crash. Therefore, like Mustazza, Fevyer's reading suggests that we reconsider the approach to climate change. However, Fevyer points to the fact that the narrator is a ghost and explains that it "... can help the reader to imagine the end of human history's 'organised existence', and so also imagine a geologic history 'beyond the human species' in a particularly productive way" (Fevyer 147). By mentioning productivity, Fevyer also insinuates that the narrative inspires a form of solution or direction that we can pursue. Furthermore, by pointing out how the characters "... have not been guided out of the Anthropocene by technological solutions, nor by a scientific understanding of the human relationship with the biosphere" (Fevyer 150), he explains that Vonnegut calls into question whether science and technology can be a "...solution to anthropogenic climate change" (Fevyer 149). Finally, Fevyer claims that *Galápagos* "... encourages the reader to consider all human history as a process of 'becoming with' the biosphere" (Fevyer 155). Inspecting the relationship between human and nature is essential in an anthropocentric context. Therefore, through our analysis, we seek to demonstrate how Vonnegut's *Galápagos* can offer new perspectives on the conceptualisation of *We* and ancestry in relation to the Anthropocene.

Analysis of *Galápagos*: Hypersubjective Hyposubjectivity

Kurt Vonnegut's *Galápagos* begins in 1986 and spans one million years. The plot is narrated in retrospect by a million-year-old ghost called Leon Trout (Vonnegut 3) and is achronological as Trout's narration resembles stream of consciousness. Therefore, the reader is introduced to fragments of multiple characters who are not connected until they coincidentally meet on "the Nature Cruise of the Century", also referred to as Bahía de Darwin. Among these characters, a certain number of them end up stranded on the island of Santa Rosalia, where they eventually turn out to be the only humans who survived the collapse of modern civilisation. As a

result, this group becomes the ancestors of all humanity as they reproduce, and over a million years, evolution turns humanity into seal-like creatures with smaller brains. Through our analysis of the novel, we will explore how Morton and Boyer's terms transcendence, subsistence, hyper- and hyposubject can generate new observations in the reading of the novel. To investigate this, we will examine how Vonnegut's novel establishes different ideas of *We* through narration and plot. Furthermore, we will explore how the implied author has employed a hypersubjective narrator to favour and encourage hyposubjectivity and subsistence.

A Story by a Ghost: Otherdimensional Hypersubjectivity

The narrator in *Galápagos* is the ghost, Leon Trout, who lives on the Bahía de Darwin. He does not interact with the other characters; however, he knows their pasts, thoughts, and intentions, which indicates that he is a zero-focalisation narrator. Nevertheless, he is also a first-person narrator, which is seen when Trout remarks: "I was here, too, but perfectly invisible" (Vonnegut 20). Therefore, Trout is a unique narrator, as the combination of the first-person perspective and omniscience is unusual. Throughout the plot, Trout makes his presence known to the reader by frequently disclosing his thoughts and opinions, which means he is an intrusive narrator. His interruptions are often opinions that revolve around the fact that he blames the advanced human brain for everything that used to be wrong with the world before humanity evolved into seals, which we will discuss in a later section. We argue that even though Trout is a first-person homodiegetic narrator, he is not inherently part of the *We* that includes other characters in the novel, nor is he part of the *We* that comprise the group of people who strands on Santa Rosalia and turns out to be the answer to humanity's survival. Thus, he is extradiegetic, as he exists outside the main story. Trout sets himself apart from humans by using specific pronouns: "Humans had much bigger brains back then than they do today, and so they could be beguiled by mysteries" (Vonnegut 3). Instead of saying "we", he uses the pronoun "they", which emphasises that he does not consider himself as part of humanity, even though his ghost presumably embodies the same big brain and features that he points out humans used to have. The similarity between Trout and the human characters is emphasised when Trout compares his former self to one of them: "Like James Wait, incidentally, I, too, was once a teenage runaway" (Vonnegut 15). However, since Trout resides in another dimension, he has no agency in the world of the characters. Thus, he cannot affect anything in their realm, which further separates him from the other characters and the *We* that they constitute. However, Trout has agency in his own way, as he is the narrator, and therefore, he chooses how he

communicates the story to the reader. It is evident that Trout speaks to a reader, as he cannot communicate with anyone else except for his father, who visits him and tries to persuade him to join him in the afterlife. Additionally, he demonstrates his agency as he has chosen to be a ghost rather than moving on to the afterlife because of the benefits that come with existing in the state of invisibility:

I had chosen to be a ghost because the job carried with it, as a fringe benefit, license to read minds, to learn the truth of people's pasts, to see through walls, to be many places all at once, to learn in depth how this or that situation had come to be structured as it was, and to have access to all human knowledge. (Vonnegut 276)

Because Trout has chosen to have the ability to go beyond the spatial and temporal present and obtain knowledge from different times and spaces, it is evident that he has agency and that he uses that agency to seek transcendence. Thus, we argue that he exhibits hypersubjective traits even though he also embodies some of the qualities associated with a hyperobject as he occupies a high-dimensional phase space, which means he is invisible to humans. Despite that, it can be argued that since he cannot be felt, and the other characters never experience Trout indirectly, he does not embody all the characteristics of a hyperobject. However, it is clear that he seeks transcendence when he talks about a license to read minds and to gain access to all human knowledge, as these abilities go beyond what is usually the limit of the human species. Thus, the narrator embodies hypersubjective qualities.

The fact that the implied author has chosen a ghost as the narrator provides a significant opportunity to envision the future on a larger scale than we would typically be able to. As the narrator, Trout is able to choose the essential events and provide information in a particular order with the perspective of a million years. The fact that the implied author experiments with a narrative that spans a million years gives the reader a unique insight into what would otherwise not be accessible. Therefore, the knowledge the reader obtains must be considered transcendent since the reader experiences a perspective that exceeds what is usually the limit for humans. As mentioned in the chapter "Context: Navigating the Anthropocene as the Perpetrator and the Victim", we are used to thinking in shorter timeframes, and now, in the Anthropocene, it is necessary to broaden our perspectives. However, it can be challenging to envision the future and consider the world and its inhabitants in a time beyond our lifespan. Though, with a million-year-old ghost as a narrator, *Galápagos* broadens our perspective as it makes it possible for the reader to imagine themselves as an ancestor. Considering Pardee's reading, the novel invites the reader into a domain where we can

discover and explore our relationship with our descendants in the future and view ourselves as progenitors. This is highlighted through the combination of a ghost that can be present for a million years as an omniscient narrator and the scientifically possible representation of human evolutionary development. Furthermore, the novel complies with Tedder's argument that to commit to the future, literature must be post-ethnic and include beings that are not here yet. Thus, Vonnegut's novel invites us to broaden our understanding of ancestry and the *We* that includes the reader.

A Roomba-like Way of Telling a Story?

The way that Trout organises his narrative is atypical because it seems to be propelled forward by the ideas that catch his attention while he tells the story. Though there is a sense of chronological progress, we argue that *Galápagos* is also achronological because it contains numerous digressions and flashbacks. For example, while Trout talks about the fact that the new humans are unable to handle weapons, he sidetracks and talks about his childhood:

... my mother took me to see the circus in Albany one time, although we could not afford it and Father did not approve of circuses. And there were trained seals and sea lions there who could balance balls on their noses and blow horns and clap their flippers on cue and so on (Vonnegut 161)

These digressions make it unclear to the reader what is relevant to the plot. Furthering this point, Trout remarks that he has written the entire story in the air with his left index finger (Vonnegut 318). This remark advances the feeling of aimlessness since, technically, there is no recipient of Trout's story. Considering this, Trout appears insane, which is a theme we will elaborate on in a later section. However, this type of framework allows the plotting of different events and characters that, in a temporal and spatial sense, are far apart before they are connected by plot and narration. Moreover, the unique plotting is exemplified by how Trout continuously foreshadows the ending throughout the plot, for example, by hinting that humans had bigger brains back then (Vonnegut 3). As Trout often foreshadows and reveals details about the characters and their pasts in fragments, he creates a somewhat disorganised narrative, which demonstrates that recounting a million years worth of events can be hard to keep track of. In that way, Trout's role is similar to that of Snowman in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, as he is also the last human, a hypersubject, and bears a "burden" of knowledge. However, Snowman's relationship with knowledge will be unpacked in the next chapter.

Although Trout is omniscient, he is also a homodiegetic narrator who has the agency to include and omit what he deems necessary. His selective way of narrating is exemplified by how most of the story focuses on the years leading up to the Bahía de Darwin's last voyage and the first ten years on Santa Rosalia. Although Trout reveals how humanity has evolved into beings that resemble seals more than humans one million years later, there is a knowledge gap. This gap exists as the reader only gets information about how humanity got their fur and why their brains shrank, but not about what happens while they evolve, i.e., Trout leaves out an incredible amount of information about what happened while they gradually evolved. Thus, there is an immense gap in knowledge between the narrator and the reader. This is exemplified when Trout mentions that "Forty-two years after that, Kanka-bono would be the only language of humankind" (Vonnegut 184). This comment is an example of the achronological plot, which illustrates how Trout uses ellipsis as he never tells what happens between this and a million years ahead in time when the human brains have shrunk, and language has gone extinct. The use of ellipsis highlights Trout's hypersubjectivity as he demonstrates how his amount of knowledge far exceeds the usual limit of a human; thus, he transcends.

As a hypersubjective narrator, Trout presents an unconventional plot as he announces the characters' deaths by putting a star by their name before they die, revealing to the reader that they are about to die (Vonnegut 20). Thus, he creates suspension by revealing "what", before he reveals "how". As mentioned, Trout seems to concentrate on characters and concepts rather than conveying the chronological sequence of events in his narration. This type of plot resembles the fact that coincidence plays a significant role in humanity's survival which also equates to our understanding of evolution:

As luck would have it, there was going to be a documentary about the lives of blue-footed boobies on the islands shown on educational television that evening, so King enclosed notes saying that they might want to watch it. These birds would later become crucial to the survival of the little human colony on Santa Rosalia. If those birds hadn't been so stupid, so incapable of learning that human beings were dangerous, the first settlers would almost certainly have starved to death. (Vonnegut 109)

The mentioning of the blue-footed boobies is an example of how Trout foreshadows later events in the story, as he comments that they will become fundamental for the stranded humans to survive. Furthermore, this comment is an example of Trout's general approach to narration, which we argue resembles the narrative technique, stream of consciousness. This technique is similar to how a

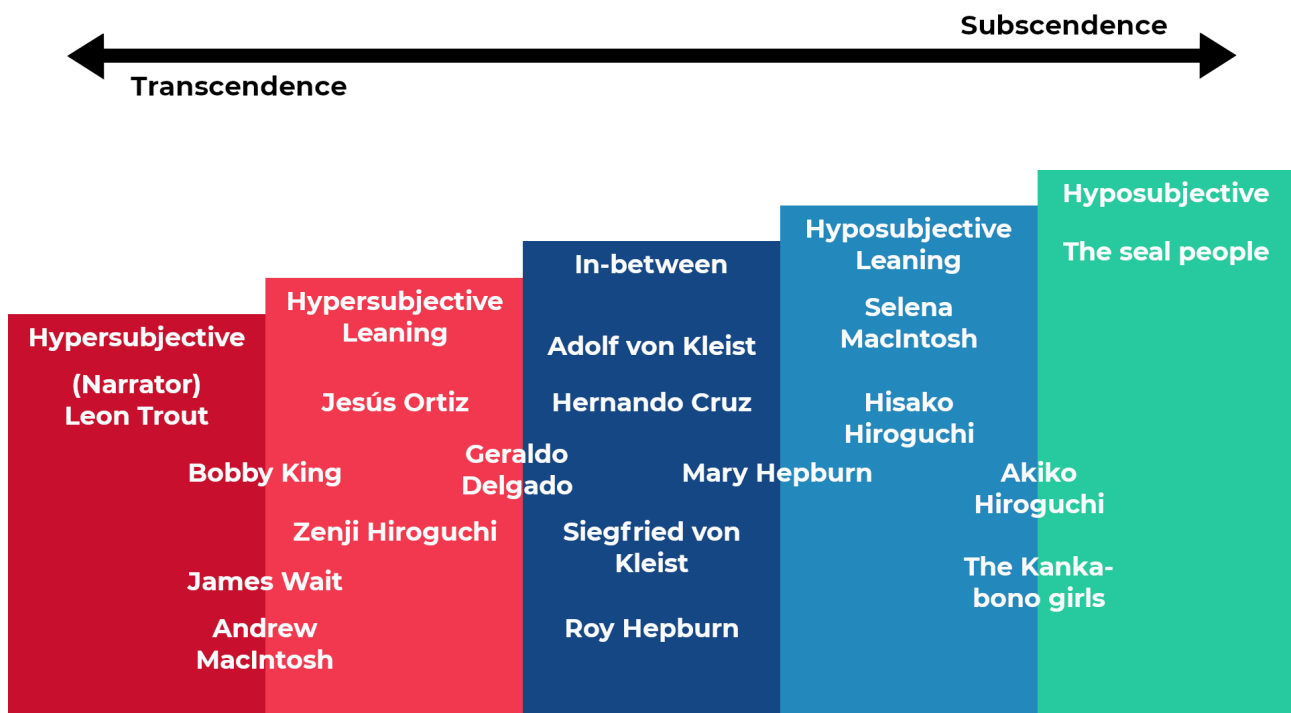
Roomba operates, as it seems like Trout trundles along in his narration in an unplanned manner, similar to how a Roomba vacuums. Therefore, we argue that the way the narration mirrors Trout's stream of consciousness illustrates how he conveys his story in a hyposubjective manner even though he is a hypersubject.

However, Trout has the perspective of a million years, and he has access to all knowledge. Therefore, Trout's abilities seem to contrast with how he chooses to utilise them. Trout decides to convey the story achronologically, including ellipsis, instead of a more rational approach, which is atypical considering the fact that he holds an omnipresent perspective. In his narration, he often goes off on a tangent, as illustrated when he uses the blue-footed boobies to move the narrative from King to Mary Hepburn's teaching at Ilium High School: "The high point of that program, like the high point of Mary Hepburn's lectures on the islands at Ilium High School, was film footage of the courtship dance of the blue-footed boobies. The dance went like this: ..." (Vonnegut 109-110). By tying the characters and events together in this manner, Trout effectively demonstrates how all characters, and their actions are connected. Thus, we argue that Trout conveys his story in a Roomba-like manner. Hence, the implied author has employed a hypersubjective narrator to tell a story that illustrates and echoes how a Roomba operates. However, as we will show in the next part, the implied author also draws attention to hyper- and hyposubjectivity through the characters, which eventually are used to illustrate how transcendence and subsistence can distinctively impact the development of humanity and their relationship with nature.

Pointless Transcendence and Vital Subsistence

In *Galápagos*, we meet many characters, though it is far from everyone who survives long enough to reproduce and thus be significant, according to Trout. Trout categorises the characters as significant or insignificant based on whether they reproduce: "He was unmarried and had never reproduced, and so was insignificant from an evolutionary point of view" (Vonnegut 50). However, characters can also be significant by performing an action that turns out to be critical to the evolution Trout witnessed, for example, the action of Mary Hepburn when she initiates an artificial insemination programme that ultimately ensures the continuation of humanity. Another example is: "... the decision of Hernando Cruz to go to the aid of his own flesh and blood, although the stuff of low comedy of the time, has turned out to be of incalculable value to present-day humankind" (Vonnegut 49). As Cruz abandons his position, he exits the grid; therefore, at the point in time where Trout labels his actions significant, he unplugs. Altogether, we witness a pattern which

demonstrates that the more hyposubjective characters are also the characters who are significant concerning the evolution of humanity and vice versa; the hypersubjective characters seem to have less influence on the development of humanity. Because *Galápagos* presents seventeen characters, we have illustrated where they can be placed on a spectrum between hyper- and hyposubjectivity to provide an overview that makes our analysis easier to follow:



In this section, we will show how this pattern is reflected by the characters who, like Hernando Cruz, never make it to Santa Rosalia because they either never board the ship or die. These characters include Bobby King, who is the organiser of “the Nature Cruise of the Century”, Andrew MacIntosh, who is widowed and a wealthy financier with a blind daughter and Zenji Hiroguchi, who is “... a Japanese computer genius” (Vonnegut 19). He is also the husband of Hisako Hiroguchi and the father of Akiko Hiroguchi, who is later born on Santa Rosalia Island. Additionally, the swindler James Wait does get on board the ship but dies before they arrive on Santa Rosalia. The list also includes Mary’s husband, Roy Hepburn, and Adolf von Kleist’s brother Siegfried von Kleist. Finally, Trout mentions two minor characters: The waiter Jesús Ortíz and the soldier Geraldo Delgado. Now, we will explore what defines these characters by applying Morton and Boyer’s terms because Trout has chosen to include them in the plot, even though they never make it to Santa Rosalia, and he even deems some of them insignificant.

Trout describes Bobby King as a publicity man whose masterpiece was “the Nature Cruise of the Century” (Vonnegut 94). King had persuaded multiple celebrities to go on the cruise by

allowing them to go for free: “The trip wasn’t to have cost them a nickel—and they had already received free matched luggage and toiletries, and Panama hats besides” (Vonnegut 123). In addition, King’s actions can be described as deliberate as he “... had done as much as Charles Darwin to make the Galápagos Islands famous—with a ten-month campaign of publicity and advertising which had persuaded millions of people all over the planet that *Bahía de Darwin* would indeed be “the Nature Cruise of the Century.”” (Vonnegut 95). This illustrates how King uses certain people to promote his business and how he seeks to be in control, achieve power, and transcend. Similarly, Andrew MacIntosh is also a businessman who uses people, and he is described as “... greedy and inconsiderate” (Vonnegut 55). Thus, MacIntosh exhibits hypersubjective traits, which also becomes apparent when he calls Zenji Hiroguchi an idiot for being on salary because he could help him become rich (Vonnegut 52). Zenji is the inventor of the Mandarax, which “... was not only a translator, but also could diagnose with respectable accuracy one thousand of the most common diseases which attacked *Homo sapiens*, including twelve varieties of nervous breakdown” (Vonnegut 57). This machine is brought to Santa Rosalia, which we will elaborate on later in this chapter. The invention of the Mandarax is also the reason why MacIntosh tries to persuade him. Though Zenji needs time to think about MacIntosh’s offer, his “... big brain began to play with the idea of becoming as rich as the richest man in his country, who was the Emperor of Japan” (Vonnegut 53). As Zenji fantasises about becoming rich, it is clear that MacIntosh’s desires have swayed Zenji’s mind also to desire transcendence. Additionally, the waiter Jesús Ortiz is described as “... Nature’s experiment with admiration for the rich” (Vonnegut 86). Thus, similarly to Zenji, Ortiz fantasises about becoming rich:

Ortiz’s brain was so big that it could show him movies in his head which starred him and his dependents as millionaires. And this man, little more than a boy, was so innocent that he believed the dream could come true, since he had no bad habits and was willing to work so hard (Vonnegut 78).

However, Ortiz feels that his dream cannot be realised without “... some hints on succeeding in life from people who were already millionaires” (Vonnegut 78). Even though his chance of procuring transcendence is slim, he still pursues it: “He had tried, without much satisfaction, to get some advice on living well from James Wait downstairs, who, while so laughably unprepossessing, had a wallet stuffed, as Ortiz had observed respectfully, with credit cards and American twenty-dollar bills” (Vonnegut 78). It is clear that Ortiz pursues an unattainable ideal. Therefore, he functions as a manifestation of the unfruitful hypersubject. Conclusively, it is apparent that both King, MacIntosh,

Zenji, and Ortiz chase and desire to be more-than-subjects. Thus, all four of them are or want to be part of the grid. However, it is also apparent that the main factor in how they seek to be more-than-subjects is wealth which insinuates that their hypersubjectivity is concerned with capitalism, liberalism, and individualism.

Additionally, Trout compares Wait and MacIntosh: “Like James Wait, *MacIntosh was a fisherman of sorts. He hoped to catch investors, using for bait not a price tag on his shirt but a Japanese computer genius” (Vonnegut 53). Trout spends a significant amount of time telling the reader about Wait, even though he does not impact human evolution. Therefore, it is intriguing to investigate whether he exhibits hyper- or hyposubjective traits. Wait is described as a successful swindler who “... was registered at the hotel under the name on his bogus Canadian passport, which was Willard Flemming” (Vonnegut 8). Wait’s source of livelihood was dishonest and manipulating, and he had “... so far courted and married seventeen such persons—and then cleaned out their jewelry boxes and safe-deposit boxes and bank accounts, and disappeared” (Vonnegut 8). It is clear that Wait exhibits predatory behaviour and seeks prosperity by deliberately planning how to obtain wealth by fraudulent means. However, Wait is not the only fraudulent character, as Trout notes that “...fully half of the guests at the El Dorado weren’t who they were supposed to be” (Vonnegut 103). Here, he refers to the Hiroguchis, who also checked in under a false name so that Zenji’s employer would not find out that he was considering a business deal with MacIntosh (Vonnegut 103). For that reason, it is evident that hypersubjectivity is also expressed through fraudulent characters, as they manipulate people as they seek wealth.

However, Wait’s early life was characterised by being the child of a father-daughter incestuous relationship, growing up in different foster homes, being punished for his inbred parentage, running away, and working as a prostitute (Vonnegut 14-15). Therefore, it is difficult to imagine how he could do anything but seek transcendence to escape the atrocious conditions. It is hard to argue that Wait does not have prominent traits that are related to being a hypersubject because of his wealth: “He was so successful at what he did that he had become a millionaire, with interest-bearing savings accounts under various aliases in banks all over North America, and he had never been arrested for anything. For all he knew, nobody was even trying to catch him” (Vonnegut 8). Thus, he uses his knowledge to go beyond what would usually be expected of a person who had to overcome these obstacles. However, similar to how hyposubjects are born into an anthropocentric world and have no choice but to adapt, it is hard to imagine how Wait could do anything but seek transcendence. This observation supports the idea that Wait’s predatory

behaviour results from his survival instinct in an unbearable situation. This makes the lines between Morton and Boyer's terms blurry since we can argue that Wait was initially a less-than-subject as he had little agency and was simply trying to adapt and survive. Thereby, he needed to be spontaneous rather than part of the grid. However, at some point, Wait exhibits considerably more hypersubjective traits, although it is difficult to identify when he transcends the barrier between hyper- and hyposubjectivity.

Moreover, Trout remarks that Wait's foster parents expected that he would become a moral monster because he was inbred, which Trout refers to when he talks about Wait: "So here that monster was now—in the Hotel El Dorado, happy and rich and well, as far as he knew, and keen for the next test of his survival skills" (Vonnegut 15). The description of Wait's state of mind connotes that of someone who is both deliberate and spontaneous because he is a monster that is happy, rich, and well – but he also views his circumstances as merely another situation in which he needs to survive. The combination of these observations prompts the question of whether it is possible to be both a hyper- and a hyposubject simultaneously, as Wait seems to be both the predator and the prey. This combination is highlighted as he, as a millionaire, is not in a place where he needs to survive. However, he still believes that his survival skills need to be tested. Nevertheless, Wait scams other people, which is narcissistic, and predatory behaviour. Though Wait might challenge the concepts of hyper- and hyposubjectivity, it is evident that, at the point in time where Bahía de Darwin sets out on the last journey, he has fully turned into a hypersubject as he continues to pursue transcendence by marrying Mary Hepburn. This is due to the fact that she does not want to marry him and only agrees to it because: "He had worn her down. It was though he had been begging for water all night, so that finally she was going to give him some. If he wanted betrothal so badly, and betrothal was all she had to give him, then she would give him some" (Vonnegut 258). This establishes that Wait is a hypersubject because it shows how he does not accept his limitations and seeks to be in control by consistent persuasion, i.e., manipulation. Consequently, Trout has presented the reader with four characters who do not directly influence the story's outcome, which means that they are insignificant in Trout's opinion. Because these characters also have a desire for transcendence in common, the implied author shows that nothing is achieved by pursuing transcendence and being deliberate by including these characters. On the contrary, through subsistence and spontaneity, it is possible to have a significant impact, which becomes apparent through Roy Hepburn and Geraldo Delgado, among others.

