Surviving the Anthropocene: An econarratological examination of the environmental storyworlds and narrative empathy within Ian McEwan's *Solar* (2010) and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006)

Rikke B. Eilersen & Emma M. B. Andersen
Supervisor: Jens Kirk
Aalborg University
June 8, 2023

Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between narrative and environment in Ian McEwan's 2010 novel *Solar*, and Cormac McCarthy's 2006 novel *The Road*. First, we will look at how their two different approaches of satire and tragedy are employed to frame the two storyworlds both at the level of discourse and at the level of the storyworld. Second, we will examine how these two modes of persuasion affect the readers and guide them through their emotional responses to the storyworlds and the characters. This will be examined in relation to the era of the Anthropocene and the ways in which they, through their tragic and satirical approaches, may influence the reader's attitude and behaviour towards climate change. Lastly, there will be a discussion of how the aspects of satire and tragedy create different perceptions of the novels in relation to their depiction of a changing environment and whether or not these perceptions are determined by the reader's cultural background.

Keywords: Econarratology, Narrative Empathy, Tragedy, Satire, Allegory, the Anthropocene, Climate Change, Ian McEwan, Solar, Cormac McCarthy, The Road

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1. An introduction to Anthropocene climate fiction

The age of the Anthropocene, a geological epoch, defined by humanity's exploitation of the Earth and its natural resources, has, in many ways, influenced the way in which we read fiction in contemporary time. This new epoch has engendered a new scope of environmental discourse in cultural and literary studies that is interested in the relationship between climate change and literature. In this sense, the examination of Anthropocene storyworlds are not only essential for understanding the issues of the epoch, but also for environmental thought in relation to its potential to make the reader rethink their relationship with nature and climate change, albeit in different ways (Hegglund 27).

This paper will consist of an analysis of two examples of climate fiction: Ian McEwan's *Solar* from 2010 and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* from 2006. *Solar* revolves around the imminently dislikeable scientist Michael Beard, a Nobel Prize laureate whose professional and personal life melt together in a freak accident. Beard is an opportunistic, obese scientist who overconsumes food, women and especially crisps, which eventually takes its toll on his body and physical health. *The Road* takes place in a ravaged, post-apocalyptic America in which a father and his son struggle to survive in the burned, grey and ashy landscape. Despite the situation they are in, the man and the boy manage to maintain moral goodness, especially towards each other. Even though Ian McEwan's *Solar* and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* depict different storyworlds in terms of the novels' temporal and spatial settings and their use of satire and tragedy, they both explore how each their current state of the environment can affect humanity and the reader in different ways. *Solar* depicts the climate crisis through the point of view of Beard whose ambition is to create a solar energy solution for climate change. On the contrary, *The Road* treats an ecological disaster in which has extirpated all requisite resources for survival.

This thesis will examine econarratology in relation to how Ian McEwan's *Solar* and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* offer up environmental insights at both the level of the storyworld and the level of the discourse. In doing so, we analyse the two different storyworlds in terms of their tragic and satirical portrayal of the environment and humanity's role within it. Moreover, we will look at how the tragic and the satirical mode create different emotional resonance with the characters within the reader. Lastly, we will discuss how satire and tragedy have different influences on the reader's interpretation of the novels and how this interpretation may be tied up with the reader's cultural background in relation to how American and British culture perceive the notions of tragedy

and satire. In this sense, we will argue that despite the two novel's dissimilarities in terms of plot and storyworld, the novels meet in their ability to affect the reader's environmental awareness, though through different modes of persuasion.

2. Methodology

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century and the era of the Anthropocene, an increasing number of writers have weaved the tale of anthropogenic climate change into their narratives. This focus on climate change in literature came approximately at the time when the real life anthropogenic climate crisis started occupying much of our lives. The contemporary focus on the climate crisis began a new wave of climate fiction that seems to have a significant grasp on the literature, films, games, etc. that are released today. In 2003, Margaret Atwood published the speculative fiction *Oryx and Crake*, which depicts a near post-apocalyptic future where the ecology of the planet has collapsed, the boundaries between culture and nature blur and a new species is formed due to genetic engineering. Some of the same issues are introduced in Jeff VanderMeer's eerily uncanny novel *Annihilation* (2014), where the readers are invited to explore the mysterious and strange new region, Area X, wherein nature consumes everything it touches. Over the past two decades the dystopian and apocalyptic tales of a changing world, such as the two abovementioned, have had a thigh grip on the modern consumer of fiction attempting to inspire climate action by depicting a near future that is both familiar and unfamiliar. Zombie and epidemic outbreaks such as the video game *The Last of Us* (2013) which, since its publication, have positioned itself as a modern classic in the videogame space. *The Last of Us* portrays a world wherein society is breaking down due to a zombie outbreak caused by a mutating fungus that infects the human brain. In the game, the player controls a character named Joel who is assigned the responsibility for a young girl named Ellie whose biology might provide a cure, and thereby, be humanity's only chance of survival. *The Last of Us* premiered as a TV series in January 2023 where the mutating fungus is explicitly explained as a consequence of the intensity of global warming. The TV series is faithful to the original material but there are some modifications such as how the warming of the planet has resulted in the mutation of the fungus, which presents it with a more climatological approach.