Trout presents the characters Roy Hepburn, Geraldo Delgado, and Siegfried von Kleist, who also never board the Bahía de Darwin. However, they all perform a significant action. Roy and Siegfried are both ill and succumb to madness before they die; Roy's madness emanated from a brain tumour, and Siegfried's madness came from Huntington's chorea. Furthermore, they are both aware that they are losing their mind, as Siegfried informs his brother about this (Vonnegut 225) and Roy tells Mary that his brain is not working: "It's the part of you that knows when your brain isn't working right. I always knew, Mary. There wasn't anything I could do about it, but I always knew" (Vonnegut 45). Trout also describes Geraldo Delgado as a crazy person (Vonnegut 161). However, his illness is not deadly, as he has paranoid schizophrenia (Vonnegut 160). Even though these characters' brains do not function properly, they take part in getting Mary and the Kanka-Bono girls on the ship, which is crucial as they turn out to have a significant role in the continuation of humanity. The significance of these characters unfolds when Roy purchases the tickets to the cruise, though Mary speculates if his tumour played a role in the purchase (Vonnegut 31). When Delgado makes a pathway for the Kanka-bonos during a psychotic episode involving a hallucination: "Before they could get to Santa Rosalia, though, they would first have to reach the hotel. And the soldiers and the barricades would surely have stopped them from getting there, if Private Geraldo Delgado had not opened up that pathway through the store" (Vonnegut 165). Though Trout argues that "Siegfried von Kleist is not important to my story" (Vonnegut 50), Siegfried is responsible for the fact that the group who reaches Santa Rosalia survive until they board the Bahía de Darwin: "And then *Siegfried told Mary to get on the ship with the rest of them, and to do what she could for *Wait, whom they believed to be Willard Flemming. She did as she was told" (Vonnegut 228). Thus, the story's outcome would likely not have unfolded the way it did without these characters.

Accordingly, we will investigate what defines the characters who do not board the ship but instead assist in continuing humanity in a different manner. As mentioned, they are all in a state of madness while they perform the actions which prove to be significant, and none of them seems to be concerned with transcendence in the same way that MacIntosh, Zenji, Ortiz and Wait are, as they are not chasing wealth. Since they do not display these types of hypersubjective traits, we will consider what characteristics they exhibit instead. Roy exhibits hyposubjective qualities when he decides to quit his job even though he "... was a man who adored the work he did with machinery, and who had never taken off so much as an hour from his job during his twenty-nine years with GEFFCo—not for sickness, since he was never sick, not for anything" (Vonnegut 31). Because Roy

decided to change his life on a whim, even if it seemed unchangeable, it could be interpreted as a form of subsistence because he acts spontaneously, exits the grid, and thus, he becomes unplugged. However, Mary compares his behaviour to a teenager's: "... who was tired of being thought a good boy all the time" (Vonnegut 31). Qualities of subsistence and transcendence are contrasts, so instead of pursuing wealth, power, and knowledge, subsistent individuals would attempt a more trial-and-error based approach. Thus, Roy appears to have adopted subsistent traits. Concerning the type of behaviour that is typical for someone who exhibits hyposubjective traits, it is evident that Delgado, because of his hallucinations, does something similar:

Delgado, facing starvation like so many other people in Guayaquil, thought his big problem was enemies with little radios. And when he broke in through the back door of what was plainly a defunct souvenir shop, it wasn't a souvenir shop to him. To him it was the headquarters of the Ecuadorian Ballet Folklórico, and he was now going to get his chance to prove that he really was the greatest dancer in the world. (Vonnegut 160)

Delgado has deserted his unit because of his hallucinations, so he has gone rogue. Thus, he has exited the grid in the real world similar to Roy since they both subsist because of their illnesses. However, when Delgado pursues his pseudo-dancing career, he also acts hypersubjectively since he is connected in a made-up grid of his own and trying to obtain some unattainable ideal, similar to how Ortiz pursued and dreamt of financial wealth. Although, at the same time, his actions can be viewed as unpredictable as he is neither here nor there in his approach to the world. Nevertheless, it can be questioned whether Delgado and Roy are aware of their actions. However, they both perform a random and seemingly irrelevant action that turns out to have an immense impact on the development of humanity. Furthermore, both their crucial actions are purely coincidental because they appear to be a consequence of their illness. The way random actions of the characters turn out to be of great significance illustrates how the implied author emphasises incidents, accidents, and coincidences. This mirrors our understanding of evolution and illustrates subsistence, thus visualising how the whole is ontologically smaller than the sum of its parts and how individual parts can alter the whole. Consequentially, the similarities between hyposubjectivity and evolution become clear.

As regards Siegfried von Kleist, his actions were not performed because of his illness but rather in spite of it:

Mary Hepburn and Hisako and *Siegfried, whenever poor *Siegfried could stop dancing, hauled the stern of the ship right up to the wharf with the bus, and then parked the bus under

the stern, so that it could be used as a ladder up to the lowest deck of the ship, which would have been unreachable otherwise. (Vonnegut 226)

Siegfried is perfectly aware of what he is doing, though he cannot know how vital his actions will be for the continuation of humanity. Additionally, Siegfried does not exit the grid, and he does not exhibit similar traits to Roy and Delgado: “He was generally an idler, having inherited considerable money, but had been shamed by his uncles into, so to speak, “pulling his own weight” in this particular family enterprise” (Vonnegut 50). Although Siegfried is described as idle and does take part in the family business, which indicates that he is uninterested in pursuing transcendence, he does not exit the grid as Roy and Delgado do. Therefore, Siegfried does not fit the category of a hyposubject. However, he does not fit the category of hypersubjects either. Albeit he seems to exhibit qualities related to both categories, thus, we place him in the middle of the spectrum. The ambiguity mirrors the fact that Siegfried does something significant while at the same time Trout argues that he is unimportant. However, while Trout deems Siegfried unimportant, he states that “... his only sibling, his brother Adolf, three years his senior and also a bachelor, surely is [important]” (Vonnegut 50). Adolf is part of the group that reaches Santa Rosalia, which we will explore in the next section.

Evolution of the Hyposubjects

Considering that the extinction of humanity in any other place was occurring (Vonnegut 200), the group on Santa Rosalia effectively forms a new *We* that soon will include all of humanity, as they are the only ones left. The people who get to Santa Rosalia Island include Mary Hepburn, six girls from the Kanka-bono tribe, Selena MacIntosh, Adolf von Kleist, and Hisako Hiroguchi, pregnant with her daughter Akiko. When they reach the island, everyone is prompted to act in a hyposubjective manner since they find themselves in an unfamiliar situation that requires a trial-and-error approach. As they find themselves on a deserted island, the Roomba-like approach seems like the only possibility as they find themselves separated from the rest of the world. This fact also means that a neoliberal or hypersubjective approach would be difficult since they are disconnected from the metaphorical grid described by Morton and Boyer. Despite these circumstances, most of the characters already exhibited hyposubjective traits before arriving on this island, and in this section, we will explore how their subjectivity manifests.

Since Mary Hepburn is a crucial factor in the artificial insemination programme, she plays a crucial role in human evolution even though she never becomes anyone’s ancestor. Trout

emphasises her role by explaining that “Mother Nature Personified” is the only inscription that would do her justice on her inexistent gravestone (Vonnegut 100). The reasoning behind this description is shown when Mary adopts a purpose ten years after they strand on Santa Rosalia: “In the face of utter hopelessness on Santa Rosalia, she still wanted human babies to be born there. Nothing could keep her from doing all she could to keep life going on and on and on” (Vonnegut 100). Considering their circumstances of being stranded on an island, her actions appear irrational, highlighting how Mary dissociates from liberal humanist subjectivity. However, the fact that she prioritises human babies indicates the opposite because she subscribes to anthropocentrism, which shows that Mary views humans as intrinsically more valuable. Through her perspective, Mary also exhibits hypersubjective qualities, and since she otherwise behaves hyposubjectively, it further underscores that hyper- and hyposubjectivity should be considered on a spectrum.

Following Mustazza’s reading, which we unpacked earlier, the biblical references symbolise a new beginning, which displays how the implied author distances herself from hypersubjectivity, as Mary Hepburn is the key to the beginning of a completely different way of being human. By using the name “Mary”, the implied author refers to the Virgin Mary. Additionally, we argue that the Virgin Mary can be described as a prime example of being less than the sum of one’s parts because she gave birth to Jesus. Thus, the biblical reference also amplifies how Mary is less than the sum of her parts, which is also shown in the way that she approaches her artificial insemination programme in a subsistent manner:

Mary’s doubts about whether a woman could be impregnated by another one on a desert island without any technical assistance led to her taking action. In a trancelike state, she found herself visiting the camp of the Kanka-bono women on the other side of the crater, having brought Akiko along as an interpreter. (Vonnegut 292)

The fact that Mary’s approach is caused by doubt, and she is described as being in a trancelike state mirrors Morton and Boyer’s description of subsistence, where an individual must test things out in an unscientific manner. Mary discovers a new purpose and pursues it similar to how a Roomba would find dust in a new environment. The similarity is illustrated when Trout describes her artificial insemination programme as an experiment that she approaches through trial and error. Because of her actions, Mary ensures the survival of the human species. In order to achieve her goal, Mary couples up with Adolf von Kleist, the captain of Bahía de Darwin, and this relationship makes it possible for her to realise her experiment because she uses von Kleist’s semen to impregnate the Kanka-bono girls without his knowledge. In this way, Mary takes advantage of him,

which is apparent since von Kleist did not want to have children: “And he was determined not to reproduce, since he felt that there was still a good chance that he could pass on Huntington’s chorea” (Vonnegut 289). However, despite the seriousness of the matter, Trout portrays Mary’s actions as less wicked because he idealises the outcome of her experiment:

People still hiccup as they always have, and they still find it very funny when somebody farts. And they still try to comfort those who are sick with soothing tones of voice. Mary’s tone when she kept *James Wait company on the ship is a tone often heard today. With or without words, that tone conveys what a sick person wants to hear now, and what *Wait wanted to hear a million years ago. (Vonnegut 246-247).

Although much has been lost as people’s brains shrank over a million years, Trout highlights how they still have fun, play, care for, and comfort each other. Thus, he shows how they still hold the best of human qualities, which are also hyposubjective traits.

Similar to Mary, Captain von Kleist exhibits hyposubjective traits since he, without Hernando Cruz, must resort to a trial-and-error approach as he steps into the role of the captain: “... although he did not know shit from Shinola about navigation, the Galápagos Islands, or the operation and maintenance of a ship that size” (Vonnegut 149). However, the fact that von Kleist reproduces seems ironic since he is the only ancestor who displays apparent hypersubjective traits: “... he was a racist, and so not at all drawn to Hisako or her furry daughter, and least of all to the Indian women who would ultimately bear his children” (Vonnegut 289). However, as the captain is the only male on the island, his involvement is necessary for them to reproduce. In accordance with the captain’s hypersubjective traits, Trout also declares that “... the Captain of the Bahía de Darwin was Nature’s experiment with ill-founded self-confidence” (Vonnegut 86). Furthermore, just before his death, von Kleist throws the Mandarax in the ocean, which makes Trout compare him to: “... the new Adam, [and] it might be said, his final act was to cast the Apple of Knowledge into the deep blue sea” (Vonnegut 63). Recalling the biblical references which Mustazza pointed out, it is evident that the implied author stresses that this new beginning on Santa Rosalia Island takes an entirely different direction than humanity had previously. Through his action, von Kleist condemns the knowledge the Mandarax holds and ensures that future generations will not be able to use the Mandarax to transcend in terms of knowledge. Therefore, he determines the course of the new beginning for humanity. As von Kleist embraces his and everyone else’s inaccessibility to knowledge and ensures that future generations will have to subscond in terms of knowledge, he pushes the new and only branch of humanity towards hyposubjectivity. According to Trout, this is a

righteous act since he despises the big brains and believes it to be a blessing that humans get rid of them. Furthermore, as Trout equates the Mandarax to the Apple of Knowledge, he also equates it to an object that can potentially steer humanity in a less desired direction. However, as Trout also points out, the Mandarax was practically useless in the situation:

Under the circumstances peculiar to Santa Rosalia, the medical advice of Mandarax was bound to sound like mockery. When Hisako Hiroguchi entered a deep depression which was to last until her death, to last for nearly twenty years, Mandarax recommended new hobbies, new friends, a change of scene and perhaps profession, and lithium. When the kidneys of Selena MacIntosh began to fail when she was only thirty-eight, Mandarax suggested that a compatible donor for a transplant be located as soon as possible. Hisako's furry daughter Akiko, when Akiko was six, came down with pneumonia, apparently caught from a fur seal who was her best friend, and Mandarax recommended antibiotics. (Vonnegut 64)

The technological device is designed with another context in mind, as it cannot aid the group on Santa Rosalia. Until von Kleist got rid of the Mandarax, it provided an abundance of quotes from different famous writers. However, it was designed for translation and diagnostics, so the fact that it also presents occasional quotes indicates that it has transcended because it has exceeded its limits. Consequently, the Mandarax teases the characters because their surroundings limit them. Therefore, when von Kleist gets rid of it, he gets rid of their primary means for transcendence on the island, and as a result, he distances himself from transcendence.

While captain von Kleist involuntarily becomes the father of humanity, the Kanka-bonos and Hisako "... become the mothers of all modern humankind" (Vonnegut 164). Even though von Kleist fathers the first generation of the children on Santa Rosalia Island, he does not participate in their upbringing. Instead, the children's mothers are responsible for it. Because Trout glorifies the seal-like humans with smaller brains, we will examine what defines them and their ancestors. The Kanka-bonos are presented as remarkably hyposubjective characters: "So in only five hours those girls were flown from the Stone Age to the Electronics Age, from the freshwater swamps of the jungle to the brackish marshes of Guayaquil" (Vonnegut 168). Because they grew up in the jungle, they never participated in modern society, and they were never part of the grid. This is similar to Akiko and all future generations born on Santa Rosalia Island, as they never know any different.

Akiko is raised by her mother and Selena MacIntosh: "Hisako and the blind Selena were then living together and raising Akiko together, almost like husband and wife" (Vonnegut 64). As Selena was blind and chose not to reproduce because of her genes, she is less relevant, following

Trout's standpoint. Hisako was a teacher, and she "... had been very reluctant to learn how to work Mandarax, and would remain so until she died" (Vonnegut 70). Therefore, Hisako also distances herself from transcendence. Furthermore, Hisako's mother had been exposed to radiation from the atomic bomb America dropped on Hiroshima (Vonnegut 59), which resulted in Akiko being born with fur. This development pushed evolution so that humans mutated and developed a coat of fur faster (Vonnegut 168-169). Though Hisako and Selena do not have hypersubjective traits, they do not exhibit many hyposubjective traits either. However, they both died of suicide: "And twenty years went by. Hisako and Selena had committed suicide by drowning eight years before" (Vonnegut 308). It is complicated to relate Morton and Boyer's terms to suicide. Because Trout obtains all human knowledge after his death, choosing death could be interpreted as an act of seeking transcendence. Nevertheless, as neither Hisako nor Selena has any way of knowing this, it is difficult to argue that they are trying to obtain anything by drowning. Besides the fact that Trout's ghost has the ability to subsist, not a single one of the other characters enters the realm in which Trout resides as they go straight to the blue tunnel that is the passage to the afterlife. Therefore, death is the end of subjectivity, with Trout as the exception.

The group of people on the island form a *We* characterised both by hyposubjectivity, the near absence of hypersubjectivity, and achievement of subsistence. Though, transcendence is also exhibited at some point. However, as Trout notes:

The original colonists never became a family which included everyone. Subsequent generations, though, after the last of the old people died, would become a family which included everyone ... It went very fast—that formation from such random genetic materials of a perfectly cohesive human family. That was so nice to see. It almost made me love people just as they were back then, big brains and all. (Vonnegut 299)

Following Trout's thoughts, the reader is not supposed to view the group as uniform, perhaps because they are too different and hold both hyper- and hyposubjective traits. However, although that Trout views the big human brain as the archenemy, he admits that he likes the family that the second generation of Santa Rosalians has formed, even though evolution has not turned them into seals yet. Considering this, it is relevant to examine further Trout's relationship with the human brain, which we will attempt to unpack in the next section.

Why are Big Brains the Enemy?

Trout's despise for the big brains could easily be interpreted as if he favours stupidity. However, this is not necessarily the case, as seen in this comment: "This woman was so ugly and stupid, she probably never should have been born" (Vonnegut 11). Because Trout is an omniscient narrator, it is not apparent for the reader to question his reliability immediately. However, in this quote, it is clear that even though Trout detests big brains, he directly states that stupid people should die. His statement shows that he dislikes stupidity too, which paints him as an unreliable narrator since he contradicts himself. Furthermore, Trout remarks that: "... now it appears to me that the tale I have to tell, spanning a million years, doesn't change all that much from beginning to end" (Vonnegut 55). At this point, the reader is aware that humanity evolves into seal-like creatures, which we will refer to as *seal-people* from this point on. Hence, Trout's announcement clarifies that his opinions should not be taken literally. Furthermore, after Trout has finished his story, he reveals that he had "... contracted syphilis from a Saigon prostitute" (Vonnegut 322). It is unclear if he is successfully treated for it, even though he sees a doctor. He also hides the disease from the Marine Corps in fear of having his pay docked (Vonnegut 322). Additionally, when talking to the doctor, Trout thinks the doctor tells him "... how resistant syphilis organisms had become to antibiotics" (Vonnegut 324). However, the doctor said: "... that he had friends who could arrange to get me from Bangkok to Sweden" (Vonnegut 324). The fact that Trout cannot follow a conversation insinuates that he might have gone mad, which again encourages the reader to approach Trout with scepticism when he castigates the big brain. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate what the implied author seeks to convey by employing a narrator that hates big brains. To discover what the implied author attempts to criticise, we will examine what the brain symbolises for Trout.

As described, Trout prefers the smaller brains that humans have obtained after one million years of evolution. He unceasingly makes it clear by his continuous commenting on the downside of the large human brain. In fact, he argues that the brains were an evolutionary defect, and he blames the big brain for everything that he found to be wrong with the world a million years ago:

So I raise this question, although there is nobody around to answer it: Can it be doubted that three-kilogram brains were once nearly fatal defects in the evolution of the human race? A second query: What source was there back then, save for our overelaborate nervous circuitry, for the evils we were seeing or hearing about simply everywhere? My answer: There was no other source. This was a very innocent planet, except for those great big brains. (Vonnegut 9)

The fact that Trout deems the planet innocent if the big human brain was removed from the equation implies that the large human brain can be associated with hypersubjectivity. This notion is similar to how Morton and Boyer connect the continuous transcendence to the Anthropocene, as we mentioned in the chapter “Hyper- and Hyposubjects: Two Ways of Being Human”. Moreover, in one of Trout’s tirades against the big brain, he notes that there “...was no end to the evil schemes that a thought machine that oversized couldn’t imagine and execute” (Vonnegut 9). By labelling the brains as oversized, Trout implies that the brain has transcended, i.e., exceeded its limits.

Furthermore, he argues that people were aware that their brains were an issue because they made automatic machines to replace their labour: “About that mystifying enthusiasm a million years ago for turning over as many human activities as possible to machinery: What could that have been but yet another acknowledgment by people that their brains were no damn good?” (Vonnegut 39). By arguing that the production of machinery is connected to the fact that the big brains are bad, Trout further establishes a similarity between the brain and hypersubjectivity because it is defined by the fact that people deliberately use technology to obtain their goals. Another example of this is shown when Trout gives an example from his own life:

When I was alive, I often received advice from my own big brain which, in terms of my own survival, or the survival of the human race, for that matter, can be charitably described as questionable. Example: It had me join the United States Marines and go fight in Vietnam. Thanks a lot, big brain. (Vonnegut 29)

We determined that Trout has strong hypersubjective traits because he sought transcendent knowledge by choosing to exist as an omniscient ghost. However, this insight into his life illustrates that he he also had these traits before becoming a ghost because he voluntarily took part in the Vietnam war. In this way, it is illustrated how he took part in seeking dominion over others. In retrospect, Trout labels this action as “questionable”, and ironically, he thanks his big brain for that idea. Therefore, it is clear that he condemns this form of behaviour and blames his brain for it instead of taking responsibility. Consequently, we argue that Trout views the big human brain as synonymous with transcendence and hypersubjectivity because the big brain is a symbol that represents these characteristics.

It is illustrated how Trout views the big brain as a separate entity not connected to the self when he talks about how James Wait strangled Prince Richard of Croatia-Slavonia: “It was Wait’s big brain’s idea. It wasn’t anything he himself had particularly wanted to do” (Vonnegut 180). Consequently, when Trout criticises the big brains, he does not view them as part of what it means

to be human. In addition, this perspective makes it possible to view the seal-people who evolve after a million years as authentic humans. Trout idealises the futuristic seal-people, which is illustrated as he highlights the benefits of having a smaller brain: “Thanks to their decreased brainpower, people aren’t diverted from the main business of life by the hobgoblins of opinions anymore” (Vonnegut 17). Here Trout argues that smaller brains make it possible for people to focus on the essential part of life and not be distracted. Additionally, he points out that the shrunken brains have eliminated slavery: “Now, there is a big-brain idea I haven’t heard much about lately: human slavery” (Vonnegut 192). In this sense, Trout highlights how slavery was a consequence of the big brains. On the contrary, Trout specifies that the shrunken brains also have consequences as humanity loses art: “Nobody, surely, is going to write Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony—or tell a lie, or start a Third World War” (Vonnegut 284). Even though humanity’s shrunken brains have eliminated art, it is clear that Trout thinks that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages since he criticises the big brains tremendously.

Following Pardee’s reading of the novel, we considered if the outcome of the Santa Rosalian evolution should be viewed as utopian or dystopian. Taking Tedder’s reading into account, it is defined as utopian discourse. Tedder argues that Vonnegut critiques a specific kind of intelligence, which no longer exist towards the end of the story. As we have shown, the type of intelligence being critiqued is concerned with harmful transcendence, deliberate predatory behaviour, and capitalism. While the big brains function as a metaphor for these specific kinds of hypersubjectivity, what seems to shock Trout the most is not how the big brains are responsible for the pursuit of wealth, but the specific kind of violence that follows:

And then, as though in trances, the people would really do it—have slaves fight each other to the death in the Colosseum, or burn people alive in the public square for holding opinions which were locally unpopular, or build factories whose only purpose was to kill people in industrial quantities, or to blow up whole cities, and on and on. (Vonnegut 291)

This type of hypersubjectivity shows how people were not only incompatible with the environment but also with each other. Furthermore, Trout emphasises that this behaviour is connected with colonialism, as he mentions enslaved people, which is a central theme we will address in our analysis of *Cloud Atlas*.

However, Trout adds that the issue particularly revolves around the fact that the big brains are incompatible with nature: “And the Law of Natural Selection was powerless to respond to such new technologies. No female of any species, unless, maybe, she was a rhinoceros, could expect to

give birth to a baby who was fireproof, bombproof, or bulletproof” (Vonnegut 157). Here, Trout emphasises that nature simply cannot keep up, which is why it is necessary to go back and disregard the planning- and connection-focused behaviour that has led to humanity conquering nature. While Tedder uses the term postethnic utopianism to convey that the implied author promotes a dismissal of anthropocentrism, we argue that the implied author instead shows how small, unplugged, and spontaneous actions can make a difference that changes the whole. This perspective is mirrored in the way that Trout describes how humanity has changed from being a threat to themselves and Earth to being harmlessly harmonious:

When my tale began, it appeared that the earthling part of the clockwork of the universe was in terrible danger, since many of its parts, which is to say people, no longer fit in anywhere, and were damaging all the parts around them as well as themselves. I would have said back then that the damage was beyond repair. Not so! Thanks to certain modifications in the design of human beings, I see no reason why the earthling part of the clockwork can't go on ticking forever the way it is ticking now. If some sort of supernatural beings, or flying-saucer people, those darlings of my father, brought humanity into harmony with itself and the rest of Nature, I did not catch them doing it. (Vonnegut 319).

In addition to the change in humans, it is interesting that Trout views people as parts of a whole because this mirrors Morton and Boyer's description of subsistence. Thus, Trout shows the reader how changing a part will change the whole of what it is part of. Additionally, the fact that Trout insinuates that he did not notice how humanity was brought into harmony with itself and nature underlines how small a change is necessary to restore a benign relationship with Earth. This interpretation is closely connected to Fevyer's, as he states that Trout paints the big brains as the reason humans are both incompatible with and a danger to nature. Furthermore, Fevyer argues that *Galápagos* shows that it is difficult to use scientific knowledge to tackle anthropogenic climate change (142). This argument is substantiated by Trout's description of human's disinterest in the survival of their race: “More and more people back then, and not just *Andrew MacIntosh, had found ensuring the survival of the human race a total bore. It was a lot more fun, so to speak, to hit and hit a tennis ball” (Vonnegut 81). Consequently, the hypersubjective humans threaten the environment and seem unable to rectify the damage. Thus, we agree with Fevyer's analysis, but we add that Trout also shows the reader what it takes to stop and even reverse the damage. As mentioned, Trout should not be taken at face value, which means that the solution is not as extreme as evolving into seal-people, but rather to unplug from the grid and embrace spontaneity and action.

Therefore, the implied author employs Trout's radical opinion on brains to illustrate how a specific type of transcendence will lead to humanity's downfall. Furthermore, the implied author shows that it is necessary to consider a subscent approach and focus on collective issues rather than individual ones to solve our environmental problems.

Subscendence as our Liberation?

As Oramus remarked, *Galápagos* describes the "human within nature", and we argue that it also shows an anthropocentric incompatibility between humans that are more-than-subjects and nature. Following our analysis of Vonnegut's novel, the implied author uses Trout's despise for the big brains to critique specific kinds of hypersubjectivity, which also define a substantial part of humanity. Furthermore, it is not a straightforward text, as the implied author experiments with a story that spans a million years. Thus, the narrative offers a unique perspective for the reader to imagine themselves as someone's ancestor as it gives insight into how every decision and action can impact the future. Through this experiment, it also becomes possible to show how a new and non-hypersubjective *We* can be established over time, even though the plot replete with ellipses. Tedder touches upon this when he argues that literature must be post-ethnic when it attempts to determine the future, meaning that it must include beings that are not born yet (216). However, through Oramus' perspective, Vonnegut has painted an example of a perfectly adapted humanity as a bitter irony (26). Indeed, the seal-people is an unexpected and comic outcome of evolution. However, we argue that these evolved humans are also an illustration of how the ideal Earth disapprove of specific and harmful types of transcendence. In addition, the seal-people demonstrate how subscentence can save Earth and its environment as they become less-than-subjects.

Moreover, hypersubjectivity is incompatible with evolution, as it denotes deliberate planning, which is the opposite of our understanding of evolution. However, hyposubjectivity is similar to evolution as it implies a random, spontaneous, and action-oriented approach. Nevertheless, in our analysis, we have shown how the implied author, through the different characters, has illustrated how transcendence is utterly unproductive and that subscentence is of substantial importance in making positive change. Finally, we have shown how Trout has been employed as a transcendent and omniscient narrator who promotes subscentence as a means to conserve the environment and for humanity to live in harmony with the environment without damaging it further.

Reading *Oryx and Crake*: A Capitalistic Apocalypse

Published in 2003, the dystopian novel *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood is the first of her MaddAddam trilogy, which also contains the novels *The Year of The Flood* (2009) and *MaddAddam* (2013). Because of its themes regarding humankind's manipulation of the natural world, the novel has often been analysed from an ecocritical perspective, especially as apocalyptic fiction. Moreover, it has been read in the context of the Anthropocene. In this literature review, we want to highlight some of the perspectives concerning post-apocalypse, post-humanism, and *We* in the Anthropocene. We will examine readings by Roman Bartosch, Gerry Canavan, Martin Ryle and Alla Ivanchikova to relate the aforementioned themes to our reading of Atwood's novel. In our analysis, we will use Morton and Boyer's theory on hyper- and hyposubjects in order to explore the concept of *We*. Furthermore, we will refer to these readings to discuss our findings.

In his book *EnvironMentality: Ecocriticism and the Event of Postcolonial Fiction*, Bartosch attempts to address the potential of literature when it comes to challenging how we think about the concept of nature by investigating the reader:

Can fictional literature transcend its own imaginative boundaries in order to affect and change consciousness? I believe that it can, but I also believe that this requires a new way of reading 'green' literature and of theorising ecocriticism. This challenge is what this study tries to address. (Bartosch 11)

However, while he expresses that literature challenges the way we think about the concept of nature, he also claims that this process provides new insights into our world and that engagement with literature requires us to "... leave behind old ways of talking about nature and opt for the unknown and uncertain instead" (Bartosch 12). To further explain what is meant by this claim, he discusses the concept of *EnvironMentality*, which he defines in the following way:

EnvironMentality therefore manifests itself in a process that is determined by the human capacity to think beyond a given hermeneutic situation. This process encompasses the dialectics of understanding the other (which may be nature, nonhuman animals or 'simply' our fellow human beings) by means of literary exegesis, and, finally, it helps us as readers of fiction to learn from the books we read that which can only be learned by reading: to 'think like a mountain' (Leopold) and to know 'what it is like to be a bat' (Nagel) - *EnvironMentality*. (Bartosch 17)

Because of the nature of the concept, Bartosch claims that the term involves "... radical reassessments of what we think we know about the world" (12), which he tries to illustrate

throughout the book by analysing and discussing different works of literature. In addition to this, he claims that these literary analyses can foster the environmental awareness that EnvironMentality denotes: "... by interpreting a text, a certain 'environmental' awareness and processes of understanding are both presupposed and fostered" (Bartosch 16). Among these works of literature, he specifically includes *Oryx and Crake*, which he focuses on by emphasising how a Darwinian stance can benefit EnvironMentality.

According to Bartosch, an interesting way that a Darwinian perspective can be illustrated in *Oryx and Crake* is in relation to Crake:

With regard to the role of Darwinism in literature, my reading foregrounds the view that it is Glenn/Crake who accepts the fact that we are "reading, thinking, feeling naked ape at the centre of the humanistic inquiry", as Garrard puts it (2010c: 224). Much to humanity's disadvantage, however, he concludes that the human race is flawed. He explains love and art as biologically determined in a quasi- Darwinian manner and decides to abolish these things in the species he creates - the Crakers. (Bartosch 232)

In this quote, Bartosch illustrates how the Darwinian perspective of the novel can become apparent when comparing Crake's thinking to Darwin's theory of natural selection. As Bartosch explains, Crake believes that we observe and interact with the world in an anthropocentric manner, and that we are unable to escape from this and he leaves it up to Crakers to develop their own culture instead. To Bartosch, this idea also applies since there will also be something *postnatural* after the apocalypse, which is an idea that he further elaborates on in the following quote:

I will argue that Atwood's dystopias *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* present the vision of a postnatural world where dualist thinking has dissolved but, since the novels are clearly dystopian, they formulate an obvious critique of this state. Especially in the context of 'green thinking' and the environmentalist attempt to do away with binaries in favour of an ecocentric unity, this critique is surely relevant. (Bartosch 220-221)

Besides the fact that the statement highlights an idea of a more unifiable entity that will be created in the post-apocalyptic world, or rather how the previous categories will be dissolved or melt together, Bartosch also points out that Atwood's novel helps us think about how the idea of "humanism" can be challenged and how the human category can be recreated:

The texts I have read in this chapter have shown the category of the human to be a category that is engendered by means of "anotherness" (see Murphy 1998) - the human self is always also created by others, human and nonhuman, and our identities respond to our environments.

But identities we have. Readers of the dystopian tales of Atwood might understand the narrative power to emplot these ideas with regard to postnatural identities. (Bartosch 254)

Thus, Bartosch highlights the point that *Oryx and Crake* helps us imagine a future where the distinction between the human and the non-human is not so obvious, which at the same time helps us realise that our categories need a designated “other” in order to hold any meaning. In this sense, Bartosch also emphasises how an imagined apocalypse can have more meaning than simply function as a warning:

Oryx and Crake and *The Year of the Flood* stand as a warning, but this warning “implies that choice, and therefore hope, are still possible” (Moylan 2000:136). This holds especially true in the context of re-thinking humanism. With regard to the idea of EnvironMentality, the question is how this sense of choice and hope can be described in terms of narrative experiences. (Bartosch 252)

Bartosch, then, sees the portrayal of the apocalypse in Atwood’s story as both an end to current categorisations and concepts regarding humanism but also the beginning of new ones as well. This idea seems to resonate with Morton and Boyer’s theory on subsistence in the sense that the imagined apocalypse in Atwood’s trilogy will make it easier for oneself to subscend the concept of humanism and possibly reevaluate how we think about ourselves, the environment, and the relationship thereof. In that sense, it also allows for a reevaluation of the concept of *We* since it makes it easier for us to consider what this term encapsulates.

The idea of a climate apocalypse as a transitional period instead of the end has been explored in other academic literature related to *Oryx and Crake*. Canavan examines this in his reading of the novel, where he explores narration, plot, and characterisation. He approaches the novel by analysing it alongside Atwood’s *The Year of the flood* and relating them to Fredric Jameson’s historical imperative and his concept of the *radical break*, which he defines as “... the answer to the universal ideological conviction that no alternative is possible, that there is no alternative to the system” (Canavan 139). He argues that Jameson’s radical break is represented in a postmodern version which represents the apocalypse in science fiction. This is done in a way that disputes the understanding that there is no alternative to a capitalist society:

Apocalypse reminds us that the logic of consumer capitalism is not, in fact, timeless and eternal; there was a time before it, and there will be a time after it. History does, indeed, go on. This article therefore seeks to draw out the unexpected utopian potency lurking within our contemporary visions of eco-apocalypse ... (Canavan 139)

A key point in Canavan's analysis is that *Oryx and Crake* presents two dystopias: The postapocalyptic, which represents "... the fear that things might change ..." (Canavan 143) and the preapocalyptic represents "... the fear that they might not" (Canavan 143). Canavan argues that the preapocalyptic revolves around capitalism but also more profound themes: "The latter dystopia [the preapocalyptic] is not only capitalism, but also history itself—even, perhaps, human nature as such—which is depicted as the accumulation of an endless series of disasters" (Canavan 143). Similar to Bartosch, Canavan also believes that imagining the apocalypse is a powerful way to make people more likely to care about the planet and take responsibility for it (Canavan 156). However, Canavan presents the idea that the apocalypse is not final:

I take Atwood's two postmodern ecological jeremiads as attempts to somehow bridge this fundamental critical disjuncture: to imagine a future that is frightening (as ecological science tells us it must be) without at the same time being final (as it so often seems it will be)—a doomsday, that is, to which we are not simply and inescapably doomed. To say that the present has no future is not to say there is no future—it is only to say that things cannot continue to go on as they have. (Canavan 156-157)

In this sense, Canavan explains that *Oryx and Crake*, along with *The Year of the Flood*, as works of ecofiction, can give people a way to imagine an ecological apocalypse that is not final. Thus, *Oryx and Crake* inspires people to feel the magnitude of the situation while not giving up hope, which we will also emphasise in our analysis.

The idea of seeing the novel as a way of imagining the apocalypse is also touched upon in a different article by Ryle, where he examines the plot of the novel: "Oryx and Crake implicitly suggests that the disaster of climate change (which has already happened, and is part of the novel's taken-for-granted landscape) is linked with the grip of the economic, psycho-social and technological forces that dominated the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries" (147). The perspective that Ryle provides is similar to Canavan's perspective in the sense that it antagonises capitalism because of humanity's collective greed, which has been allowed to run wild to a degree where humanity is on the brink of destruction in Atwood's novel. However, compared to the approach taken by Canavan, Ryle focuses on the fact that an ecological apocalypse is inevitable and, in some sense, has already happened:

In the novel, climate change has already disrupted weather systems, and nobody suggests it is still feasible to address its causes or even mitigate its effects. We can interpret this in opposed ways. The novel can be read as an exhortation addressed to us as readers who can forestall

disaster if we act while time remains. This would require us to use and strengthen the cultural and political opportunities that still exist in the present. However, it would not be unreasonable to conclude that if Atwood's diagram is accurate, it is already too late for action. We may as well resign ourselves to our collective fate. (Ryle 148)

In this quote, Ryle emphasises that the apocalypse has already occurred in the novel alongside unfixable climate changes. This is distinct from Canavan's focus on the fact that the novel allows us to feel a sense of urgency created by the imagined apocalypse, while we still feel that we are able to prevent it. However, while Ryle and Canavan appear to focus on two different aspects of the apocalypse in Atwood's novel, their critique of the society in Atwood's story is highly similar in the sense that they point out the Western world's capitalistic ideology as the problem leading to the apocalypse. This point is relevant in the discussion of *We* in the sense that capitalism, to a large extent, has influenced how we think about the concept of *We* as individualism. Therefore, the use of *We* is suited to fit the neoliberal way of thinking.

Ryle emphasises how *Oryx and Crake* illustrates a way to imagine the consequences of global warming but also the consequences of letting capitalism reign freely:

The sublime entertainment offered by *Oryx and Crake* is not just the spectacle of runaway global warming; it is also the spectacle of a society completely controlled by corporate interests, where no possibility remains of collective political decision in favour of an alternative. (148)

Here, Ryle claims that Atwood's novel highlights and exemplifies how corporations in a neoliberal society each have the freedom to pursue their own goal, which does not encompass any collective efforts towards global problems but encourages competition in the name of profit. This argument fits well with a point made in an article by Ivanchikova, who briefly touches upon the novel where she criticises the use of the pronoun, *We*:

Anthropocene as well as the uncritical use of 'we' in statements about the imagined ecological impact of humanity as a whole, pointing out the specific political, racial, cultural, and economic formations that enable exploitation of nature, as well as exploitation of humans. Atwood's and Byatt's short stories are in tune with the critique of the collective 'we' of the Anthropocene that suggests that 'Anthropos' names a capitalist, racist, patriarchal, and settler colonialist regime of exploitation. (6)

In this quote, Ivanchikova underlines a connection between our use of *We* and the issues presented in Atwood's stories, including but not limited to *Oryx and Crake*. While she phrases it differently,

this seems similar to the point made by Bartosch concerning how categories in *Oryx and Crake* seem to dissolve. Additionally, her argument that the word *Anthropos* names a specific problematic *We* is similar to Morton and Boyer's definition of a hypersubject since that term also denotes a problematic way of acting. In our analysis, we will explore this further by looking at how Atwood's novel challenges the concept of *We* in the wake of the apocalypse and how hypersubjectivity is problematised.

Analysis of *Oryx and Crake*: The Tale of a Tragic Hypersubject

In this chapter, we will investigate how Morton and Boyer's theory can be used to explore the representation of different kinds of *We* presented in Atwood's novel and the notion of knowledge. We will investigate whether these kinds of *We* have qualities relating to Morton and Boyer's terms. These observations will be used to strengthen the main argument of this section: That the implied author employs Snowman as a tragic hypersubject to satirise the concept of hypersubjectivity. To construct this argument, we will examine the relationship between the Crakers and Snowman with a focus on the knowledge relationship between them. This will be done in order to show that Snowman is portrayed as a character who transcends in regard to knowledge and applies this knowledge in his relationship with Crakers. Furthermore, Snowman's character will also be discussed to highlight both his hyper- and hyposubjective traits. However, Snowman's traits and character will also be discussed in later sections, where Snowman's relationship with selected characters will be outlined to reveal more indirect characteristics. Additionally, we will show how these characters embody stereotypical hyper- and hyposubjective traits. Snowman's mother and father are analysed since they present opposing views on society which has influenced Snowman to some degree. In addition, the characters Oryx and Crake will be analysed as they each play a key role in Snowman's life and in the plot.

Before delving into this investigation, we will briefly explain the plot of the novel in order to make our arguments easier to follow. Atwood's novel is a story set in a post-apocalyptic world where neoliberalism in its most extreme and unhinged form has been allowed to run rampant. The plot follows a man named Snowman, who appears to be the sole survivor of a virus outbreak. Snowman tries to navigate the post-apocalyptic world while watching over the genetically engineered Crakers, who resemble people to an uncanny degree. The plot contains two narratives: A primary present time narrative which follows Snowman while he tries to find his place in the post-apocalyptic world and a secondary embedded narrative in the past where we follow Snowman back

when he was known as Jimmy. The secondary narrative eventually catches up to the primary narrative, where Jimmy becomes Snowman, and the virus outbreak has occurred. The main focus of the plot is how the world has ended up the way it has and the Crakers: The new genetically engineered race made to succeed humanity.

Snowman's Knowledge Transcendence and the Subscendent Crakers

Before approaching some of the different plot specific topics that *Oryx and Crake* presents in the light of Morton and Boyer's theory, we will consider how knowledge is revealed through the plot and what this can tell us about the concept of *We*. We will start by looking at narration and how it contributes to our understanding of the novel. The novel is narrated by a heterodiegetic narrator with internal focalisation from Snowman's point of view. Thus, the narrator has the same amount of information as Snowman. Therefore, the story is told with internal focalisation, which is exemplified in the following quote:

Jimmy's mother persists as a clear image, full colour, with a glossy white paper frame around her like a Polaroid, but he can recall his father only in details: the Adam's apple going up and down when he swallowed, the ears backlit against the kitchen window, the left hand lying on the table, cut off by the shirt cuff. His father is a sort of pastiche. (Atwood 50)

Here, it is clear that while the narrator explains that Jimmy or Snowman can remember his mother almost as if he was looking at a glossy photo of her, he only remembers minor details about his father. The way the narrator describes the father reflects how Jimmy is unable to recall him since the reader is only given vague physical information about him. However, the way the narrator uses the word "persists" in describing how Snowman remembers his mother denotes that this is unwanted. Thus, this quote illustrates how the narrator is linked to Jimmy as the narrator has access to Jimmy's memories and thoughts. While this type of narrator is more common than Trout in *Galápagos*, the way knowledge is presented to the reader is interesting because the plot contains an embedded narrative in the form of flashbacks of the past before the virus outbreak and societal collapse.

The question of how knowledge is conveyed through narration prompts the question of whether different kinds of *We* can be based on knowledge. The connection between the knowledge that Snowman possesses and what the narrator presents to the reader raises the question of whether it can be beneficial to look at how the amount of knowledge differs in different groups in the story and how this affects the characters' actions, which we will unpack in a later section. As we

established, the narrator has access to Snowman's thoughts and knowledge, and in that sense, they form a category of their own regarding the amount of knowledge they possess. Therefore, we will investigate how this knowledge is presented to the reader throughout the plot. While doing this, we consider the knowledge relationship between the Crakers and Snowman simultaneously because it, to some degree, mirrors the relationship between the narrator and the reader. Throughout the plot, it is established that the Crakers only know what they are told about the world before the virus outbreak, and to get more knowledge, they have to consult Snowman. This is seen when the Crakers bring snowman objects they have found scouring the beach:

Opening up their sack, the children chorus, "Oh Snowman, what have we found?" They lift out the objects, hold them up as if offering them for sale: a hubcap, a piano key, a chunk of palegreen pop bottle smoothed by the ocean. A plastic BlyssPluss container, empty; a ChickieNobs Bucket O'Nubbins, ditto. A computer mouse, or the busted remains of one, with a long wiry tail. Snowman feels like weeping. What can he tell them? There's no way of explaining to them what these curious items are, or were. But surely they've guessed what he'll say, because it's always the same. "These are things from before." (Atwood 7)

This example makes the knowledge gaps between Snowman and the Crakers apparent. The knowledge gap is especially explicit as the Crakers ask Snowman to explain what the objects they have found are and whether they will hurt them or not. The knowledge gap between the Crakers and Snowman is quite large as Snowman does not even know where to begin to explain these things. This is due to the fact that the Crakers will have no way of understanding these concepts since they have not lived in the world or context where they were used. Furthermore, this scene illustrates the knowledge gap between the narrator and the reader because the reader does not know, for example, what a BlyssPluss or ChickieNobs are at this point in the plot, as they are items specific to the fictional world of *Oryx and Crake*. However, the knowledge gap is smaller than that between Snowman and the Crakers as the reader most likely will know what items such as a piano key and a computer mouse are. This places the knowledge level of the reader between the Crakers and Snowman. Considering Morton and Boyer's terms subscedence and transcendence, we can describe how the narrator is transcendent regarding knowledge compared to the reader and the Crakers. As we argued, this relationship seems to mirror that of the Crakers and Snowman since the Crakers also seek transcendence by consulting Snowman about various things. This reflects how the Crakers have an innate epistemophilia, regardless of how Crake designed them. Considering the Crakers from this perspective also makes sense considering when Snowman comes back after

having been away for a while to scavenge, he returns to the village where he finds the Crakers having built a monument in his honour that is supposed to represent him (Atwood 360-361). Around this monument, or “picture”, as the Crakers call it, they perform a ritual to wish him good luck on his journey and to worship him by chanting his name (Atwood 360-361). When the Crakers suddenly see him, they rejoice:

Now they’ve seen him. They scramble to their feet, hurry to greet him, surround him. All are smiling happily; the children jump up and down, laughing; some of the women clap their hands with excitement. This is more energy than they usually display about anything. “Snowman! Snowman!” They touch him gently with their fingertips. “You are back with us!” “We knew we could call you, and you would hear us and come back.”. (Atwood 361)

It is illustrated how Snowman is treated like a religious figure which could be attributed to the fact that he allows them to transcend by having answers for everything. Considering this, he is able to guide them in ways that allow them to bypass a Roomba like approach of trial-and-error. In some sense, this idea can be linked to how the reader seeks transcendence by consulting the narrator and in this manner, it can be argued that the Crakers and the reader seek this in a similar manner. Even though Crake designed the Crakers to not have any concept of religion, this inherent and deliberate search for knowledge seems similar to the purpose of religion: to get answers to the questions of life. This is also reflected in how they construct a religious image representing Snowman after he returns from his journey away from the Crakers’ camp (Atwood 363). These actions beg the question of how the desire for religion has gotten into the Crakers when Crake specifically has designed them not to have this desire. This might point toward the idea that people have an inherent need to transcend in terms of knowledge if the opportunity presents itself.

Now that it has been argued that the Crakers and the reader share similar characteristics when it comes to knowledge seeking, we move on and show how knowledge-based categories of *We* can also be construed in relation to the concept of ancestry. This is exemplified when the Crakers ask whether the items they have found will hurt them:

“Will they hurt us?” Sometimes they find tins of motor oil, caustic solvents, plastic bottles of bleach. Booby traps from the past. He’s considered to be an expert on potential accidents: scalding liquids, sickening fumes, poison dust. Pain of odd kinds. “These, no,” he says. “These are safe.” At this they lose interest, let the sack dangle. (Atwood 7)

Here, it is revealed that Snowman is also portrayed as a person to consult whether the items the Crakers find are dangerous or not. This is interesting as Snowman is transcendent in regards to

knowledge in relation to the Crakers as he is able to provide them with an answer of whether the items will hurt them as he has lived in the world before the apocalypse. The answer that Snowman gives the Crakers is an example of how the Crakers are able to transcend the trial-and-error condition linked with subsistence but also how Snowman decides what kind of knowledge to share with the Crakers and what to withhold. This is especially prominent in comparison with the previous quote where Snowman chose to withhold knowledge, but even more so in instances where Snowman functions as an unreliable narrator to the Crakers, which is seen in the following quote where he deliberately contemplates how to construct a lie after having returned from scavenging:

He'll need to invent some lies about that. What did Crake look like? I couldn't see him, he was in a bush. A burning bush, why not? Best to be nonspecific about the facial features. But he gave some orders: I get two fish a week – no, make it three – and roots and berries. Maybe he should add seaweed to that. They'll know which kinds are good. And crabs too – not the land crabs, the other kinds. He'll order them up steamed, a dozen at a time. Surely that's not too much to ask. (Atwood 359)

In this quote, Snowman considers how to construct a non-malicious lie that will benefit him. The Crakers believe that the reason Snowman went away was to visit Crake, so when he comes back, he not only has to make up a lie to explain what Crake looked like and what he said, but he also considers how he can benefit from this lie. This contrasts with when he withheld information about the objects that the Crakers found since he felt that he was unable to explain these things at that point in time. However, sometimes when Snowman lies, it is to protect the Crakers from the world:

Some of the buildings along the way were still smouldering. There were many questions, and much explaining to do. What is that smoke? It is a thing of Crake's. Why is that child lying down, with no eyes? It was the will of Crake. And so forth. Snowman made it up as he went along. He knew what an improbable shepherd he was. To reassure them, he tried his best to appear dignified and reliable, wise and kindly. A lifetime of deviousness came to his aid. (Atwood 353)

It is clear that Snowman lies to protect the Crakers from the trauma and horror that happened when the apocalypse took place. Instead of telling the truth to the Crakers, Snowman chooses to construct a narrative that makes the situation both easier to comprehend and simplistic in the sense that the details are sparse so that the Crakers are not prompted to ask more questions. In this way, Snowman's transcendence in relation to the Crakers is illustrated since they acknowledge that Snowman knows more than them. However, at this point in the plot, it is unclear whether Snowman

fully realises that everything he says in relation to the narrative he constructs will be remembered by the Crakers. Thus, it is difficult to revert anything he has said back to ignorance, or in other words, to withdraw knowledge once it has been presented, which also means that everything he says has to be consistent with the overall narrative he is constructing. The way knowledge is presented and withheld also mirrors the relationship between the narrator and the reader since the narrator is equally unable to withdraw any knowledge or information that has been revealed. Instead, the narrator would have to provide new knowledge if the first iteration of the narrative would have to be changed. All these points stem from the fact that both the Crakers and the reader approach the narrative with the intention of transcending in terms of knowledge, which implies a hermeneutic approach to knowledge.

Regarding the narrative, these points seem to be important throughout the plot as Snowman continuously must consider how to present knowledge to the Crakers. However, on occasions, Snowman makes mistakes regarding his narrative that he later regrets, which is apparent when he realises that he should have asked for three fish a day: “Idiot, he thinks. I should have made it three a day” (Atwood 101). Even though this is a minor detail, it ends up affecting him in a significant manner as he finds it difficult to sustain himself on only one fish a day. Throughout the plot, he considers different ways of going about this problem and how to make the Crakers provide him with three fish a day. However, it is difficult to change the narrative he has already established as everything he says is treated as divine gospel and dogma. This is a topic that Snowman touches upon when he has to tell the Crakers stories about Crake in exchange for the fish. This instance makes Snowman state that he regrets having made Crake a god:

Why don't they glorify Snowman instead? Good, kind Snowman, who deserves glorification more – much more – because who got them out, who got them here, who's been watching over them all this time? Well, sort of watching. It sure as hell wasn't Crake. Why can't Snowman revise the mythology? Thank me, not him! Lick my ego instead! But for now his bitterness must be swallowed. “Yes,” he says. “Good, kind Crake.” He twists his mouth into what he hopes is a gracious and benevolent smile. (Atwood 104)

It becomes clear that Snowman regrets having made Crake a god instead of himself since he believes that he deserves credit for what he has done while he claims Crake has not done anything of note for the Crakers. He continuously feels bitter about this fact every time he repeats the myths to the Crakers because he has locked himself into the role of being a prophet of Crake, and therefore, he is unable to change the narrative as well. While he asks himself in the third person

why he is unable to revise the mythology, this seems to be an expression related to the frustration he feels more than a genuine question. This is because he is already aware that the Crakers demand dogma:

At first he'd improvised, but now they're demanding dogma: he would deviate from orthodoxy at his peril. He might not lose his life – these people aren't violent or given to bloodthirsty acts of retribution, or not so far – but he'd lose his audience. They'd turn their backs on him, they'd wander away. He is Crake's prophet now, whether he likes it or not; and the prophet of Oryx as well. That, or nothing. And he couldn't stand to be nothing, to know himself to be nothing. He needs to be listened to, he needs to be heard. He needs at least the illusion of being understood. (Atwood 104)

In this sense, Snowman is aware that he now, as a prophet, has to construct his narrative in line with what the Crakers already know, as he believes that they will stop listening to him if he deviates too much from his established narrative. Because of this, he tries to be as sparse with details as possible so that they will not ask too many questions, which becomes apparent when he is asked to tell about when Crake was born:

Oh Snowman, tell us about when Crake was born," says one of the women. This is a new request. He isn't ready for it, though he should have expected it: children are of great interest to these women. Careful, he tells himself. Once he provides a mother and a birth scene and an infant Crake for them, they'll want the details. They'll want to know when Crake cut his first tooth and spoke his first word and ate his first root, and other such banalities. "Crake was never born," says Snowman. "He came down out of the sky, like thunder. Now go away please, I'm tired." He'll add to this fable later. Maybe he'll endow Crake with horns, and wings of fire, and allow him a tail for good measure. (Atwood 104)

Before constructing a narrative, Snowman reminds himself that he needs to be careful as he already knows that he will receive more questions if he leaves the explanations too open-ended, which in turn will end up being dogma and limiting him. Because of this, he decides only to provide sparse details until he has thought of a narrative that does not limit him to a greater extent. The act of limiting the number of details that he gives seems to mirror how the narrator only provides a certain number of details to the reader.

Even though Snowman acknowledges the dangers of constructing a rigid narrative that does not give him enough leverage to change necessary aspects, he knows that the level of trust that the

Crakers have for him outweighs the importance of keeping the narrative consistent. This is an idea he explains when constructing a creational myth:

Internal consistency is best. Snowman learned this earlier in his life, when lying had posed more of a challenge for him. Now even when he's caught in a minor contradiction he can make it stick, because these people trust him. He's the only one left who'd known Crake face to face, so he can lay claim to the inside track. Above his head flies the invisible banner of Crakedom, of Crakiness, of Crakehood, hallowing all he does. (Atwood 96)

Here, Snowman acknowledges that while inconsistencies should be avoided, the Crakers will accept them as long as they trust that he is transcendent in regard to knowledge. This does not seem to apply to the relationship between the reader and the narrator, as small inconsistencies and minor contradictions can indicate that the narrator is unreliable. Some narrators are more easily trusted than others; for example, heterodiegetic narrators outside of the plot are without motives, whereas homodiegetic narrators are characters within the story who do have motives that can be identified by the reader. Even though Snowman is a character within the plot, to the Crakers, he might appear as a heterodiegetic narrator since he is so distinct from them. However, on occasions, Snowman's mental state can be questioned, which is exemplified when he sees the spirit of Oryx after waking up in the middle of the night:

Now he can feel Oryx floating towards him through the air, as if on soft feathery wings. She's landing now, settling; she's very close to him, stretched out on her side just a skin's distance away. Miraculously she can fit onto the platform beside him, although it isn't a large platform. If he had a candle or a flashlight he'd be able to see her, the slender outline of her, a pale glow against the darkness. If he put out his hand he could touch her; but that would make her vanish. (Atwood 113)

Here, it is unclear to the reader whether Snowman really sees Oryx or if she is a figment of his imagination. Briefly, after wishing aloud upon the stars in the sky, he is approached by a Craker who asks him why he is talking to no one (Atwood 97). To this, Snowman begins constructing a narrative revolving around Crake to excuse himself but needs time to think about a good response to the question of why he is talking to Crake about the stars (Atwood 97). On this occasion, Snowman finds it difficult to provide a good reason why he does this and accidentally slips up when trying to tell the Craker off:

"I was telling him," says Snowman, "that you ask too many questions." He holds his watch to his ear. "And he's telling me that if you don't stop doing that, you'll be toast." "Please, oh

Snowman, what is toast?” Another error, Snowman thinks. He should avoid arcane metaphors. “Toast,” he says, “is something very, very bad. It’s so bad I can’t even describe it. Now it’s your bedtime. Go away.” (Atwood 97-98)

In this instance, Snowman acknowledges that he had made another error in addition to the first one when he said that he could talk to Crake by turning to the stars instead of his watch (Atwood 96). In response to the second error, instead of attempting to explain what toast is, Snowman chooses a simpler approach by lying to quickly subdue the situation. Afterwards, he tries to think of a good explanation he can use next time but realises how difficult this will be:

“What is toast?” says Snowman to himself, once they’ve run off. *Toast is when you take a piece of bread – What is bread? Bread is when you take some flour – What is flour? We’ll skip that part, it’s too complicated. Bread is something you can eat, made from a ground-up plant and shaped like a stone. You cook it . . . Please, why do you cook it? Why don’t you just eat the plant? Never mind that part – Pay attention.*” (Atwood 98)

When thinking about this explanation, he realises how much knowledge the Crakers lack in order to comprehend a piece of toast, which becomes apparent to him as he keeps stumbling upon new words that the Crakers would not understand either. He gives up in the middle of this explanation and decides on a more far-fetched lie. This act of trying to come up with an explanation for bread also seems to mirror how the order of knowledge must be presented in a plot because the plot is constructed in an order that provides the necessary knowledge to the reader for it to make sense. Knowledge has to be presented by the narrator so that the reader is able to hermeneutically follow along and, in that way, strive towards transcendence. This notion contrasts with a more hyposubjective way of reading where hermeneutics is not preferred but where the reader stumbles upon random pieces of information in random order. However, this approach is rarely employed when reading novels. Nevertheless, *Oryx and Crake* presents an odd situation where we have a character that mirrors the narrator in the sense that Snowman has a knowledge-based relationship with the Crakers, who did not know the world before the apocalypse. However, while the narrator is heterodiegetic and thus outside the story, Snowman functions as an intradiegetic narrator to the Crakers. This means that he is a character within the story and has traits, intentions, and other characteristics that can be understood and used to determine why he tells certain narratives in a specific way to the Crakers. Before we identify and interpret more of these characteristics, we will look at how Snowman functions as a narrator for the Crakers and how this resembles the relationship between the reader and the narrator.

A significant point of interest is found when a change in tense happens when the narrator tells about Snowman's past, back when he was Jimmy. This change is significant since the primary narrative is told in the present tense. Since the present tense gives the reader a feeling that the narrative is emergent and that the end of the story is unknown, Snowman and the narrator do not surpass the limit in regard to knowledge in this narrative. Thus, the present tense indicates that they observe the plot as it unfolds, similar to how the reader experiences it. In this sense, Snowman appears subsistent because he cannot be a planner and instead must be spontaneous in his actions. This contrasts with the fact that he appears transcendent in relation to the Crakers by being their epic narrator or oracle. Snowman has to adopt a trial-and-error based approach where he has no idea of the outcome, which is contrasted in the embedded narrative told in the past tense; thus, the ending is known to the narrator. Furthermore, the use of present tense makes the narration similar to *Galápagos* as it resembles stream of consciousness since the importance of certain events and actions is only revealed when the end of the story is known, which the use of the present tense does not imply.

Even though Snowman appears transcendent to the Crakers because he is more knowledgeable and able to make rational and calculated decisions, he seems miserable, which is shown in his occasional outbursts caused by despair and loneliness:

Everything is so empty. Water, sand, sky, trees, fragments of past time. Nobody to hear him. "Crake!" he yells. "Asshole! Shit-for-brains!" He listens. The salt water is running down his face again. He never knows when that will happen and he can never stop it. His breath is coming in gasps, as if a giant hand is clenching around his chest – clench, release, clench. Senseless panic. "You did this!" he screams at the ocean. No answer, which isn't surprising. Only the waves, wish-wash, wish-wash. He wipes his fist across his face, across the grime and tears and snot and the derelict's whiskers and sticky mango juice. "Snowman, Snowman," he says. "Get a life." (Atwood 11-12)

It is clear that Snowman is miserable because of the vivid descriptions of anxiety and despair, for example, when he feels like his chest is being choked by a giant hand and the panic he feels, which seems to relate to how he has no control over his life. The quote also shows that his misery relates to how lonely he feels, which is indicated by the fact that nobody is there to listen or help him. Even though the Crakers resemble people, Snowman clearly does not view them as such. Likewise, the Crakers do not view him as one of them: "... they want to look at him because he's so unlike them. Every so often they ask him to take off his sunglasses and put them on again: they want to see

whether he has two eyes really, or three” (Atwood 7). As a result, he is not a part of their *We* and his strangeness causes them to approach him with curiosity. Instead of a shared curiosity, the Crakers invoke a feeling of despair when they remind Snowman how he is not part of their *We* on certain occasions. Snowman explains that one of these instances is when they start singing, as this seems to be a rude awakening:

There’s a distant, peaceful murmur from the village: human voices. If you can call them human. As long as they don’t start singing. Their singing is unlike anything he ever heard in his vanished life: it’s beyond the human level, or below it. As if crystals are singing; but not that, either. More like ferns unscrolling – something old, carboniferous, but at the same time newborn, fragrant, verdant. It reduces him, forces too many unwanted emotions upon him. (Atwood 105)

Initially, Snowman describes the voices as peaceful, which seems to be linked to how they sound human. However, he then explains how a problem arises when they start singing as this appears to be almost uncanny as it subverts description. This contrast appears to awaken unwanted emotions within Snowman that might be caused by how the singing is unlike anything he has ever heard, which he neither describes in a positive nor negative way. This experience makes Snowman realise just how different he is from the Crakers and how he will never feel like he is a part of their *We*, regardless of how many human-like qualities they have. In other words, Snowman explains that “He feels excluded, as if from a party to which he will never be invited” (Atwood 105-106). These thoughts are further built upon when Snowman explains his feelings more in-depth: “All he’d have to do is step forward into the firelight and there’d be a ring of suddenly blank faces turned towards him. Silence would fall, as in tragic plays of long ago when the doomed protagonist made an entrance, enveloped in his cloak of contagious bad news” (Atwood 105-106). Whereas Snowman previously described how he felt left out and alone, he explains that these emotions are accompanied by a feeling of being similar to a tragic protagonist who has experienced hamartia. Snowman further elaborates on his feeling of being a tragic protagonist as he believes that he, similar to a tragic protagonist, should function as a reminder of something terrible that has happened:

On some non-conscious level Snowman must serve as a reminder to these people, and not a pleasant one: “he’s what they may have been once. I’m your past, he might intone. *I’m your ancestor, come from the land of the dead. Now I’m lost, I can’t get back, I’m stranded here, I’m all alone. Let me in!* Oh Snowman, how may we be of help to you? The mild smiles, the

polite surprise, the puzzled goodwill. Forget it, he would say. There's no way they can help him, not really." (Atwood 106)

In his explanation that he unconsciously functions as an ominous reminder of the past, Snowman also states that he feels like an ancestor to the Crakers as he feels excluded from their *We*. This is the case, even though the Crakers accept him with open arms and want to help him. In this sense, the Crakers do not have a problem with the fact that he is different, which is a hyposubjective quality. Because Snowman still thinks in strict categories, which might be attributed to the society he lived in before, he is unable to subscend.

The idea of viewing something as a designated "other" is a topic Bartosch discusses, and he argues that the human identity is created in relation to other humans and by identifying what is non-human. While Bartosch explains how the plot dissolves dualistic distinctions such as the distinction between human and non-human, Snowman still upholds a dualistic way of thinking. However, while the Crakers can identify that Snowman is a designated "other", they do not seem to care about certain difference markers such as skin colour, which Crake designed them to not care about (Atwood 305). This further supports the argument that Snowman embodies hypersubjective traits because he thinks in preconceived categories instead of subscending by rejecting these.

Furthermore, Snowman's comment about feeling stranded invokes the idea of Snowman as a castaway, which is further elaborated on when he considers writing his experiences down:

He too is a castaway of sorts. He could make lists. It could give his life some structure. But even a castaway assumes a future reader, someone who'll come along later and find his bones and his ledger, and learn his fate. Snowman can make no such assumptions: he'll have no future reader, because the Crakers can't read. Any reader he can possibly imagine is in the past. (Atwood 41)

Since Snowman is unable to imagine a potential future reader, he dismisses his idea of writing lists since he argues no one will be able to read his texts, which as a result, shows how he does not imagine himself as a potential ancestor to anyone. The way he thinks of himself shows that he does not imagine the Crakers as his inheritors and does not consider himself part of their *We*. However, his relationship with them seems ambiguous as he appears conflicted when it comes to thinking of them as inheritors in general:

I could leave them behind, he thought. Just leave them. Let them fend for themselves. They aren't my business. But he couldn't do that, because although the Crakers weren't his

business, they were now his responsibility. Who else did they have? Who else did he have, for that matter? (Atwood 350)

Here, Snowman shows that regardless of whether he views the Crakers as his inheritors, he still thinks of them as his responsibility, which underlines how he is conflicted about what to consider the Crakers. Because of this, it could appear that the preconceived *We* that Snowman subconsciously feels that he is part of, i.e., the human race, is challenged or even reformulated to consider the Crakers as well. This marks a shift from Snowman's way of thinking in terms of static and unchangeable structures of in-groups and out-groups to a more subscendent approach of dismissing artificial groupings. Thus, this marks a conclusive breakdown of the anthropocentric *We*. Ivanchikova describes this specific *We* in her definition of the Anthropocene, where she explains that it denotes a capitalist, racist and patriarchal *We*.

This section highlights how Snowman is a complicated character that exhibits both hyper- and hyposubjective traits. By mirroring the relationship between the narrator and the reader, Snowman functions as a hypersubject in relation to the Crakers because of his knowledge transcendence. However, even though he has this relation to the Crakers, he is forced to subscend as he has no idea how to navigate his own life and has no plan of what to do. Thus, his transcendence is limited as he cannot fully exercise his agency in the post-apocalyptic world. While this section has outlined Snowman as a character, the next sections will consider the characters whom Snowman interacts with the most, beginning with his parents.

Hypersubjective Fatherhood in the Compounds

To get a clearer picture of the different ways that the implied author illustrates hyper- and hyposubjectivity, we will analyse the actions of the other characters in *Oryx and Crake*. This will be done to support the argument that Snowman is a unique example of a tragic hypersubject. It should be noted that when we refer to compound people, we refer to the *We*, which embodies a stereotype of the people living in the compounds. This means that when we refer to the compound people, we refer to the people embodying many of the same values and morals as Snowman's father, which appears to be the majority of the people living there as corporations control the compounds. When Snowman talks about his unnamed father, he gives the impression that he and his father were never close. This notion seems to be backed up by the fact that Snowman is unable to remember his father clearly, but only remembers parts of him (Atwood 50) and the fact that his father works on projects most of the time. This is a contrast to Snowman's mother, whom the reader gets to know as Sharon,

which shows that Snowman feels closer to her than to his father (Atwood 24). However, while the appearance and other aspects of his father seem to be unclear to Snowman, what he remembers about his father's actions seem to provide the reader with an understanding of what kind of character he is.

A significant aspect of this character is how he views and justifies the compounds and the actions that he and his fellow corporate scientists perform for the companies they work for. To explain how Snowman's father views the compounds, it is beneficial to examine how he distinguishes them from the cities, known as the pleeblands, as this distinction makes his views clear. The first instance where the reader is presented with information about the pleeblands is when Snowman explains that compound people do not go to the pleeblands unless they had to because they were unpredictable places where everybody could go:

Despite the fingerprint identity cards now carried by everyone, public security in the pleeblands was leaky: there were people cruising around in those places who could forge anything and who might be anybody, not to mention the loose change – the addicts, the muggers, the paupers, the crazies. So it was best for everyone at OrganInc Farms to live all in one place, with foolproof procedures. Outside the OrganInc walls and gates and searchlights, things were unpredictable. (Atwood 27)

Here, we get the impression that the pleeblands are chaotic but also a place with the freedom to act as you please with no fear of being monitored. Following this introduction to the pleeblands it gives insight into the conflicting views on the compounds as Snowman's mother and father have different opinions on this topic:

Inside, they [things] were the way it used to be when Jimmy's father was a kid, before things got so serious, or that's what Jimmy's father said. Jimmy's mother said it was all artificial, it was just a theme park and you could never bring the old ways back, but Jimmy's father said why knock it? You could walk around without fear, couldn't you? (Atwood 27)

Both Snowman's mother and father agree that the compounds construct an artificial *We*, but while Sharon makes this a point of critique and sees the compounds in a negative light, Snowman's father does not care that it is artificial as long as he benefits from its existence. At this point in the plot, Snowman agrees with his father (Atwood 27). Snowman's father goes as far as seeing the divide between the compounds and the pleeblands as an explicit distinction between his people and others, and in this distinction, he has a distrust for the others:

Still, the CorpSeCorps men – the ones Jimmy’s father called our people – these men had to be on constant alert. When there was so much at stake, there was no telling what the other side might resort to. The other side, or the other sides: it wasn’t just one other side you had to watch out for. Other companies, other countries, various factions and plotters. (Atwood 27)

Here we also see that Snowman’s father does not trust the compounds of other companies as well as everyone else that is not a part of his *We*. He also views the *We* that he is part of as better than the others, which he shows when he explains to Snowman why the compounds are necessary:

Long ago, in the days of knights and dragons, the kings and dukes had lived in castles, with high walls and drawbridges and slots on the ramparts so you could pour hot pitch on your enemies, said Jimmy’s father, and the Compounds were the same idea. Castles were for keeping you and your buddies nice and safe inside, and for keeping everybody else outside. “So are we the kings and dukes?” asked Jimmy. “Oh, absolutely,” said his father, laughing. (Atwood 28)

The way that Snowman’s father uses the fantastical analogy of kings and dukes to describe the reason behind the compounds makes his argument seem more compelling to Snowman. This is an act similar to what Snowman did to the Crakers when he helped them escape, as he explained that the occurrence was either part of a nightmare that Crake dreamt or was simply “chaos” which was a more acceptable explanation regardless of how catastrophic the situation was (Atwood 351-352). By comparing himself and the people living in the compounds to kings and dukes, Snowman’s father also shows that the compounds are a means to achieving transcendence by being part of a larger group, which he deems better than those who are not part of it.

From these interactions with his father, we argue that from early childhood, Snowman has been influenced by his father to think in a manner of seeking dominion over others. At the same time, since Snowman was born into one of the compounds, he has been born privileged compared to the people living in the pleeblands, and this privilege is a hypersubjective trait. However, while Snowman’s father appears to embody strong hypersubjective qualities and influences Snowman to adopt these, Snowman’s mother appears to challenge these qualities. The following section will explore Snowman’s mother’s character and discuss how she influences Snowman.

Snowman's Subscendent Hippie Mother

As stated earlier, Snowman's mother is highly critical of the compounds, which contrasts with his father's opinions. In one instance, she discusses the research conducted and especially the fact that the biotechnology created in the compounds is made in the name of profit:

It's the neuro-regeneration project. We now have genuine human neocortex tissue growing in a pigoon. Finally, after all those duds! Think of the possibilities, for stroke victims, and . . .”
 “That's all we need,” said Jimmy's mother. “More people with the brains of pigs. Don't we have enough of those already?” “Can't you be positive, just for once? All this negative stuff, this is no good, that's no good, nothing's ever good enough, according to you!” “Positive about what? That you've thought up yet another way to rip off a bunch of desperate people?” said Jimmy's mother in that new slow, anger-free voice. “God, you're cynical!” “No, you are. You and your smart partners. Your colleagues. It's wrong, the whole organization is wrong, it's a moral cesspool and you know it.”. (Atwood 56)

Here it is illustrated that while Snowman's father relishes the fact that they have developed new biotechnology that can cure people, Sharon is more cynical and claims that the cure is simply made to profit from desperate people. Snowman's parents' conflicting views reflect two viewpoints concerning neoliberalism because Snowman's father emphasises the new possibilities that the new technologies provide. At the same time, Sharon argues that the neoliberal corporations in the compounds are highly immoral because they profit from people in need. Later, Sharon also argues that Snowman's father and the corporations are “... interfering with the building blocks of life” (Atwood 57), which she deems sacrilegious and immoral. Again, Snowman's father shares the opposite view by claiming that they simply change protein structures (Atwood 57). This discussion highlights how Snowman's mother appears to be a person who cares about what is moral, and she is, to some extent, religious. On the contrary, Snowman's father seems to be less concerned with morality or at least he does not believe that the research he is conducting is immoral and in contrast to the mother, he appears to be an atheist.

Instead of adopting one of his parents' viewpoints, Snowman appears to dislike both his parents more than anything, which he shows by making a show at school where he makes caricatures of his parents using his hands:

His right hand was Evil Dad, his left hand was Righteous Mom. Evil Dad blustered and theorized and dished out pompous bullshit, Righteous Mom complained and accused. In Righteous Mom's cosmology, Evil Dad was the sole source of hemorrhoids, kleptomania,

global conflict, bad breath, tectonic-plate fault lines, and clogged drains, as well as every migraine headache and menstrual cramp Righteous Mom had ever suffered. (Atwood 60)

Here, Snowman reveals what he thinks about his mother and father, although with some hyperboles when talking about his mother. Even though Snowman sometimes feels guilty about ridiculing his parents in front of an audience in the lunchroom at school (Atwood 60), this act shows how he does not particularly like any of his parents' viewpoints or the way they acted toward each other. This perception of his parents does not seem to become better later in his life as his mother leaves him because she has "... suffered with conscience long enough..." (Atwood 61), and as a result, she wishes to change her current lifestyle (Atwood 61). Therefore, she joins the protest group, God's Gardeners and participates in a protest against the corporation Happicuppa (Atwood 181, 213). However, Crake believes that Sharon left because she became aware of some of the corporation's suspect plans unknown to the public (Atwood 212). In conclusion, Snowman's mother embodies some of the hyposubjective traits that Morton and Boyer outline, specifically centred around disconnecting from the grid to make a difference. However, while it seems that Snowman might have adopted some of his hyper- or hyposubjective traits from his mother and father respectively, it appears that he did not agree with either of them meaning that he might have adopted more of his ideas from Crake instead, which we will investigate in the next section.

Crake's Problematic Hypersubjectivity

Compared to Snowman's father and the people living in the compounds, Crake appears to be a more complex character regarding hyper- and hyposubjective qualities, though he seems to exhibit hypersubjective traits the majority of the time, which we will illustrate in this section. One of the instances where Crake's hypersubjective behaviour becomes apparent is when he and Snowman decide to smoke joints and visit sketchy websites on Crake's uncle Pete's computer:

So they'd roll a few joints and smoke them while watching the executions and the porn ... He [Crake] didn't seem to be affected by anything he saw, one way or the other, except when he thought it was funny. He never seemed to get high, either. Jimmy suspected he didn't really inhale". (Atwood 86)

Here it becomes apparent that even though Crake and Snowman are watching child-pornographic material that shows sex tourists molesting children, Crake remains completely unaffected while Snowman is uncomfortable. Snowman even comments that he expected that Crake did not inhale the smoke from the joints, which presumably caused him to experience the explicit videos to a

stronger degree. This distinction becomes even more apparent when they see Oryx for the first time on a child-pornography site called HottTotts:

This was how the two of them first saw Oryx. She was only about eight, or she looked eight. They could never find out for certain how old she'd been then. Her name wasn't Oryx, she didn't have a name. She was just another little girl on a porno site. None of those little girls had ever seemed real to Jimmy – they'd always struck him as digital clones – but for some reason Oryx was three-dimensional from the start. She was small-boned and exquisite, and naked like the rest of them, with nothing on her but a garland of flowers and a pink hair ribbon, frequent props on the sex-kiddie sites. (Atwood 90)

This scene is described quite shockingly as the girls all look frightened while performing the sexual act involving "... whipped cream and a lot of licking" (Atwood 90). While Snowman did not think too much about the content he had been watching before, as he felt like the people he had been watching did not appear real, for some reason, Oryx broke this illusion. The situation becomes even more disturbing by the fact that a recording of giggles is used to give the viewers the sensation that the girls are enjoying the act even though one of them is visibly crying (Atwood 90). After a while, Oryx looks at the camera and smiles, which affects Snowman significantly:

Jimmy felt burned by this look – eaten into, as if by acid. She'd been so contemptuous of him. The joint he'd been smoking must have had nothing in it but lawn mowings: if it had been stronger he might have been able to bypass guilt. But for the first time he'd felt that what they'd been doing was wrong. Before, it had always been entertainment, or else far beyond his control, but now he felt culpable. At the same time he felt hooked through the gills: if he'd been offered instant teleportation to wherever Oryx was he'd have taken it, no question. He'd have begged to go there. It was all too complicated. (Atwood 91)

Snowman describes that the joint he had been smoking was not enough to quench the guilt that he felt and that Oryx, more than just breaking the illusion, makes him experience inner conflict. However, while Snowman suddenly feels this strong sense of guilt, Crake, on the other hand, decides to pause the video in order to screenshot the occasion:

Crake pushed the reverse, then the freeze, then the download. Every so often he froze frames; by now he had a small archive of them. Sometimes he'd print them out and give a copy to Jimmy. It could be dangerous – it could leave a footprint for anyone who might manage to trace a way through the labyrinth – but Crake did it anyway. So now he saved that one moment, the moment when Oryx looked. (Atwood 91)

Both Snowman and Crake participate in this morally dubious act of viewing child pornography, and thereby they both perform a predatory action by finding enjoyment in watching people, in this case, children, in submissive positions. However, what distinguishes Crake from Snowman is that while Snowman is conflicted and experiences guilt watching the act, Crake does not seem to show any remorse but rather seems to find even more pleasure in Oryx's act of looking at the camera. This fact is exemplified by how he freezes the video and takes a screenshot which he offers Snowman: ““This a keeper?” Crake said. “You want it?” “Yeah,” said Jimmy. He could barely get the word out. He hoped he sounded normal” (Atwood 91). Crake seems to have noticed that something about the scene influenced Snowman, but clearly, he did not register that he felt guilty since he decided to offer him the picture. When he gives Snowman the picture, he does not realise that Snowman finds it difficult to accept the photo without showing his guilt and inner conflict. This further distances them in regards to the degree they embody hypersubjectivity since Crake appears to relish his predatory position while Snowman feels uncomfortable in this position.

A key example of Crake's hypersubjective behaviour is his actions concerning his Paradise Project. The creation of the Crakers as a race to succeed humanity was Crake's attempt to eliminate the flaws that he perceived humans had; therefore, he created a species that did not embody these flaws. This act does not seem to be specifically hypersubjective as Crake does not seek to gain any power from it. However, what Crake did to achieve this goal is deliberately predatory. This point is exemplified in his creation of the BlyssPluss pill, which was a part of the Paradise Project:

Compared to the Paradise Project, even the BlyssPluss Pill was a crude tool, although it would be a lucrative interim solution. In the long run, however, the benefits for the future human race of the two in combination would be stupendous. They were inextricably linked – the Pill and the Project. The Pill would put a stop to haphazard reproduction, the Project would replace it with a superior method. They were two stages of a single plan, you might say. (Atwood 304)

Here, it becomes apparent that Crake seeks control over the human population with the help of the BlyssPluss pill, but control is not his main goal or something he strives to achieve. He acknowledges that this pill is lucrative, and the monetary aspect is what the corporations in the compounds strive towards as it would benefit humanity in the long run. Still, these aspects do not seem to be of interest to Crake. Instead, Crake only appears to be interested in the monetary gain as far as they benefit his Paradise project.

Since the purpose of Crake's drug is to control the population by sterilising people without them knowing and because the primary goal of the BlyssPluss is to hold dominion over the human race, it is made extremely attractive to people by having other qualities:

The aim was to produce a single pill, that, at one and the same time: a) would protect the user against all known sexually transmitted diseases, fatal, inconvenient, or merely unsightly; b) would provide an unlimited supply of libido and sexual prowess, coupled with a generalized sense of energy and well-being, thus reducing the frustration and blocked testosterone that led to jealousy and violence, and eliminating feelings of low self-worth; c) would prolong youth. (Atwood 294)

The advertised qualities would benefit humanity by themselves, and the pills would greatly increase the life quality of anyone that takes them. As these prescribed qualities were difficult to pass up on, Crake ensured that most people were interested. However, the final effect was an unreversible "... sure-fire one-time-does-it-all birth-control pill ..." (Atwood 294) that was not advertised, which was how Crake sought to control the population level. In this sense, the BlyssPluss pill is ultimately part of a well-thought-out plan that aims to tempt people into unknowingly subscribing to a grid that ultimately becomes the end of humanity. These actions point toward the idea that Crake is the archetypal hypersubject because he thrives in the neoliberalist society presented in *Oryx and Crake*. Even his process of developing the pill is unethical as he proudly explains to Jimmy that he has found the test subjects from poorer countries: "Crake grinned. "From the poorer countries. Pay them a few dollars, they don't even know what they're taking. Sex clinics, of course – they're happy to help. Whorehouses. Prisons. And from the ranks of the desperate, as usual." (Atwood 296). Here, Crake reveals that he has used the neoliberal society to take advantage of desperate people with a complete disregard for their safety. This cements his hypersubjective personality because he disregards morality in the name of personal freedom. In other words, to Crake, nothing is sacred if you can buy it. However, since the reasoning behind these actions seems to be different from the goal of wanting power and wealth, it is challenging to characterise Crake solely as a hypersubject. As seen in the following quote, Crake's reasoning for creating both the BlyssPluss pill and the Paradise project is because he views it as a way of saving humanity:

Demand for resources has exceeded supply for decades in marginal geopolitical areas, hence the famines and droughts; but very soon, demand is going to exceed supply for everyone. With the BlyssPluss Pill the human race will have a better chance of swimming." "How do you figure?" Maybe Jimmy shouldn't have had that extra drink. He was getting a bit confused.

“Fewer people, therefore more to go around.” “What if the fewer people are very greedy and wasteful?” said Jimmy. “That’s not out of the question.” “They won’t be,” said Crake. (Atwood 295)

Instead of being a means to achieving power, Crake explains that the BlyssPlus pill is his way of saving humanity because it will control the size of the population and, in turn, solve the problem that the demand for resources exceeds the supply. This seems to relate to Ryle’s argument that Atwood’s novel portrays a world where climate change has already happened and is linked with the rampant neoliberalist capitalism that controls society. Crake’s behaviour relates to this argument because he acknowledges that drastic changes need to happen if humanity is to survive. Therefore, he uses extreme measures to tackle the already catastrophic ecological consequences in a society where nobody else seems to care. Thus, behind Crake’s actions seem to be a philanthropic motive achieved through transcendent means since he seeks power to accomplish this goal. Relating this to Morton and Boyer’s theory, it can be said that Crake exemplifies the transcendent sweet spot fantasy where it is believed that a point will eventually come where we can solve the environmental crisis through technological transcendence and that it will be benign. Snowman challenges Crake’s idea by pointing out that the people left will be greedy and wasteful, which Crake disregards. Crake’s disregard for this idea implies that he fails to see that it is already the case. Furthermore, only the most privileged are the main cause of the state of their society and seemingly the reason why the compounds have been created.

When outlining how Crake thinks about society and humanity, it is revealed that he despises many of humanity’s flaws as they have led to conflicts and disastrous events. This is illustrated through how he excitedly tells Jimmy about the Crakers:

What had been altered was nothing less than the ancient primate brain. Gone were its destructive features, the features responsible for the world’s current illnesses. For instance, racism ... Hierarchy could not exist among them ... Since they were neither hunters nor agriculturalists hungry for land, there was no territoriality ... They ate nothing but leaves and grass and roots and a berry or two; thus their foods were plentiful and always available. Their sexuality was not a constant torment to them, not a cloud of turbulent hormones ... In fact, as there would never be anything for these people to inherit, there would be no family trees, no marriages, and no divorces. They were perfectly adjusted to their habitat ... They would have no need to invent any harmful symbolisms, such as kingdoms, icons, gods, or money. (Atwood 305)

The way that Crake describes each of the Crakers' qualities in great detail shows how much thought he has given each of them and how proud he is to be able to eliminate what he deems to be the flaws of humanity. Crake's thought shows that he cares about humanity as he tries to eliminate all their flaws and that he acknowledges that these are problems that need to be solved. However, at the same time, Crake deems that the way to solve humanity's problems is to create a new race that eventually should replace humans. In addition, while Crake explains that the BlyssPluss pill is supposed to regulate the human population, he ultimately wipes out the whole population instantly, including himself, by including a deadly virus in the BlyssPluss pill instead of the qualities he made Snowman advertise. While this displays explicit hate towards humanity rather than a dislike, Crake's relationship with humanity is contradictory. Although Crake exhibits hypersubjective traits by wanting to achieve transcendence and at the same time believing that the best course for humanity is to create a new race to replace humans, his relationship with humanity is obscured because his view on humanity implies hyposubjective qualities. These qualities appear to be especially prevalent in the following quote:

“ ... Nature is to zoos as God is to churches.” [said Crake] “Meaning what?” said Jimmy. ... “Those walls and bars are there for a reason,” said Crake. “Not to keep us out, but to keep them in. Mankind needs barriers in both cases.” “Them?” “Nature and God.” “I thought you didn't believe in God,” said Jimmy. “I don't believe in Nature either,” said Crake. “Or not with a capital N.” (Atwood 206)

Crake reveals that he does not believe in certain established and accepted categories such as nature and religion. Instead, he argues that the categories are simply created because people need concepts such as nature and God for zoos and churches to make sense. This points toward the fact that Crake has hyposubjective traits as well since he is able to think subscently about large gridlike concepts that keep people locked in specific ways of acting. The way that Crake views the Crakers appears to reflect this because they are designed to not think about concepts such as religion. Additionally, the Crakers also seem to be Crake's attempt to eliminate the rigid distinction between humans and non-humans as they are supposed to replace humankind. Canavan argues that the belief in a future after the apocalypse is a characteristic of Atwood's novel. This belief is illustrated in Crake's careful design of the Crakers not to embody any of humanity's flaws. The design shows that he believes in the emergence of a new utopian society after humanity's extinction. Crake plans the end of humanity but at the same time believes in a future where concepts such as capitalism do not have to exist.

Through the interactions that Snowman has with Crake, the reader is shown a part of Snowman's character, which to a large degree is reflected in how he responds to Crake's actions. In this section, we have shown that while Crake appears to embody strong hypersubjective traits, he does not seek to personally gain anything by realising his project. However, it is relevant that Snowman challenges some of Crake's views but ultimately supports him in his actions until his true motive is revealed. This is the case since he supports the Paradise Project as he is responsible for the advertisement campaign (Atwood 305). Through Crake, it is shown that while Snowman feels conflicted by some of Crake's actions, he embodies many of the same hypersubjective traits such as having dominion over others and his predatory involvement in the Paradise Project. These characteristics are in stark contrast to how Oryx behaves, which we will explore in the next section.

Oryx the Roomba

Oryx is a character who reflects many of Snowman's dilemmas, especially concerning ethics and morality. The first time Crake and Snowman see Oryx is through the site HottTotts. As mentioned, Snowman is extremely conflicted since he, for the first time, feels guilty to the degree that he cannot ignore. Oryx is treated as an object, which she has been from the point her mother sold her (Atwood 121). Because of her situation, her agency is extremely limited. Despite these circumstances, she does what little she can to exert her agency:

Oryx paused in her activities. She smiled a hard little smile that made her appear much older, and wiped the whipped cream from her mouth. Then she looked over her shoulder and right into the eyes of the viewer – right into Jimmy's eyes, into the secret person inside him. I see you, that look said. I see you watching. I know you. I know what you want. (Atwood 90-91)

Her act of smiling and looking directly at the camera has a big effect on Snowman and sets the development of his character in motion. This point is representative of the thought behind subscendence, which emphasises that even the smallest actions matter. It can be said that the scene shows how Oryx, even in the most miserable situations, attempts to enact her agency. The actions specifically made Snowman wonder what she thought when she looked at the camera until he could ask her. When he showed her the picture, to Snowman's surprise, she did not denounce him or his actions but acted calmly instead (Atwood 92-93). When Snowman asks her what she thought about at that moment when she looked at the camera, she reluctantly answers that she was thinking "... if I ever got the chance, it would not be me down on my knees" (Atwood 92-93). This remark reveals

that she does not feel hatred towards the people who abused her but simply wishes that it was not her. In addition, this is also telling about Snowman as he disregards how he essentially admits to having committed an immoral action by watching Oryx being molested in order to get answers from her. This shows that he is controlled by a strong sense of epistemophilia and wants to achieve transcendence in regard to knowledge which Oryx also comments on: ““You want to know everything,” said Oryx” (Atwood 93).

Later, Crake employs Oryx to teach the Crakers, which intrigues her (Atwood 310). She enjoys the experience of teaching the Crakers, and when the Crakers start to ask questions about who made them, she tells them the truth by explaining that Crake made them, which is why she named them Crakers (Atwood 311). This seems to be the start of the Crakers’ search for transcendence regarding knowledge. However, Oryx also finds joy in helping them transcend, contrasting with how Snowman feels about teaching the Crakers. Oryx’s actions paint her as a helpful and unselfish person. However, depending on the nature of her teaching, it can be considered a hypersubjective action. This is the case because education traditionally connects people to the grid as it introduces people to the liberal humanist way of thinking. However, at the same time, it is uncertain whether the type of education that Oryx provides can be considered as introducing the Crakers to the grid as what she teaches is “...what not to eat and what could bite. And what not to hurt ...” (Atwood 309).

Later, Oryx’s unselfishness is also questioned when she decides to seduce and sleep with Snowman despite her relationship with Crake. This action is strange since she explains that the reason, she decides to sleep with Snowman is for his sake: ““I didn’t want to see you so unhappy, Jimmy,” was her explanation. “Not about me.” “How could you tell I was unhappy?” “Oh, I always know”” (Atwood 312). It is questionable whether she does this for Snowman’s sake or her own. However, her reasoning behind her action might denote that she does not think longsighted but instead acts Roomba-like by trying to fix whatever is wrong:

“What about Crake?” he said, after she’d hooked him that first time, landed him, left him gasping. “You are Crake’s friend. He wouldn’t want you to be unhappy.” Jimmy wasn’t so sure about that, but he said, “I don’t feel easy about this.” “What are you saying, Jimmy?” “Aren’t you – isn’t he . . .” What a dolt! “Crake lives in a higher world, Jimmy,” she said. “He lives in a world of ideas. He is doing important things. He has no time to play. Anyway, Crake is my boss. You are for fun.” “Yes, but . . .” “Crake won’t know.” (Atwood 313)

The way she argues that she does want to see Snowman unhappy and that she does not consider herself and Crake to be in a relationship appears spontaneous because she acts upon whatever she feels at that point in time, which is a hyposubjective trait. It appears that Oryx approaches the world subscendently as she is simply trying to survive and get the most out of her difficult life. In this sense, Oryx acts Roomba-like and acts out her agency in whatever way she can, which affects Snowman to a great extent without her knowledge, as this makes him reconsider his actions and makes him think about her all the time.

Inert Hypersubjectivity

In our analysis of *Oryx and Crake*, we have shown how many of the characters embody stereotypical hyper- and hyposubjective traits, such as Snowman's mother and father, who each represent these traits. Snowman's father is the stereotypical compound citizen who thrives in the pre-apocalyptic world by exerting his agency for his own personal gain. He shows this specifically by supporting the rampant capitalism and creating dubious products that are supposed to generate wealth. Contrarily, Snowman's mother objects to this system and rebels against it, which is shown as she joins the protest group God's Gardeners. This shows that she is aware that their society is a predatory system and tries to change it, which is a hyposubjective trait. By making Snowman's parents each other's opposites, the implied author shows the conflict between hyper- and hyposubjects in the society and their differing approaches to their environment. Oryx also embodies strong hyposubjective traits though she is taken advantage of her whole life, which aligns with Morton and Boyer's idea of the hyposubject as prey. Even though her agency is extremely limited, she still attempts to exert it in any way possible, affecting Snowman to a great extent. Contrarily, Crake acts towards a goal of eliminating categories though his behaviour is predatory. Through Crake, the implied author illustrates the complicated nature of trying to unplug from the grid and how hypersubjective solutions toward subscending can lead to disaster as humanity is nearly extinct. Finally, the way Snowman interacts with his world denotes that he is a tragic hypersubject who is forced to adapt to a world where he cannot exert his agency fully but is forced to navigate the world in a Roomba-like manner. Thus, the implied author employs Snowman as a tragic hypersubject to show how he is grievously aware that his former way of life is incompatible with the subscendent Crakers' world. This is similar to how Morton and Boyer argue that hypersubjects' way of life is near its end. The only way he can enact his knowledge-based transcendence is towards the Crakers, who, despite having hyposubjective traits, are drawn to Snowman in order to

transcend. This relationship mirrors the relationship between the narrator and reader because the narrator of *Oryx and Crake* helps the reader transcend when they read the novel.

Reading *Cloud Atlas*: Subjectivity in a Broken World

David Mitchell's novel from 2002, *Cloud Atlas*, provides six different narratives with different protagonists set in different time periods. In this chapter, we will account for and discuss the critical reception of the novel by considering readings by Astrid Bracke, Luke Hortle, and Reetta Koskinen, which will be used to highlight themes such as ecocriticism, posthumanism, colonialism, and the relationship between humans and nature in the novel. Furthermore, the readings provide different perspectives focused on subjectivity, which relates to the debate that Morton and Boyer engage in. Furthermore, these readings will be used to provide insight into our analysis which will be centred around Morton and Boyer's concepts of hyper- and hyposubjects, which include the terms transcendence and subscendence.

Bracke reads *Cloud Atlas* as an example of environmental collapse. However, she purposely makes sure not to label the collapse of the environment as an apocalyptic event because: "Apocalyptic narratives are also ill-suited to contemporary climate crisis because they have come to be associated too much with the fictions of disaster films or science fiction" (Bracke 24). Bracke presents an interesting perspective, as Mitchell's novel can easily be read as apocalyptic because the novel envisions a future of both environmental and societal collapse. However, Bracke argues that this should not be considered the end of the world: "Nevertheless, the popular idea of apocalypse as 'the end of the world' might stand in the way of productive, rather than defeatist, engagements with climate crisis. The environmental collapse narrative that *Cloud Atlas* ... present[s] is an example of such a more productive approach" (Bracke 25). In this quote, Bracke presents an idea that aligns with Morton and Boyer's notion of hyper- and hyposubjects. Bracke's idea of a defeatist attitude can be exemplified through the idea that humanity is slowly and inevitably causing its own extinction, which we explained in the chapter "Context: Navigating the Anthropocene as the Perpetrator and the Victim". Furthermore, the idea of a productive engagement in the climate crisis can be compared to hyposubjects who try to find alternative ways to approach the hyperobjective era. Bracke further discusses the problematic nature of apocalypse as a term in relation to narratives by pointing out how it is troublesome:

Environmental collapse holds none of the connotations of 'end of the world' that makes popular apocalypse so problematic. Rather, typical of the narrative of environmental collapse

is that climate crisis coincides with and leads to socio-economic and political collapse, despite which, however, one or several people survive, allowing for the story of what happens after the collapse to be told. (Bracke 25)

The survival of humanity after an environmental collapse is exemplified multiple times throughout *Cloud Atlas*. The fifth narrative features a synthetic clone, referred to as a fabricant, in the distant future by the name of Sonmi~451. She has been confined to a single restaurant her entire life but eventually gets freed and starts to learn about the outside world. One of the things Sonmi~451 learns after escaping the diner is that most of the world is categorised as “deadlands”, places that have been devastated and irradiated to such a degree that they are impossible for humans to inhabit. However, humanity has made immense technological advancements despite ecological disaster; even if Mitchell’s depiction of the future is rather dystopian, society has not yet collapsed. This observation supports Bracke’s point that the novel presents a productive approach to environmental collapse. Bracke argues that: “By blurring the line between present and future and playing on the principle of minimal departure ... novels employ realism to bring the large scale of environmental crisis down to the smaller scale of human understanding” (Bracke 46). Because *Cloud Atlas* presents a distorted timeline of escalating ecological collapse, which aligns with Morton’s theory of hyperobjects and the fact that they cannot be directly perceived by humans and must be presented through a perceivable medium.

Bracke primarily takes an ecocritical approach to narratives, with a focus on the benefits and problems of narratives when it comes to ecological awareness. She argues that:

Being sensitive to the role that narratives and narrativity play foregrounds how *Cloud Atlas* ... and other novels open up a space of uncertainty that echoes some of the uncertainty of climate crisis. When the reader’s attention is drawn to the instability, corruption or loss of narratives within a novel, she may also reflect on a similar instability when it comes to interpreting climate crisis discourses and predictions. (Bracke 47)

Bracke’s reading is primarily concerned with the narrative of the novel and how it impacts the reader. This diverts from our reading, as we will focus on the implied author through narration and characterisation. While Bracke presents some relevant points, we will take a different approach in our thesis. This is because, as stated in the section about hyper- and hyposubjects, most of humanity has intuitively felt what a hyperobject is through the Coronavirus. The same can be considered regarding narratives that increase awareness of the hyperobjects, such as the climate crisis due to global warming; as Morton and Boyer pointed out: If everyone intuitively feels, there is less need to

tell them about it. Furthermore, it can be argued that hypersubjects primarily control climate crisis discourse and that hyposubjects will be tasked with creating a new discourse instead of an interpretation of the old. However, the notion found in Bracke's reading of *Cloud Atlas* is still valuable, as subscendent readers could shape new discourse. Furthermore, it serves as a great example of an ecocritical approach to the novel as it presents the book in an ecocritical context, which is relevant to our reading.

Another way that Mitchell's novel can be read is within the context of posthumanism in the Anthropocene, which is relevant as it mirrors several of the ideas found in Morton and Boyer's theory on hyper- and hyposubjects. Hortle's reading takes a departure from the ecocritical and instead seeks to explore sexuality through human representation while focusing on narrative and characterisation. He explores queerness and posthumanism primarily through the characterisation of Sonmi~451 and the world she inhabits:

Cloud Atlas epitomizes this tension at the heart of posthumanist theory: between fantasies of posthumanism and the posthuman on one hand and a humanist resurgence of normative humanity on the other. In this way, Mitchell's novel capitalizes on anxieties over the pressures applied to the human by critical theory. (Hortle 258)

The struggle between posthumanism and normative humanity is a focal point in Hortle's reading of *Cloud Atlas*. This is exemplified through the posthuman fabricant Sonmi~451 and her interactions with the natural-born human "purebloods". Hortle categorises Sonmi~451 and other fabricants as a type of less-than-human posthuman:

Fabricants are precluded from, and defined in opposition to, the status and rights of human "purebloods" (362). They are less-than-human livestock and productive of biopolitical excess: stripped of subject positionality their bodies create "huge quantities of liquefied biomatter" (359), butchered like fish aboard a "sardine-processor" (361). (Hortle 259)

The lack of subject positionality and the hierarchy between purebloods and fabricants are illustrated when Sonmi~451 is granted consciousness from an experiment and freed from the restaurant, as her newfound subjectivity startles most purebloods she encounters after the escape. However, according to Hortle, this elevation of consciousness is not enough to raise her status as a less-than-human posthuman: "Despite this humanist ascension, Sonmi-451's vulnerable body continually marks her as posthuman and therefore expendable" (Hortle 260). Thus, he argues, her body and existence do not conform with that of the liberal humanist subject: "The liberal humanist subject must be in happy possession of a rational mind in control of an obedient body (and by extension, the world laid

passively before them), a condition to which Sonmi-451 cannot lay claim” (Hortle 260). Through this, Hortle argues that she is inherently queer. Furthermore, the biological difference of posthumans means that they do not conform to norms regarding gender and sex, which Hortle argues is also an inherently queer trait. Hortle’s reading is interesting because parallels can be drawn between his less-than-human posthumans and Morton and Boyer’s hyposubjects, who are both described as queer and less than the sum of their parts. However, unlike Morton and Boyer, Hortle presents being a liberal humanist subject as desirable as he describes posthumans as inferior. It can be argued that while hyposubjects are the inheritors, posthumans are instead denied their inheritance as there is no world left to inherit. Furthermore, Hortle’s description of the human purebloods mirrors that of hypersubjects, as they are depicted as free, predatory, and part of the grid. However, Hortle presents a bleak future for the posthuman: “... the novel recuperates the posthuman into its emergent neohumanism and resurgent human presence—a reiteration of the human as a solvent to the queer posthuman condition” (Hortle 271). The notion of the human as a solvent coincides with the predatory aspects found in Morton and Boyer’s discussions on hypersubjectivity, which they describe as a colonisation of the non-human subjectivity, which we explained earlier. While Hortle’s reading provides some interesting points, the focus on posthumans is primarily applicable to Sonmi~451. However, our reading will take a broader focus on the novel.

One thing that becomes apparent when researching readings of *Cloud Atlas* is that most ecocritical readings are centred around Sonmi~451 and Zachry, which are both narratives set in the future. Koskinen shares a similar notion as she writes: “There is also some research into the apocalyptic themes of the novel ... but discussing the apocalypse in the light of the attitudes that humans have towards nature in the earlier narratives is rather rarely done” (Koskinen 5). Her reading is concerned with the relationship between humans and nature and takes the novel’s earlier chapters into account. Koskinen’s reading is centred around the narratives in the novel and employs ecocritical theorists such as Greg Garrard, whose classical approach toward nature provides an alternative to Morton’s theories. Furthermore, she uses Bracke’s reading as an outset, explaining that her reading diverts in focus:

Although Bracke claims that an ecocritical reading of a novel should focus more on the structure of the novel since ecocritical readings often do not pay attention to it ... I am primarily concerned with the content of the novel and the ways in which the novel depicts nature and the relationship between humans and nature. (Koskinen 1)

Koskinen's choice to primarily forego structure in her reading diverts from our reading as well. It is a curious choice as one of the novel's defining features is how the six storylines are plotted. We will argue that the plotting is an integral part of the novel's content, as it shapes the reader's perception of each storyline by promoting a subscendent reading. Furthermore, Koskinen's use of Greg Garrard's tropes differs from our reading and dark ecology in general: "Especially in wilderness writing, the human encounter with sublime nature often has an impact on the main character, becoming an incentive for personal growth. This trope is also present in *Cloud Atlas*, especially if one considers nature as something outside of the human made city" (Koskinen 20). The notion of nature existing as an entity outside of civilisation contradicts the idea of the mesh found in Morton's theory on interobjectivity. However, Koskinen's reading is relevant as it presents ideas that will contradict our reading while inspecting the earlier storylines of the novel ecocritically.

Koskinen's reading also focuses on elements of colonialism in the novel, which are present in the majority of the storylines. Additionally, Koskinen mentions a criticism of ecocriticism as a theoretical field: "Colonialism affected the nature of the colonies, and in many ways disrupted the relationship humans had with nature ... both inside and outside the novel. Ecocriticism as a whole has been criticised for the same problem as most Western criticism, the lack of attention toward non-western societies" (Koskinen 27). This critique is also relevant in relation to dark ecology, as the theory's primary focus is centred around the US and Western Europe. Koskinen's reading of colonialism not only concerns the relationship between humans and nature but also the relationship between humans: "... some of the characters tend to see other humans more as a resource to be exploited than as actual human beings, especially in "Journal"" (Koskinen 27). The idea that humans are seen as a resource is similar to Hortle's reading of fabricants as less-than-human posthumans present an interesting similarity between the two storylines, which we will explore in our analysis. Furthermore, Koskinen describes the fabricants similarly to Hortle, albeit with different terminology:

... the society of Nea So Copros relies on the fabricants that are considered to be nonhumans as workforce. Nature is seen as the opposite of culture, as the opposite of human, and thus otherness has been used as an excuse to take advantage of both nature and humans pushed into the role of 'the other'. (Koskinen 28)

"The other" mirrors that of Hortle's less-than-human posthumans, beings who the neoliberal purebloods take advantage of. Furthermore, even though the definition of nature differs, the interpretation of nature as "the other" can be used in relation to Morton and Boyer's idea of hyper-

and hyposubjects, as those who push nature into the role of “the other” must inherently be hypersubjects. The idea of labelling “the other” as something that can encompass both humans and nature is similar to the aspect of OOO that labels everything as equally an object since both nature and fabricants are viewed as such in the mind of the purebloods. However, the separation diverts because Koskinen’s reading privileges the human subjects over “the others”, which goes against the main premise of OOO. In our analysis of *Cloud Atlas*, we will further explore some of the concepts presented in this chapter by looking at how the implied author criticises particular types of hypersubjective behaviours, which we will illustrate through the characterisation of certain characters.

Analysis of *Cloud Atlas*: Constructive Hypersubjectivity

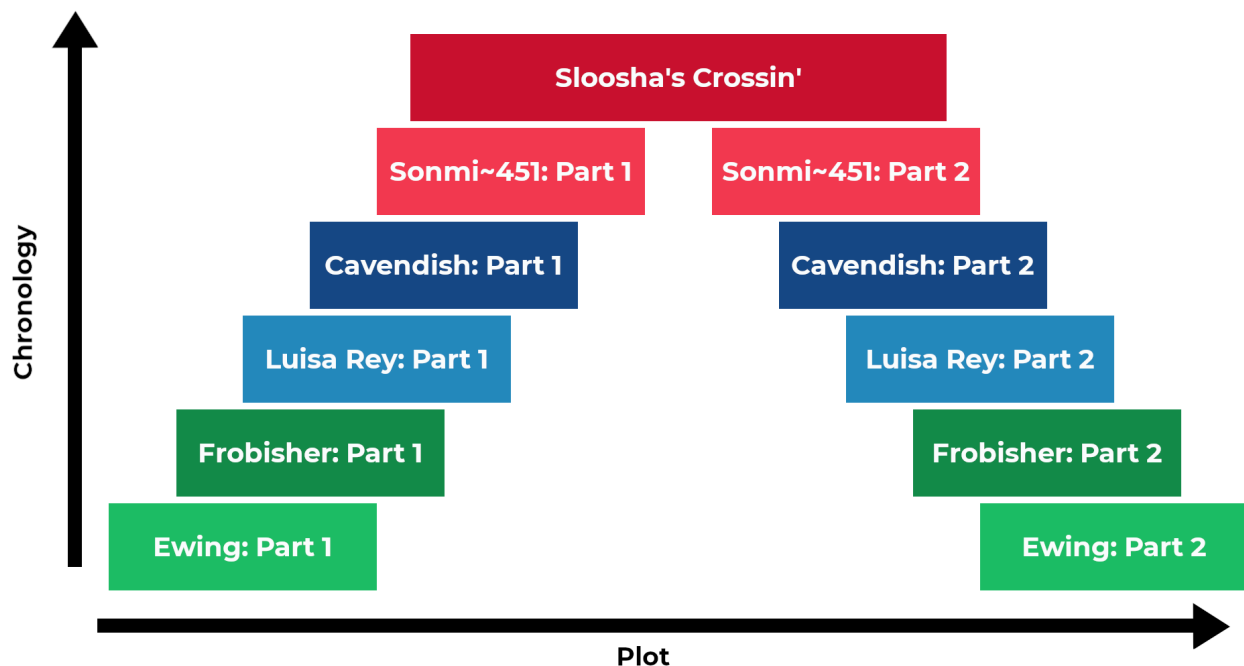
The third and final novel we will analyse is David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas*. We will focus on the way that the novel is plotted and the impact this has on the reading, as the plot is unique. Furthermore, the knowledge relationship between the reader and the different narrators will be considered. We will show that the six narratives in the novel are interconnected and share many of the same themes, illustrating that history repeats itself. Because some of the narratives feature similar characters and themes, we have chosen to primarily focus on the two narratives “The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing” and “An Orison of Sonmi~451” because they challenge the idea of hyper- and hyposubjectivity. These narratives both feature predatory and what we call institutionalised hypersubjectivity, which is caused by environments where rampant capitalism is at the forefront. However, the protagonists also exhibit forms of hyposubjectivity, thus challenging the terms. Conclusively, our analysis will show how the implied author criticises predatory behaviour and specific societal structures that lead to this behaviour. Finally, we will argue that the implied author criticises a certain kind of hypersubjective behaviour and not in general.

Narration: Six Tales in One Spirit

Before we begin the analysis, we will briefly explain the plot of the novel. Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* presents multiple narratives that seem disjointed at first, as the novel consists of six different narratives with six different protagonists scattered throughout time. The earliest takes place in the mid-nineteenth century and the latest in the distant future. However, it is revealed that one character from each story all share a mutual comet-shaped birthmark, and a vague connection is slowly established between the characters and their individual stories.

The first narrative, “The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing”, is presented as a journal where Adam Ewing, a white mid-nineteenth century lawyer from the United States, has written down his experiences from his journey across the Southern Pacific. On his journey, he reluctantly helps a Polynesian stowaway, Autua, who ends up saving his life from the British Dr Goose, who attempts to poison Ewing. The second narrative, “Letters from Zedelghem”, follows a young nobleman musician named Robert Frobisher who is down on his luck as he has been kicked out of the music academy and disowned by his family. The narrative is arranged as letters written by Frobisher, addressed to his former lover Rufus Sixsmith. In a last-ditch effort, Frobisher travels to Belgium to coerce the old and sickly musician, Vyvyan Ayrs, to take him as his amanuensis. The third narrative, “Half-Lives - The First Luisa Rey Mystery”, is a detective drama narrated as a manuscript of a book, which follows the old scientist and ex-Seaboard employee, Rufus Sixsmith, who meets an untimely end as he has written a report detailing the dangers of the company’s new nuclear reactor. Later, the narrative follows the reporter Luisa Rey who is trying to uncover the truth. The fourth narrative, “The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish”, is narrated as a memoir that follows a struggling publisher who gets a breakthrough as one of his books, an autobiography by a crook who is in jail, becomes a best-seller and earns him a lot of money. After receiving threats from the family of the crook, Cavendish flees to the countryside to what he thinks is a hotel room paid for by his brother. However, it turns out that the hotel is a nursing home where Cavendish gets locked in and desperately tries to escape. The fifth narrative, “An Orison of Sonmi~451”, is set in the distant future and follows the fabricated clone named Sonmi~451, who has been captured and scheduled for execution, as she has obtained consciousness and joined an anti-government resistance group, something that is highly irregular. The narrative is told as an interview and details her life before and after obtaining consciousness, which turns out to have been choreographed in its entirety by the government. The sixth and last narrative, “Sloosha’s Crossin’ an’ Evrythin’ After”, is set further in the future, in a post-apocalyptic world, where humanity has been reduced to primitive tribes presumably due to nuclear disaster and follows Zachry, who is a member of the peaceful Valleymen tribe. This narrative is presented as oral storytelling, as Zachry narrates it to fellow people of the tribe. One day, a more advanced tribe named the Prescients sends the woman Meronym to observe the Valleymen’s way of life for a year, and her relationship with Zachry and the Valleymen serves as the focal point of the narrative as they have to deal with distrust, disease, and the violent Kona tribe.

The unique plotting of *Cloud Atlas* and the use of several narratives and different narrators will act as the point of departure for our analysis. The first five narratives are split into two parts each, while the sixth narrative is presented in its completed length. In the first half of the novel, the implied author has chosen to order the first parts of each narrative chronologically, starting with part one of Adam Ewing's journal from the mid-nineteenth century and ending with part one of the interview of Sonmi~451 from a distant future. Each narrative ends at a critical point in the plot and does not get resolved until much later in the novel. Due to the difference in narration, time periods, and characters in each part, it can initially be difficult for a reader to figure out a connection between the narratives. The sixth story is followed by the second part of the first five narratives. However, the second part of each narrative is all presented in backwards chronological order, meaning that it begins with the story of Sonmi~451 and ends with Adam Ewing's journal. This creates a structure that resembles a full circle, as the novel begins and ends with the same narrative, which we have illustrated here:



The implied author has chosen to use different types of narrators for each subplot, which further differentiates the stories. As the chapter's title implies, "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing" is presented as journal entries written by Adam Ewing. The journal entries are written in chronological order but sometimes jump several days ahead. The narration of the journal is in the first-person perspective, where the narrator is the main character, which means that it is an autodiegetic narrator, as is shown through the use of pronouns: "Beyond the Indian hamlet, upon a

forlorn strand, I happened on a trail of recent footprints” (Mitchell 3). This type of narrator is limited when it comes to conveying information to the reader, as it only provides the perspective of a single character. It is unclear whom the narrator speaks to, other than himself, as it is a personal journal. However, both parts of the narrative are contextualised by information found in the rest of the novel. The first part of the journal ends mid-sentence abruptly: “Reading my entry for 15th October, when first I met Rafael” (Mitchell 39), and the sentence is not completed until more than 450 pages later in the final chapter of the novel: “during our shared *mal de mer* on the Tasman Sea, I stand amazed at how the sprite lad...” (Mitchell 493). This creates a situation that forces the reader to return to the first part of the novel, as they would not likely not be able to remember whom the incomplete sentence refers to otherwise. This approach makes the reading subscendent as the reader has to defy the logical way of approaching a novel. During the plot between the two parts of “The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing”, the reader is made aware that the copy of the journal read by Frobisher has been split into two halves, similar to how the plot is presented to the reader (Mitchell 64). Therefore, ending and starting both parts of “The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing” mid-sentence promotes the feeling of a connection between the two parts at the end.

The chapter “Letters from Zedelghem” is told by a different first-person narrator through various letters from the main character, Robert Frobisher, and addressed to a character named Rufus Sixsmith. Like the case of Ewing’s journal, it is an autodiegetic narrator with internal focalisation as the protagonist writes the letters, which is illustrated through the use of the pronoun I: “You’d remind me I brought it all upon myself, Sixsmith, but shrug off that middle-class chip on your shoulder and stick with me a little longer” (Mitchell 44-45). Furthermore, it is clear that the narrator is speaking to Sixsmith, as the letters are all addressed to him.

The third narrative, “Half-Lives - The First Luisa Rey Mystery”, is primarily narrated from the perspective of two characters. The beginning is narrated from a third-person perspective, following the scientist Rufus Sixsmith, who is also the addressee of Frobisher’s letters: “Rufus Sixsmith leans over the balcony and estimates his body’s velocity when it hits the sidewalk and lays his dilemmas to rest” (Mitchell 89). Later, the point of view changes to that of another character, a reporter named Luisa Rey. However, it also takes the point of view of several minor characters; thus, the shift in the third-person point of view from one character to another means that the narrator is heterodiegetic with multiple selective omniscience. The implied author’s use of a narrator with multiple selective omniscience means that he is less restricted when it comes to presenting information to the reader compared to the other narratives. The type of narration found in both parts

of “Half-Lives - The First Luisa Rey Mystery” stands out as it is the only narrative in the novel to be told in the third person and from more than one perspective. This change in narration, paired with the fact that it presents a mystery, makes the narrative stand out to the reader as more significant than the first two narratives, even if that is not necessarily the case. We argue that this is because the heterodiegetic narrator is transcendent and therefore presents the reader with a more complete narrative than other parts of the novel through omniscience.

The chapter “The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish” presents another autodiegetic narrator; however, he stands out as he addresses the reader directly. Furthermore, the narrative is a memoir written by the main character: “That’s the problem with inking one’s memoirs in longhand. You can’t go changing what you’ve already set down, not without botching things up even more” (Mitchell 148). The fact that the narrator directly addresses the reader and that his memoir starts with him confessing to a lie seems to denote a certain amount of unreliability: “Alas, I had already amplified the truth and told her my muggers were five louts with swastikas shaved on to their skulls” (Mitchell 148). This notion seems to be further supported by some of the exaggerated characters, such as the diabolical caretakers in the nursing home found in this narrative.

The fifth narrative, “An Orison of Sonmi~451”, is structured as an interview between two characters. Due to this, much of the narrative consists of dialogue between the two characters: “Fair point. Did you have a sense of time? Of the future? Yes: as governed by Catechism Six. Which states? *One Year, One Star, Twelve Stars to Xultation!*” (Mitchell 190). However, the character being interviewed, the protagonist Sonmi~451, functions as a first-person narrator whenever she is telling her story to the interviewer: “A bearded passenger slouched in the roomy interior, working on his sony. He xuded authority, like a Logoman, but much more so. I crouched by the door, watching his flexing knuckles, his aged face, waiting for his order” (Mitchell 209). This example makes it clear that the implied author uses an autodiegetic narrator with internal focalisation in the parts where Sonmi~451 recalls her past.

The last narrative, “Sloosha’s Crossin’ an’ Evrythin’ After”, is also told from a first-person perspective by the protagonist Zachry: “Up I looked an’ sure ’nuff there was Old Georgie crossleggin’ on a rottin’ ironwood tree, a slywise grinnin’ in his hungry eyes” (Mitchell 249). However, initially, it is not clear who the narrator is speaking to or how the narrative is conveyed. At the end of the narrative, it is revealed that it has been told by Zachry’s son, who seems to be telling the story of his late father to other members of his tribe: “Zachry my old pa was a wyrd buggah, I won’t naysay it now he’s died” (Mitchell 323). The story is either told by Zachry himself

or is told by his son, although this is unclear due to how the chapter ends. However, this is another example of an autodiegetic narrator with internal focalisation.

Divergent Narratives: Timeless Interconnection

Even though the plot is presented in a unique manner, each individual narrative is common in isolation. The journal form has been used before in other known works, such as H.P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931), while Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) is epistolary as it is told through diary entries, letters and more. However, even though *Dracula* features multiple narrators, they are all first-person narrators, sound rather similar, and present the narrative in a coherent manner. While the narrators of *Cloud Atlas* are primarily autodiegetic, the novel still stands out as the presentation differs greatly between the narratives. The use of a heterodiegetic narrator and the fragmented structure of the novel underlines the difference in narration. Each narrative makes sense in isolation; however, additional meaning can be found when they are all put together. *Dracula* stands out as the letters and journals of the novel each exist as physical objects in the narrative, which the character Mina collects and creates a work that includes all information known about Dracula and is one of the primary reasons that he is brought down. The fact that the characters in the story are interacting with and reading the same things as the reader is similar to Mitchell's novel. Adam Ewing's journal, the letters from Frobisher, Luisa Rey's manuscript, Cavendish's memoir, and Sonmi-451's orison are all physical objects that characters in the novel interact with. However, it can be argued that the physical copy of the information about Dracula that exists in the story plays a more significant role in the plot than the physical journal, letter, manuscript, memoir, and orison in *Cloud Atlas*.

The connection between each protagonist is not explicitly stated but rather shown through actions, thoughts, themes, or dialogue. An example of similar themes and actions can be found in the narratives of Ewing and Sonmi-451. Ewing seeks to end slavery in the United States, while Sonmi-451 seeks to end the slavery of fabricants. Furthermore, the characters are not aware that they are connected or that they share the same birthmark, and the connection is not necessarily a focal point of each narrative as it mostly plays a small role in terms of the actions of the protagonists. Instead, the actions of the main characters repeat, themes are mirrored, and future events are foreshadowed. An example of this can be found in the second narrative, where the composer Vyvyan Ayrs describes a dream to the protagonist: "I dreamt of a ... nightmarish café, brilliantly lit, but underground, with no way out. I'd been dead a long, long time. The waitresses all

had the same face. The food was soap, the only drink was cups of lather” (Mitchell 80). While never explicitly stated, the dream of Ayrs perfectly describes that of the Papa Song diner where Sonmi~451 works before her awakening. Thus, the dream functions as a foreshadowing of events that happen at a much later point in the novel. An example of narratives directly interacting with each other is found in “The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish”; however, it does not impact the overall plot. Here, Cavendish receives a manuscript which features the story of Luisa Rey and a cover letter from the author:

Mrs Latham brought in the mail and left without a word. Bills, junk, moral muggings from charity fundraisers and a package addressed ‘FAO The Visionary Editor of “Knuckle Sandwich”’ containing a MS titled *Half-Lives*— lousy name for a work of fiction—and subtitled *The First Luisa Rey Mystery*. Lousier and lousier... Nutcase ahoy. I threw the letter away into my ‘Urgent Business’ tray and switched on my spanking new fat-gigabyte computer for a game of Minesweeper. (Mitchell 157-158)

This is interesting from the perspective of the reader, as Cavendish’s comment functions as a direct metacommentary on the name of another chapter in the novel. Here we argue that the reader transcends, as the reader possesses more information about the manuscript than the narrator. The reader is aware of the importance of the manuscript and that Luisa Rey is somehow connected to Cavendish. However, the metacommentary is also a way for the implied author to comment on his own work through the narrator. The appearance of the Luisa Rey narrative does not serve as an important part of the plot, which is further exemplified when Cavendish decides to read a couple of pages in the manuscript later in the chapter:

I opened my briefcase for a bag of Werner’s toffees but came up with *Half-Lives—The First Luisa Rey Mystery*. I leafed through its first few pages. It would be a better book if Hilary V. Hush weren’t so artsily-fartsily Clever. She had written it in neat little chapteroids, doubtless with one eye on the Hollywood screenplay. (Mitchell 164)

Similar to the previous quote, the narrator directly comments on the Luisa Rey narrative. However, this time both the plot and the narration are commented on. While Cavendish does end up wanting to publish the manuscript as a book, or even a series, the Luisa Rey narrative does not play an important role in the plot. Therefore, it serves as an example of a direct connection between the narratives without an impact on the overall plot.

Another theme that is present throughout the narratives is the idea of an environmental disaster caused by nuclear fallout. While a direct connection is never stated, this theme is present in

both “Half-Lives - The First Luisa Rey Mystery”, “An Orison of Sonmi~451”, and “Sloosha’s Crossin’ an’ Evrythin’ After”. As mentioned earlier, the Luisa Rey narrative is centred around the exposure of new and dangerous nuclear reactors that could lead to a massive ecological catastrophe. However, even though Luisa Rey succeeds in stopping Seaboard and their dangerous nuclear reactors, most of Earth is uninhabitable due to numerous zones of irradiated “deadlands” which are: “... so infected or radioactive that purebloods perish there like bacteria in bleach ...” (Mitchell 215). By the time of Sonmi~451’s narrative. It is never explained what exactly happened to cause the “deadlands”; however, the radiation denotes that a nuclear catastrophe is likely to have been the cause. Likewise, this theme is present in Zachry’s narrative as well, as Earth’s condition has worsened with the collapse of society, together with spreading diseases and mutations. Therefore, and considering the way the plot is structured with fragmented chapters, the novel invokes a similar feeling to that of Morton’s idea of a “car crash”. When the reader is presented with the second part of each narrative after reading “Sloosha’s Crossin’ an’ Evrythin’ After”, they are transcendent since they already know the fate of the world. Even if most of the narratives have a positive conclusion, the reader is aware of the inevitable societal collapse. While this does sound grim, it can be interpreted in a more positive manner as we relate it to Morton’s theory, which aligns with Bracke’s idea of a more productive approach regarding narratives that feature environmental collapse. The novel starts with Adam Ewing, who is presented as a hypersubject, which we will explore in the next section, and the middle of the novel denotes the total collapse of society. Ewing subscends at the end of the book, which will be addressed in more detail later, as we argue this cannot be interpreted as a new beginning. Furthermore, it is evident that each story follows a similar structure as the first part of each narrative is rather dark and ends at a critical time in the plot. Examples of this are Cavendish’s heart attack and Rey being driven off a bridge. Nevertheless, the second part of each narrative ends on a high note or gives a feeling of hope, as Ewing subscends and Sonmi~451 call to action against the government. However, even if the narratives end on a high note, the reader is aware that history will repeat itself and that society will eventually collapse as a consequence of humanity’s actions.

While it does not make sense initially, the information shown in the earlier narratives helps contextualise the themes of the more abstract narratives set in the future, which in turn gives a new perspective as the novel loops back to the beginning. All of this contextualises the protagonists of the novel by showing how, even though they are all different, they end up displaying some of the same traits, and the narratives share similar themes or are directly connected to each other.

Therefore, the implied author shows how history repeats throughout the plot and how characters display the same traits regardless of setting and time.

Adam Ewing: Institutionalised Hypersubjectivity

Since the novel is split into six different narratives, which all occur in different time periods, the novel has multiple main characters. Instead of one, the reader is presented with six different protagonists with different motivations, goals, and ideals. This part of the analysis will be centred around the characterisation of Adam Ewing, using Morton and Boyer's theoretical terms as a point of departure.

Ewing is a white mid-nineteenth century lawyer and devout Christian from the United States on a journey across the Southern Pacific from the Chatham Islands near New Zealand towards Hawaii. Ewing's narrative centres around colonialism as one of the main themes, as Koskinen points out in her reading of the novel. We argue that Ewing can be classified as a liberal humanist subject and, therefore, a hypersubject. This is both because of the predatory aspects of this behaviour found in colonialism and also because Ewing has liberal humanist freedom due to his job and social standing. However, Ewing's perspective on the world slowly changes throughout his experiences, and we argue that he starts to subscend at the end of the plot. In this section, we will explore how it is possible for a hypersubject to subscend through the characterisation of Adam Ewing and the use of Morton and Boyer's theory.

At the beginning of the novel, Ewing does not have a favourable view of either native islanders or enslaved people. While it is important to note that the mid-nineteenth century featured a radically different perspective on race than that of today, which means that Ewing's initial views do not divert from the norm of his time period, it is still relevant to analyse as it plays a central role in the plot and the development of Ewing as a character. Early in the novel, Ewing passes a group of islanders and their slaves: "The slaves, duskier & sootier than their nut-brown masters & less than half their number, squatted in the mud. Such inbred, bovine torpor! Pockmarked & pustular with *haki-haki*, these wretches watched the punishment, making no response but that bizarre, bee-like 'hum'" (Mitchell 6). Ewing describes the natives as if they are inhuman, which is exemplified through the use of animal characteristics such as "bovine torpor" and "bee-like hum". Thus, it is clear that Ewing differentiates between himself and the natives, as he considers himself to be civilised and the natives to be uncivilised. Parallels can be drawn to Hortle's reading, as the Polynesian natives are treated as something less-than-human similar to how Sonmi-451 and the

posthumans are treated. In this comparison, the Western colonists see themselves as being at the top of a hierarchy where the natives are at the bottom. Furthermore, this idea is supported by Koskinen's definition of "the other", as the natives are presented as an opposition to Western values and culture.

At this point in the narrative, Ewing elevates himself and his lifestyle above that of the Polynesians. To Ewing, the natives are hyposubjects who have not yet transcended to the level of Western civilisation. However, we argue that the natives also embody hypersubjectivity in their own way because they carry slaves of other natives and tribes, which mirrors how the colonialists treat them. In this sense, it is a matter of perspective as the natives are both predators and prey in relation to each other, but they are only prey in relation to the Westerners. Another example of how Ewing elevates himself above the natives can be seen in his interactions with the Polynesian stowaway, Autua: "I recalled that the stowaway may not have eaten for a day & a half, fearfully, for what bestial depravity might a savage not be driven to by an empty stomach?" (Mitchell 29). Here, Ewing again separates himself from the natives using animal characteristics in "bestial depravity", and his use of "savage" denotes something opposite of civilised. Furthermore, he does not trust the Polynesian as he initially suspects him of lying: "'I able seaman!' insisted the Black. 'I earn passage!' Well & good, I told him (dubious of his claim to be a sailor of pedigree), & urged him to surrender himself to the captain's mercies forthwith" (Mitchell 27). This contrasts how Ewing initially reacts towards other hypersubjects who he deems to share similar values to himself, such as the British Dr Goose, who Ewing trusts with his life even though the two have only met a couple of days prior. It seems that Ewing's mistrust of the natives is grounded in a lack of knowledge and a belief that the subscentent natives are unable to act in a rational manner because their way of life differs substantially from his. However, as shown later in the novel, Autua is neither a liar nor violent, and these traits are instead found in Ewing's fellow colonisers, such as the lying Dr Goose and the aggressive Mr Boerhaave. Ewing is not the only character to describe the natives as inhuman since other characters make similar or even worse descriptions. This is one of the elements that spark a subscentent change in Ewing as he is the witness to the cruel actions and opinions of his fellow colonisers, which makes him question his own actions and opinions.

Preacher Horrox, a missionary at the head of a small colony of natives and missionaries, ranks the races on what he considers a "ladder of civilisation": "It is Progress that leads Humanity up the ladder towards the God-head ... "Civilization's Ladder", if you will. Highest of all the races on this ladder stands the Anglo-Saxon" (Mitchell 506-507). He ranks races on his own

preconceived notion of their ability to progress and evolve, which he sees as the goal of humanity. The idea of progress as the essential aspect of humanity mirrors that of hypersubjects and their goal of becoming part of the grid. Through this, we argue that Horrox attributes the ability to transcend to race and that he believes certain races are unable to. However, he argues that a partial transcendence is possible with the help of white missionaries: “Now, our Polynesian. The visitor to Tahiti, O-hawaii, or Bethlehem for that matter, will concur that the Pacific Islander may, with careful instruction, acquire the “A-B-C” of literacy, numeracy & piety thereby surpassing the Negroes to rival Asiatics in industriousness” (Mitchell 507). Horrox explains colonialism as a way for the natives to transcend, which introduces more people into the grid. However it only produces slaves who are not given the same amount of education and freedom as the missionaries. Horrox clearly treats the natives as subjects to be exploited, and while white children receive additional education, the natives’ children work in the plantations. The dominion that Horrox has over the natives, which he uses to further his own goals of transcendence, is another trait that fits within the concept of hypersubjectivity. He uses knowledge as a tool of dominion to trick the natives into slavery through religion and by getting the workers addicted to tobacco that only he can supply them with. This further exemplifies that the implied author portrays certain kinds of hypersubjective traits as antagonistic, as they are embodied by predatory characters such as Horrox. The natives are taught that smoking is a part of Christianity as a way to make them addicted to tobacco, which Ewing learns from one of the missionaries:

You must understand, sir, your typical Polynesian spurns industry because he’s got no reason to value money. “If I hungry,” says he, “I go pick me some, or catch me some. If I cold, I tell woman, ‘Weave!’” Idle hands, Mr Ewing, & we both know what work the Devil finds for them. But by instilling in the slothful so-an’-sos a gentle craving for this harmless leaf, we give him an incentive to earn money, so he can buy his baccy— not liquor, mind, just baccy— from the Mission trading-post. Ingenious, wouldn’t you say?’ (Mitchell 501-502)

We argue that the missionaries are attempting to force the natives to become part of the grid. The traditional life of the natives is subsistent and Roomba-esque in nature, which means that they exist outside the grid of Western civilisation. By getting them addicted to tobacco, the missionaries force them to enter the grid as a way to get them to buy more tobacco. Therefore, the missionaries achieve dominion over the natives and force them into slave labour, and while the natives do become part of the grid, they do not inherit the same rights as their Western counterparts.

Through the introduction to both Western civilisation and mass organised religion, the

natives lose their subsistent way of life. However, this presents a challenge to Morton and Boyer's terms, as it seems illogical that someone can both transcend and become a slave at the same time. In a sense, they not only become slaves to the missionaries but also become slaves to Western societal norms that are fuelled by capitalism. Furthermore, specific natives receive a higher social standing than others by acting as enforcers for the missionaries, as told by Mrs Horrox: "Our Church Council—my husband & three wise elders—passes those laws we deem necessary, with guidance of prayer. Our Guards of Christ, certain natives who prove themselves faithful servants of the Church, enforce these laws in return for credit at my husband's store" (Mitchell 498). Thus, we reason that Horrox establishes a gridlike system, with a direct option to transcend through the Guards of Christ, as it gives certain natives dominance over others. This hierarchy is further explained by Mr Wagstaff, a missionary who has a low social standing among the others: "He carries a whip, 'but I rarely employ it myself. that's what the Guard of Christ the King are for. I just watch the watchers'" (Mitchell 510). Here, the oppressed are being used as oppressors by Horrox and his council. We argue this is a form of *institutionalised hypersubjectivity* built into religion, and liberalism forms parts of the grid. Furthermore, it is institutionalised through education, where the traits are adopted. We use this term as it is a deliberate way to structure society, which was brought by the missionary colonists. When the missionaries colonise the islands, they expect the natives to work and act in a way that complies with Western ideas of civilisation. Therefore, colonialism can be described as an educational programme promoting predatory behaviour, which becomes an expectation of the natives. However, there is duplicity to the education programme, as is exemplified when Ewing talks to the Horrox family during a meal:

The blacks work on our plantation to pay for the school, Bible study & church. In a week, God will it, we shall have an abundant harvest of copra.' I asked if the Indians worked of their own free will. 'Of course!' exclaimed Mrs Horrox. 'If they succumb to sloth, they know the Guards of Christ will punish them for it'. (Mitchell 499)

Here it is shown that one of the motivations for the natives to work as slaves and follow the missionaries is to avoid punishment. It becomes clear that institutionalised hypersubjectivity is used as a way to enslave the natives instead of helping them. All inhabitants of the island are part of the grid to varying degrees, as they are looking for some form of transcendence. Horrox and the council dominate the regular missionaries, the regular missionaries dominate the Guards of Christ, the Guards of Christ dominate the Christian natives, and the Christian natives have transcended further than the subsistent tribes who the West has not influenced. Thus, the structure of the grid found

on the island is transcendent in nature, which further elaborates why unplugging is an important step in subsistence as it presents an alternative to the harmful structure of the grid.

We argue that a *We* among hypersubjects is not easily established, as selfishness and the wish for dominion over others must adhere to the relationship between themselves as well. Ewing's relationship with Goose is an example of this, as Goose attempts to establish dominion over Ewing and exploit him. Goose views himself as the hunter, and Ewing as the prey, even if they are both predators. Meanwhile, Ewing views himself and Dr Goose as a *We* since he deems them to be the only civilised folk among a group of sailors, and thus above the sailors, even if the crew are also colonisers. Therefore, several definitions of *We* are established, which are all based on their perceived placement in a social hierarchy. Thus, the way they are portrayed implies that *We* are defined by a separation and a lack of the sense of communion that includes everyone. The exploitation of the natives makes Ewing reflect on colonialism and missionary work:

As with cooks, doctors, notaries, clergymen, captains & kings, might evangelists also not be some good, some bad? Maybe the Indians of the Societies & the Chathams would be happiest 'undiscovered' but to say so is to cry for the moon. Should we not applaud Mr Horrox & his brethren's efforts to assist the Indian's climb up 'Civilization's Ladder'? Is not ascent their sole salvation? I know not the answer, nor whence flew the surety of my younger years. (Mitchell 511-512)

Ewing starts to subscend as he begins to doubt the intentions of the missionaries. Furthermore, as he debates whether the natives would be happier without meeting the missionary and Western civilisation, we argue that Ewing puts the validity of that same civilisation or the grid into question. This is a highly subscent trait, as the grid acts as the foundation for transcendence, and doubting the grid is to doubt the foundations that his society is built upon. However, the quote still displays transcendent thought, as Ewing is conflicted as he states that a situation where the natives are not introduced to the grid is almost impossible.

Even though the grid functions as a foundation for hypersubjectivity, we argue that the island and the social structures found there do not provide an opportunity for people to be free liberal humanist subjects. Instead, it provides the illusion of accessing the grid and freedom to keep people working. The inhabitants of the island are not socially mobile, as there is a clear hierarchy and social structure, and therefore, they are denied freedom and choice. This can be exemplified through the natives, as their only option for social mobility is to join the Guards of Christ, which is only a small step above slavery as they are still far beneath the missionaries in the social hierarchy.

Furthermore, the lack of social mobility is shown through the missionaries as well, with Mr Wagstaff and his wife as an example of this. Mrs Wagstaff expresses the lack of opportunities in a conversation with Ewing and Mr Wagstaff: “Mr Ewing will think whatever Mr Ewing will think. Then, tomorrow, he will leave on his handsome schooner, taking his thinkings with him. Unlike you & I, Mr Wagstaff, who’ll die here. Soon, I pray God” (Mitchell 504). While the quote shows the lack of social mobility of the people living on the island, Mrs Wagstaff also points out that this is not true for Ewing. Therefore, it shows that freedom is inaccessible for the unprivileged, whereas it is only a reality for the privileged.

As Ewing is a devout Christian, his religious views conflict with that of his subscentent thoughts, which is seen when he writes: “Is not ascent their sole salvation?” (Mitchell 512). This denotes that he believes Christianity is needed, which requires meeting the missionaries and transcending for the natives to achieve salvation. We argue that Ewing’s struggle showcases how someone can have both hyper- and hyposubjective thoughts and traits, which enforces the idea that the terms are not static and that a person can change from one to the other or even exhibit both aspects. However, in accordance with the end of Ewing’s narrative, we argue that being able to disregard this feeling of impossibility is an important step in subscenting. Therefore, it is evident that while one can have subscentent thoughts, they are still a hypersubject if they do not act upon them.

While Horrox tries to sugarcoat some of his behaviours through religion and purpose, Dr Goose is more direct when it comes to the exploitation of people (Mitchell 509). Furthermore, while Horrox believes in a ladder of civilisation based on inherent traits of each race, Goose instead believes that transcendence is found purely through strength and dominion:

Why tinker with the plain truth that we hurry the darker races to their graves in order to take their land & its riches? Wolves don’t sit in their caves, concocting crapulous theories of race to justify devouring a flock of sheep! ‘Intellectual courage’? True ‘intellectual courage’ is to dispense with these fig-leaves & admit all peoples are predatory, but white predators, with our deadly duet of disease-dust & fire-arms, are exemplars of predacity *par excellence*, & what of it?’ (Mitchell 509)

Similar to Ewing, Goose compares the natives to animals. However, his description functions as a metaphor, as he describes the natives as sheep and the Western colonists as wolves, which denotes the connection between prey and predators. In certain ways, Goose can be described as hypersubjectivity personified, as he does not have any morals and is willing to achieve his goals by

any means necessary, whether that means exploiting the natives or slowly poisoning Ewing. The metaphor of the sheep and the wolves is similar to an example used by Morton and Boyer, where they mention *Attack on Titan* and the idea of opposing a predator much larger than themselves. This can be directly translated to the situation found in Ewing's journal, where the natives are the small hunted hyposubjects looking out at the massive Western predator, which Goose openly identifies with. While Ewing initially views the natives as a form of "the other", Goose instead sees them as a resource to be exploited. This clearly shows a difference in each character's views, and it is further illustrated when Ewing comments: "It upsets me that a dedicated healer & gentle Christian can succumb to such cynicism" (Mitchell 509). The difference in the ideals of each character shows that there can be varying degrees of hypersubjectivity. Both are seeking transcendence but their way of viewing the world differs greatly, which consequently shows that they are part of the grid to a varying degree.

The last part of Ewing's narrative, which is the end of the novel, features a long monologue from Ewing, who has recovered after being saved by Autua. In many ways, even considering that Ewing does not know the future, the monologue sums up and ties together the themes and events of the other narratives:

If we *believe* humanity is a ladder of tribes, a colosseum of confrontation, exploitation & bestiality, such a humanity is surely brought into being, & history's Horroxes, Boerhaaves & Gooses shall prevail. You & I, the moneyed, the privileged, the fortunate, shall not fare so badly in this world, provided our luck holds. What of it if our consciences itch? Why undermine the dominance of our race, our gunships, our heritage & our legacy? Why fight the 'natural' (oh, weaselly word!) order of things? (Mitchell 528)

Ewing starts his monologue by rhetorically questioning why he and Western civilisation should give up their privilege and stop exploiting the less fortunate. This contrasts with his comments from earlier in the novel, where he sees it as a futile endeavour, and instead, he confronts his own thoughts without being dismissive of them. The idea that the powerful and privileged would do well for themselves in a world where they continue to hold dominion over others is reminiscent of Morton and Boyer's ideas about hypersubjectivity. However, Ewing explains why opposing this idea is an important part of subscending:

Why? Because of this:—one fine day, a purely predatory world *shall* consume itself. Yes, the Devil shall take the hindmost until the foremost *is* the hindmost. In an individual, selfishness

uglifies the soul; for the human species, selfishness is extinction. Is this the doom written within our nature? (Mitchell 528)

This idea is similar to how the end of hypersubjects is described by Morton and Boyer. They are aware that their way of life is unsustainable and that they are slowly dying out; however, they are still unwilling to change. Ewing subsconds as he recognises this unsustainability; therefore, he is willing to change. Furthermore, it seems as if Ewing's narrative is specifically critiquing the selfish and predatory aspects of hypersubjectivity. Both Horrox and Dr Goose exploit and deceive as a way to achieve their selfish goals of power and riches. This is ultimately what sets them apart from Ewing, even if all three characters mainly exhibit predatory traits. However, the implied author portrays Ewing positively compared to Horrox and Dr Goose. Therefore, the narrative can be viewed as a critique of the predatory and greedy aspects.

While Ewing does possess the freedom of a white American lawyer, he does not exclusively use his freedom for his own gain. An example of this is when Ewing chooses to save Autua, even though it might get him in trouble, and the fact that he chooses to exert his privilege and becomes an abolitionist lawyer. However, even though some of his actions are subscondent in nature, Ewing's thoughts are still rooted in religiousness and thereby transcendent:

If we *believe* that humanity may transcend tooth & claw, if we *believe* divers races & creeds can share this world as peaceably as the orphans share their candlenut tree, if we *believe* leaders must be just, violence muzzled, power accountable & the riches of the Earth & its Oceans shared equitably, such a world will come to pass. I am not deceived. It is the hardest of worlds to make real. Torturous advances won over generations can be lost by a single stroke of a myopic president's pen or a vainglorious general's sword. (Mitchell 528)

The hypersubjectivity of Ewing immediately becomes apparent when his solution to the state of the world is for humanity to transcend. Furthermore, Ewing's religiousness is illustrated through his continuous mention of belief and that belief will result in a positive transcendence of humanity. His perfect world, as he describes it, follows a liberal thought process. Even though it is a peaceful and diverse world, it still has leaders in power, a conventional way of distributing resources, and it can be toppled by before it flourishes. The fact that Ewing is less selfish is shown later in his monologue when he talks about his son:

A life spent shaping a world I *want* Jackson to inherit, not one I *fear* Jackson shall inherit, this strikes me as a life worth the living. Upon my return to San Francisco, I shall pledge myself

to the Abolitionist cause, because I owe my life to a self-freed slave & because I must begin somewhere. (Mitchell 528)

Ewing wants to create a world for his son to inherit that he might not be able to enjoy himself, which is selfless. Considering how we described Horrox and Dr Goose as selfish and predatory, the negative portrayal of selfish hypersubjects paired with the positive portrayal of an unselfish one further illustrates that the implied author is criticising a certain type of character in the novel. By becoming an abolitionist lawyer, Ewing exits the grid controlled by the privileged of the Western society to join a cause that was frowned upon in this period. This is shown as Ewing expects a stern reaction to him joining the abolitionist movement from his father-in-law:

He who would do battle with the manyheaded hydra of human nature must pay a world of pain & his family must pay it along with him! & only as you gasp your dying breath shall you understand, your life amounted to no more than one drop in a limitless ocean!' Yet what is any ocean but a multitude of drops? (Mitchell 529)

Ewing's final remark, and the conclusion to the book, that the ocean is just a collection of multiple drops is similar to Morton and Boyer's theory of something being less than the sum of its part, which is the cornerstone of subscedence. While the imagined berating from his father-in-law denotes that he is unsure of whether he will be able to make a difference, Ewing still chooses to try. Furthermore, it shows that his choice to join the abolitionist movement diverts from the norms as it is a way to exit the grid; thus, he subsconds.

Ultimately, Ewing still shows traits of a hypersubject, as displayed through the numerous examples presented in this section. He is a privileged white guy trying to save the world by exerting his freedom. However, this is not presented as an immoral act, which further problematises the notion of hyper- and hyposubjects. Ewing is portrayed as a good person throughout the narrative, especially because of his choice to join the abolitionist movement at the end. He does not seek to actively exploit or prey upon the less fortunate, and he does not exert his freedom in a way that will only benefit himself. While we do argue that these types of subjectivity are not binary qualities, Ewing clearly aligns with the former. However, the fact that Ewing is a hypersubject painted in a positive light presents a problem, as Morton and Boyer continuously present it as something negative and harmful. We argue that Ewing exhibits subscedence in certain parts of the narrative, but this approach is ultimately a product of transcendence as he is deeply religious. This combination further problematises the terms as it paints Ewing's desire for humanity to transcend as something positive. Therefore, Ewing's narrative showcases that hypersubjectivity can be predatory

and selfish, which is the case of Dr Goose and Horrox, but also that it can be unselfish and that a less bleak desire for transcendence can exist.

Sonmi~451: Becoming a Multidimensional Subject

Sonmi~451 is the protagonist of the fifth narrative and another essential character in the novel. Her narrative takes place in the distant future and mirrors that of Ewing, although the roles are reversed. While Ewing can be defined as a liberal humanist, Sonmi~451 instead has hyposubjective traits, and she is born into slavery. As mentioned, the narrative of Sonmi~451 takes the form of an interview where she is getting interviewed by what is referred to as an archivist before her scheduled execution. Because she is an artificially grown clone, referred to as a fabricant Sonmi~451 is sentenced to a life of servitude in a diner:

You have no rests? ‘Rests’ constitute time-theft, Archivist! Hour zero is curfew, of course, so all consumers are gone by then. We clean every centimeter in the dinery by zero thirty, then assemble around the Plinth for Vespers, then file to the dormroom where we imbibe our sacs of Soap. By zero forty-five the soporifix take effect. In under four hours, the solars yellow-up for a new working shift, and another day begins. (Mitchell 188-189)

“Soap” is a drug that gets fed to the fabricants to keep them controlled, as it has a memory impairing effect on them. Additionally, the fabricants lack any kind of freedom or social mobility and are thus less-than-subjects. Their slavery becomes apparent when Sonmi~451 describes taking a break as “time-theft” and the fact that curfew just entrails more work. The goal of the fabricants is to achieve “Xultation” and become a “consumer”, which is possible after achieving 12 gold stars in the restaurant:

One Year, One Star, Twelve Stars to Xultation! At the Star Sermon on New Year’s morning, our twelvestarred sisters made the sign of the dollar, genuflected, then left by the Exit for the voyage aboard Papa Song’s golden ark. On 3D we saw them again as they embarked for Hawaii; later, their arrival at Xultation; soon after, their transformation into busy, well-dressed consumers. Their collars were gone; they waved from a world beyond our lexicon... How happy our sisters looked. They xhorted us to work hard; earn our stars with diligens; repay the Investment; and join them on Xultation as soon as possible. (Mitchell 190)

In many ways, this quote illustrates the life of the fabricants in the diner and the society around them. Their society is filled with liberalist greed to such an extent that human-like clones are made to do manual labour. The fact that their society is founded upon liberal greed is exemplified as the

twelvestarred fabricants make the sign of the dollar in an almost religious fashion. Furthermore, the fact that the clones work hard to become consumers after Xultation, which turns out to be a lie, is another example of their society being entirely dominated by money. Likewise, the futuristic society is governed by what they call a corpocracy, which means that corporations have most of the governmental power. The concept of a corpocracy can be seen as the direct result of rampant neoliberalist capitalism, which in turn creates an oppressive and unequal power structure run by money, similar to the compound and pleebland distinction in *Oryx and Crake*. This is further exemplified through the ‘beloved chairman’ whose statues and monuments tower over the cityscape, which paints a dystopian picture of the future. Furthermore, the chairman is presented almost as a divine figure and is mentioned in everyday speech: “Let’s pray to the Immanent Chairman that Boom-Sook won’t make *that* error again ...” (Mitchell 215). This further establishes the dystopian nature of their society. The way that the fabricants are told to repay an investment mirror that of the slaves of Horrox, as they are told to work to repay the money that it cost to build a school and church they did not ask for. However, Sonmi~451 differs from this because, at some point, the mind-altering effects of Soap suddenly stop having the full effect on her, and she starts to doubt her existence in the diner:

What shapes did these doubts take? Doubts about the sureties of the fabricant world. How could Papa Song stand on a plinth in Chongmyo Plaza Papa Song’s *and* walk to the Xultation’s beaches at the same time? Why were fabricants born into debt but purebloods not? Who decided Papa Song’s Investment took twelve years to repay? Why not eleven? Six? One? (Mitchell 198)

Though these are rather simple observations, due to the mind-altering effects of Soap and the almost cult-like indoctrination of the fabricants, Sonmi~451’s thoughts are highly irregular for a fabricant. Unlike the slaves of Horrox, who get tricked into working as a form of repayment of something, they can visibly see and interact with, the clones of Papa Song are instead led to believe that debt is just an inherent part of their existence. The slavery displayed in the narrative of Sonmi~451 is painted as an evolved form of the slavery illustrated in Ewing’s narrative. Furthermore, this is exemplified through the pureblood humans’ thoughts about fabricants: “To enslave an individual distresses the conscience, but to enslave a clone is merely like owning the latest mass-produces six-wheeled ford. In fact, all fabricants, even same-steam fabricants, are singular as snowflakes. Pureblood naked eyes cannot discern these differences, but they exist” (Mitchell 191). The fabricants are treated as commodities rather than individuals, even though Sonmi~451 argues that

they do, in fact, have distinct personalities and consciences. While the actions of the fabricants can be displayed as almost robotic, it is because the Soap is suppressing them: "... but from my own experience, I believe ascension only frees what was suppressed by Soap. Ascension doesn't implant traits that were never present. Despite what purebloods strive so hard to convince themselves, fabricants' minds differ greatly, even if their features and bodies do not" (Mitchell 191). Albeit the Soap is a much more extreme example, parallels can be drawn to the slaves of Horrox in the way that the natives are tricked into getting addicted to tobacco to keep them working, much like the clones are fed Soap to keep them working. However, Soap makes the fabricants act in a way that makes it easy to dehumanise them, which, as Sonmi~451 argues, makes it easier for the purebloods to live with the fact that they are employing slaves. Moreover, the government has banned the word 'slaves' altogether:

A more general question. Were you happy in those days? Is happiness the absence of deprivation? If so, servers are, as purebloods like to believe, the happiest stratum in the corpocracy. But if happiness is the conquest of adversity, or the sensation of being valued and fulfilled, then of all Nea So Copros' slaves we are surely the most miserable. **There are no slaves in Nea So Copros! The very word is abolished!** Archivist: is your youth genuine or dewdrugged? Why were you assigned to my 'unprecedented' case? I don't mean to offend you. (Mitchell 193)

As Ewing sets out to abolish slavery, it is ironic that humanity devolves back to slavery in the end while simply abolishing the word instead. Furthermore, it shows that this is a highly hypersubjective society, as the government is able to further instil their dominion by abolishing words altogether.

Slavery is present in half of the narratives in the novel, as shown in our analysis of both "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing" and "An Orison of Sonmi~451". Thus, it is one of the major themes that the implied author focuses on. Furthermore, as the perpetrators share similar traits and qualities, they are a particular kind of hypersubject, defined by greed and predatory behaviour. In "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing", Horrox and Dr Goose both take advantage of the natives, other missionaries, and Ewing. In the case of "An Orison of Sonmi~451", one notable character who also shares these traits that the implied author criticises is Seer Rhee, the overseer of the fabricants in the diner, who acts as a type of manager for the restaurant. Rhee is a troubled man who is caught in an unhappy marriage and stuck at a dead-end job where he has no chance of promotion due to a blemished record. Parallels can be drawn to Mr Wagstaff as both characters are stuck in a

similar situation. When Yoona~939, another fabricant who has started to ascend, talks back to him, Rhee reacts in a highly violent manner:

Seer Rhee was a heavy man. He locked my friend's head under her arm and battered it against the Plinth, repeatedly, until she was limp and senseless. Rhee kicked her until he was maroon with exertion. Yoona was now crushed, bloodied, and nearly unrecognizable. '*Look at her,*' he snarled, to us cowering fabricants. 'This is what happens to clones with ideas above their strata. That *deviant*'ll be sent away for reorientation first thing tomorrow.' Seer Rhee bent over, planted his nuke on her face, and ripped her collar off. The barcode stayed implanted in her windpipe. Rhee's fingers were wet with membrane and blood. The Seer inserted a single smeared star into Ma-Leu-Da's collar, saying nothing. Then he ground nine years of Yoona~939's labour under his nuke's heel. (Mitchell 200)

It is important to note that the fabricants are significantly more fragile and weaker than purebloods, as Hortle points out in his posthuman reading of the novel. Therefore, even if Yoona~939 wanted to fight back, it would be no more than an act of futility, similar to natives fighting against the technologically superior missionaries in Ewing's narrative. The way that Rhee violently lashes out is similar to Mr Wagstaff since he tries to beat his wife and son because they act in a manner, he deems uncivilised. Therefore, both characters exhibit clear predatory traits as they are violent and have dominion over others. Still, they are stuck in a situation that makes them miserable due to their lack of freedom. While both characters are responsible for overlooking slaves, neither of them reaps any significant reward from it, as they are employed by someone higher in the hierarchy. We argue that the implied author criticises not only slavery but also the capitalist structure behind it as the implied author illustrates how the system benefits only those at the top. Thus, even people from the middle class who have dominion over others are unhappy. People such as Horrox and members of the corpocracy act as the ultimate predators, and they employ other predators to do their bidding. Furthermore, it shows that people who have no freedom move up the ladder in a society of institutionalised hypersubjectivity will either become miserable, violent or both. We argue that this is due to the nature of the system as it illustrates how it is nearly impossible to subscend and that people become stuck in institutionalised hypersubjectivity, thus becoming miserable.

It is difficult to place the fabricants within Morton and Boyer's terms of hyper- and hyposubjects, as they are also deeply indoctrinated into institutionalised hypersubjectivity. The fabricants are goal-oriented with Xultation in mind and are thus not Roomba-like in their behaviour. This is especially true when the monotony of the clones' work and life is taken into context, as they

do the same work and rituals almost every day. To become a consumer is for the clones equal to transcendence, which they all strive towards. However, other than the pursuit of transcendence, fabricants do not possess any rational or predatory traits. Furthermore, we argue that the fabricants do not possess any overly hyposubjective traits either, as they do not exhibit any unique personality traits because they are brainwashed. This is because their entire existence is deeply rooted in the grid, while they are suppressed with Soap and therefore do not possess enough free will to unplug from it. Therefore, we argue that the fabricants cannot be defined as hypersubjects nor hyposubjects, even though the terms are not binary; however, the clones barely display any aspects of them.

Transcending Through Time

Another example of predatory behaviour and slavery can be found in the narrative “Sloosha’s Crossin’ an’ Evrythin’ After”, which takes place in the future after Sonmi~451’s execution. This further reinforces the notion that certain themes are repeated and that the implied author criticises a specific kind of hypersubjective behaviour which is exemplified through the violent Kona tribe that enslaves the main characters:

First rule is, slaves do your Kona masters’ say-so, quicksharp an’ no but-whyin’. Bust this rule an’ your master’ll bust you a bit, or a lot, d’pends on his will, till you learn better obeyin’.
Second rule is, slaves don’t speak ’cept when your master asks ‘em. Bust this rule an’ your master’ll slit your tongue an’ I will too. Third rule is, you don’t waste no time plottin’ scapes.
When you’re sold next moon you’ll be branded on your cheeks with your master’s mark. You’ll never pass for pureblood Kona ’cos you ain’t, true-be-telled all Windwards are freakbirthed shits. Bust this rule an’ I vow it, when you’re caught your master’ll blade off your hands an’ feet, blade off your cock to gag your mouth, an’ leave you by the wayside for the flies ’n’ rats’ feastin’. (Mitchell 305-306)

The chief who speaks in this quote exerts his dominion over the slaves and treats them as less-than-subjects in the way that he describes and speaks to them. Much like in the Sonmi~451 narrative, the Kona slavers treat their slaves as objects and do not mind hurting or killing them. Furthermore, the word ‘pureblood’ is reused in this narrative, this time denoting that any tribe that is not Kona is less-than-subjects. The fact that predatory traits still dominate after the collapse of society shows that it does not need capitalist structures to exist. This is also exemplified through the Maori tribe from the Ewing narrative, as they, similar to the Kona tribe, also enslave members of other tribes.

Both the enslaved tribe members from the Moriori tribe in the Ewing narrative and the Valleymen in “Sloosha’s Crossin’ an’ Evrythin’ After” exhibit similar traits as they are both peaceful, and therefore they function as prey to the violent tribes. The fact that the implied author repeatedly employs the same kind of predatory behaviours in similar instances across the different narratives further shows how the implied author criticises this type of behaviour since all characters with these traits are presented as the antagonists.

The use of six different stories with different types of focalisations, narration, and narrators makes *Cloud Atlas* a unique reading experience. Similar themes are explored in the different narratives, such as environmental disasters caused by nuclear fallout and hyper- and hyposubjectivity in relation to slavery. The repetition helps contextualise the protagonists and some of the more abstract settings in the future. Through our analysis, we have shown how Morton and Boyer’s terms can be ambiguous when applied to literature, as several characters exhibit traits from both categories. In addition, even though Ewing leans towards hypersubjectivity, he is presented positively by the implied author, which contradicts Morton and Boyer’s presentation of this type of subjectivity. Furthermore, the novel shows that a *We* between people with certain rational and predatory traits can be problematic, as certain traits denote selfishness that comes at the expense of others, as shown through the characterisation of Dr Goose. However, as this selfishness can appear in a covert manner, such as in the case of Dr Goose, a *We* between people with these traits can be established on a false pretence. Ewing mostly exhibits hypersubjective traits; however, he is presented as a good and selfless person throughout the novel, while the fabricants of the Papa Song diner barely exhibit any of Morton and Boyer’s traits. This further reinforces the notion that such traits are not binary but are instead more akin to a spectrum, which can make the application of the terms difficult as many characters exhibit traits from both categories. Furthermore, the novel shows that these traits are not right or wrong in a moral sense, but rather that the severity or certain aspects of them are criticised, which is exemplified through slavery in the novel. Slavery is present in both the narratives of Ewing, Sonmi~451, and “Sloosha’s Crossin’ an’ Evrythin’ After”, and the slavers are presented as antagonists. Therefore, all three narratives criticise a specific type of behaviour, which includes predatory tendencies, greed, and having dominion over others. Furthermore, since Ewing is continuously portrayed in a positive manner even if he mainly displays hypersubjective traits, it reinforces the notion that the implied author does not criticise this type of subjectivity in general but rather a certain kind of predatory behaviour. However, even though Ewing mainly shows rational and predatory traits, he displays signs of subservience throughout the narrative,

which culminates in his monologue at the end of the novel. The change in Ewing shows that the implied author sees subsistence as something positive that can help change the perspective of people. However, the implied author also shows that harmful hypersubjectivity continues to prevail as history repeats itself because similar issues are the main theme in the stories which take place in the future.

Comparing and Concluding: An Ambiguous Relationship with the Environment?

In this chapter, we will compare the three novels by considering the different reading experiences they produce and how the implied authors criticise a specific and similar type of hypersubjectivity. Furthermore, we will discuss whether Morton and Boyer's theoretical terms are applicable as analytical terms and if these terms are useful to use when approaching literature. Subsequently, we will compare how the novels illustrate that humanity will be responsible for its own collapse and that something else might take its place. Finally, we will conclude how the novels conceptualise *We* and how transcendence and subsistence influence the prospect of a *We* by relating this question to our analyses and how it relates to being a good ancestor.

Though *Galápagos*, *Oryx and Crake*, and *Cloud Atlas* are dissimilar in many aspects, they each offer a unique reading experience. While *Galápagos* experiments with a narrative spanning a million years, *Oryx and Crake* present an embedded narrative that produces ongoing shifts between past and present, and Mitchell's novel experiments with six separate plots set in completely different times. In different ways, each novel provides the reader with a Roomba-like experience. In Vonnegut's novel, it is because Trout employs stream of consciousness in his narration, uses numerous digressions, and fragmented foreshadowing. These factors cause the reader to access information in the same Roomba-like manner Trout presents his story. In our reading of *Oryx and Crake*, we discovered that the reader accesses knowledge in a similar Roomba-like manner. However, this only applies to the frame narrative because it is narrated in the present tense, thus implying that the narrator has the same amount of knowledge as the reader. Therefore, because of the narrator's lack of knowledge they narrate without knowing where they are going, which implies a subsistent approach. While reading *Cloud Atlas*, we observed how the different plots were presented in a particular order making it necessary for the reader to return to previous pages to remember and make sense of the different narratives. Therefore, it forces the reader to defy the rational process of reading a novel, making the reading Roomba-like. Conclusively, it is evident

that each novel urges the reader to subscend. However, while *Galápagos* and *Oryx and Crake* achieve this through focalisation and narration, *Cloud Atlas* achieves it through plotting.

Furthermore, in our analysis, it became apparent that the implied authors criticise hypersubjectivity in different manners. In *Galápagos*, characters who subscribe to capitalism and embody traits concerning selfishness, greed, and predatory behaviour were systemically sorted from being evolutionarily relevant and thus labelled as insignificant by Trout. In *Oryx and Crake*, the implied author criticises hypersubjectivity by illustrating how capitalism is unregulated, which results in the compounds that cause people to engage in morally bankrupt practices such as the development of medicine for illnesses they have invented themselves. Thus, the implied author also criticises selfishness, greed, and predatory behaviour, but also capitalism and dominion over others. Furthermore, through the characterisation of Snowman, we have shown how the implied author demonstrates that transcendence leads to isolation, or more importantly, a separation from the *We* that includes everyone else. Following the points we made regarding Mitchell's novel, it became apparent that the implied author chose to employ certain characters, such as Dr Goose and slave traders, as antagonists. Thus, the implied author also criticises selfishness, greed, violence, predatory behaviour, and dominion. Furthermore, the critique extends to capitalism, which we defined as institutionalised hypersubjectivity, as it leads to slavery, and people becoming part of the grid. Therefore, all three novels can be read as a general critique of a specific and harmful form of hypersubjectivity. However, considering Adam Ewing, Mitchell's novel challenges the tendency that these characters are either insignificant, miserable, or plain evil.

As shown throughout our analysis, Morton and Boyer's terms can be applied in the discussion of the reader, narration, plot, characterisation, and implied author. However, while the terms were applicable as literary terms, they appeared problematic because of their seemingly binary nature. In their theory, Morton and Boyer tend to display hyposubjectivity positively, while hypersubjectivity is portrayed negatively. Contrarily, the novels occasionally portray it positively, which seems to challenge how the terms are presented in Morton and Boyer's theory. For example, in *Cloud Atlas*, Adam Ewing is continuously presented positively even though he mostly exhibits hypersubjective traits. Additionally, in *Galápagos*, Mary Hepburn exhibits selfishness when she uses captain Adolf von Kleist's sperm without his knowledge to fulfil her dream of having human babies on Santa Rosalia. Trout portrays this positively as he idolises how humanity evolves from this line of action and never condemns Mary's actions. Furthermore, the terms can get obscured as most characters share qualities of both of Morton and Boyer's terms, making it challenging to apply

them without disregarding them as categories and viewing the terms as markers for specific traits and behaviours. Therefore, we will discuss the problems of the terms, how they can be applied, and how they can categorise people, traits and behaviour.

The way we apply the terms takes a distance from a dualistic understanding of them, which we argue Morton and Boyer display by presenting it as undesirable or desirable. Since certain kinds of hypersubjectivity are presented positively in the novels, it is uncertain whether it is beneficial to characterise someone as being hyper- or hyposubjective. However, we define the terms as traits and employ them to investigate how different characters exhibit traits that relate to the categories. Therefore, our practical application shows how the terms are far from binary. Additionally, by denouncing all hypersubjective behaviours, future subjectivity is colonised through hyposubjectivity instead. An example of this is shown in *Oryx and Crake*, where Crake extinguishes the transcendent humans and replaces them with the subscendent Crakers.

Viewing the novels from a chronological perspective, the sequence of events is comparable in the sense that all three novels show how humanity in its current form seeks transcendence to the degree that results in ecological disaster and the collapse of human society. Therefore, all novels demonstrate that humanity will be responsible for its own collapse. After the collapse of society, humanity regresses to a simpler state from an evolutionary perspective both in *Galápagos* and *Cloud Atlas*. In contrast, humanity is almost completely replaced by a different bioengineered species in *Oryx and Crake*. In Vonnegut's novel, the fact that the seal-people are uncomplicated, simple, and live in harmony is presented positively, which shows how subscendence can give humanity a chance to redeem the detrimental acts of transcendence. Thus, we conclude that it promotes subscendence by showing how small changes can have an immense impact on the whole. This differs from Atwood's novel only because the Crakers are bioengineered. Therefore, as Crake deliberately planned their existence, they are created from a hypersubjective action rather than natural evolution. However, they are also portrayed as the ideal subjects, as they are the solution to everything that was wrong with humanity. Since the Crakers are primarily hyposubjective and approach the world in a subscendent manner the majority of the time, the implied author indicates that subscendence is a means to a more harmless and symbiotic relationship with the environment.

Nonetheless, in both *Galápagos* and *Oryx and Crake*, hypersubjectivity, capitalism and transcendence have gone so far that subscendence is only possible by extreme measures such as becoming seals or replacing humanity with Crakers. Considering *Cloud Atlas*, the novel is significantly different because even though it ends with the fact that Adam Ewing begins to

subscend, the novel is plotted in a way that makes the reader aware that history repeats itself and that the damaging aspects of hypersubjectivity continue. Even though people in the distant future evolve into a simpler state that is not capable of building fabricants as slaves, for example, the Valleymen and Kona tribes, they are still behaving in a way similar to what we saw in the narrative of Adam Ewing and Sonmi-451. Therefore, as opposed to the implied authors of *Galápagos* and *Oryx and Crake*, the implied author of *Cloud Atlas* demonstrates that hypersubjectivity is inevitable and will be present regardless of time and context.

In the analysis, a common theme has been the investigation and conceptualisation of the notion of *We*. By employing Morton and Boyer's terms, patterns seem to occur in regard to which traits allow for the conceptualisation of a *We* based on unity with other beings and the environment. Conversely, it also became apparent which traits make this conceptualisation difficult. This was illustrated in Vonnegut's novel in the form of the seal-people. The seal-people's approach to their environment resulted in a unified *We* that encompassed their entire race because of their subsistence. This was made explicit when the narrator remarked that the colonists of the island never became a family but after the last humans died, a family-like bond between the new generation on the island emerged. Thus, the implied author shows that this contrasts with how humanity before was unable to be part of a *We* since they exhibited egoism and a constant search for transcendence, which made them individualistic.

Similarly, *Oryx and Crake* distinguishes between hyposubjects who form a *We* defined by unity through the Crakers and hypersubjects who cannot form a coherent *We*, represented by the corporate compounds. The implied author shows that the corporate compounds are unable to create a coherent *We* because they are all trying to achieve transcendence in the form of wealth and dominion over others; thus, they are too selfish to be considered part of a *We*. Contrarily, what points toward the fact the Crakers' *We* were defined by unity and community is that they have a sense of connectedness that is not divided by differences such as skin colour. They include everyone in their *We*, even Snowman, although he feels excluded because he finds it difficult to ignore that they are a different species. The Crakers do not cast him out or shun him; He isolates himself. However, the primary way they feel connected is through their religion, which is shaped by Snowman's stories. Among these stories are the Crakers' origin story, where Snowman explains that Crake created everything and how the spirit of Oryx is in every living being. In this sense, Snowman is both part of their *We* and a prophet-like figure that helps them transcend. The way that the Crakers create a unified *We* is interesting since it is done through religion, which is a means to

transcend. This is despite the fact that the Crakers act hyposubjectively and approach the world in a Roomba-like fashion. The fact that they are religious challenges the typical understanding of hyposubjectivity. Typically, when people subscribe to religion, it can be characterised as hypersubjective because it implies that someone has dominion over others, and it includes a distinction between people who subscribe to the religion and people who do not. However, since everyone is equally part of this religion, it challenges the understanding of religion as hypersubjective. Thus, the implied author shows that religion can help enforce a sense of connectedness.

In *Cloud Atlas*, the implied author illustrates how transcendence leads to isolation and a distinction between more-than-subjects and less-than-subjects while subscendence leads to connectedness. This is demonstrated through Ewing as he, in the beginning, feels superior to the *We* that includes the natives, in the sense that he calls them animal-related names. However, later he starts to connect with them when he begins to subscend. This shift happens when he becomes aware of how people take advantage of the natives, which makes him doubt his approach toward others. However, the process does not truly occur before he learns that he has been poisoned and betrayed by Dr Goose, whom he views as the only other civilised person on the ship and regards as his friend. In this sense, he is betrayed by another coloniser, but what truly makes him change his opinion towards the natives is when he is saved by Autua. After this, he is still transcendent, but small signs of subscendence start to occur as he recognises the natives as people and stops addressing them as animals. Furthermore, Ewing decides that he wants to be a good ancestor, at least to his son. Therefore, he joins the abolitionist movement to make the world a better place, even though he recognises that his efforts might end up being futile. As a result, he attempts to act in a hyposubjective manner and gives up some of his hypersubjective privileges to make a better future.

Following our analyses of the three novels, the implied authors show how characters who display hypersubjective traits are egoistic to the degree that makes it nearly impossible for them to be part of a *We*. Contrarily, characters who subscend and exhibit hyposubjective traits are described as a family, alike, and ideal. Thus, we argue that these characters are connected and thereby form a *We* defined by a harmonious relationship with their surroundings. This is especially prominent in *Galápagos* and *Oryx and Crake*. However, in *Cloud Atlas*, the implied author shows how hypersubjects can feel a sense of connectedness towards hyposubjects when they subscend, but the *We* they are part of is still individualistic. A different way to consider the question of *We* is in regard to Salk and his question of whether we are good ancestors. By asking this question, the seal-

people in *Galápagos* would be deemed good ancestors to a *We* that includes those yet to come since they are not damaging the environment and thus not colonising time by taking away their inheritors' agency. Contrarily humans rarely considered other than themselves. Thus, they did not subscribe to a *We*. This is especially illustrated through James Wait, a scammer, and Adolf von Kleist, a racist. Before, humanity was colonising time because their actions damaged the environment and, as a result, they caused the collapse of civilisation and human extinction despite those few on Santa Rosalia. Moreover, their lack of empathy towards each other illustrates Morton's point that the manner *We* relate to each other mirrors how *We* relate to our environment. In *Oryx and Crake*, Crake can be considered a good ancestor to Crakers and the environment in general, but not to humans as he created the deadly virus. Crake's actions show that he cares enough about the world to try to change the fact that humans were colonising the future. However, he only becomes a good ancestor to a different *We* than humans and takes away all agency from humanity in the future. However, as Crake is portrayed negatively in the plot, the implied author shows that hypersubjective solutions are not preferred and how being a good ancestor does not necessarily imply being a good ancestor to humans. In this way, human ancestors do not take away the opportunity from their inheritors because they have no agency. Lastly, in *Cloud Atlas*, the implied author shows how humanity keeps colonising time if hypersubjectivity dominates peoples' behaviour which is shown in their complete disregard for nature, resulting in the radioactive deadlands. The implied author highlights this through the different narratives connected both through specific phenomena such as birthmarks but also places, themes, and similar plots. Thus, the implied author illustrates how *We* as humanity repeats history by being hypersubjective, and thus how we are bad ancestors.

In this thesis, we have employed Morton and Boyer's theoretical terms transcendence, subsurgence, hyper- and hyposubjectivity to demonstrate the unique perspectives that the novels *Galápagos*, *Oryx and Crake*, and *Cloud Atlas* provide in relation to the Anthropocene. We challenged and expanded Morton and Boyer's terms while we have shown that the novels suggest that subsurgence is necessary to build a better relationship with our environment and that a world dominated by transcendence leads to disasters. The implied authors also suggest that subsurgence is necessary to conceptualise and achieve a *We* that is both constructive, encapsulates differences, and is capable of tackling hyperobjects in the Anthropocene such as global warming. Therefore, the novels also suggest that subsurgence is necessary to be a good ancestor because specific kinds of hypersubjectivity removes agency from both human and non-human inheritors by colonising time.

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