Many of these abovementioned climate narratives serve as a warning about what happens if humanity continues to stay in its anthropocentric position. However, through these past decades, writers have had different takes on how to tell a story about climate change that could change the reader's environmental position. Through an aesthetic and ecocentric tale about trees and activism,

Richard Powers invites his readers to explore climate change and their relationship with nature in his novel *The Overstory* (2018). Just as *Oryx and Crake* and *Annihilation*, Power's novel criticises humanity's anthropocentric position towards nature and addresses contemporary climate problems. Yet, instead of speaking to humanity's anxieties about climate change through a dystopian, apocalyptic and strange storyworld, *The Overstory* depicts nature as something beautiful and alive and something we should preserve. Thereby, Power attempts to change the reader's environmental orientation, not through tragedy and dystopia, but by showing the reader an alternative lifestyle in harmony with nature. Another different take on an ecocritical work is Adam McKay's political satire *Don't Look Up* (2021), where humanity's lack of response to the climate crisis is criticised through an analogy in the shape of a planet-killing comet hurtling towards Earth. These titles are just some of many climate narratives that have been released since the beginning of the Anthropocene and not only do they show the popularity of the genre, but it also shows the genre's sheer variety through these many, different ways to portray the climate crisis and how they use different approaches to influence the reader's green morale.

The variety and large number of texts in this genre make many different opportunities available when choosing primary texts for this thesis. We have chosen the two texts based on their completely different representations of environmental storyworlds. Their narrative structure, character design and environmental approach are vividly contrasting: *The Road* portrays a tragic, post-apocalyptic tale of a father and his son on their journey of survival in a burned-down America; and in the darkly satirical novel *Solar*, the readers follow, the very dislikeable, egocentric scientist, Michael Beard, who almost saves the planet with a new technology for utilising solar energy. While the two novels are distinctly opposite in their environmental approach - one being tragic and the other satirical - both novels can still, yet in different ways, be seen as climate fiction that criticises humanity significant impact on the planet and their exploitation of natural resources. These two texts are, furthermore, chosen as they cover both American and British literature and culture, and thereby, the main areas that have preoccupied our education.

This thesis will analyse the two novels using the new interdisciplinary field labelled econarratology. Developed by Erin James in her work *The Storyworld Accord: Econarratology and Postcolonial Narratives* (2015), econarratology combines the fields of ecocriticism and narratology as a way to explore the relationship between the narrative and the reader. As the name implies econarratology contains of eco, which brings the content of a narrative into play and of narratology, which focusses on the form. Econarratology pays attention to the worldmaking power of a storyworld and

its potential to immense and transport the readers into an environment different from the one in which they read. In *Environment and Narrative: Towards New Directions in Econarratology* (2020) James combines her work with Eric Morel, by creating a collection of essays that could be considered econarratological readings. These essays address a robust range of topics and methodologies for econarratology, but there are still more issues and topics to address. In this sense, working in a new field like econarratology can be challenging, as it is not yet a well-defined or painstakingly worked out theory. Many scholarly texts about econarratology keep a thigh connection to James' initial work from 2015, and as a result, it becomes challenging to outline a diverse and diffuse definition. Instead, it is a theory with methodological possibilities that functions as a conversation starter and proposes a different, contemporary and diverse way to analyse and examine environmental storyworlds. As James and Morel argue:

> We also see much more room to expand upon some of the key considerations at the heart of this cluster of essays, including questions of the human and nonhuman, analysis of narrative discourse and rhetoric in light of environmentalism, readings of narrative space and the worldmaking power of narratives, and explorations of new narrative structures and genres inspired by new environments. We present this collection to you as a conversation starter and invite you to join us. (21)

In this sense, econarratology consists of a small scholarship, but its combination of other fields offers a lot of material to draw on and allows us to provide a more comprehensive delineation of econarratology. We have, therefore, divided our theory into different sections that account for these different fields and their role within econarratology. Econarratology is especially preoccupied with cognition whereby its narratological approach is postclassical and as we will explain in the theory, the postclassical narratology consists of classical elements. Therefore, we will have an introduction of both classical and postclassical narratology and how it fits within econarratology. Our delineation of econarratology is primarily concentrated on James' framework in *The Storyworld Accord*, which we combine with the development of the concept in James and Morel's collected work. Furthermore, we use Jens Kramshøj Flinker's definition of econarratology in his article "Econarratology, the Novel, and Anthropocene Imagination" (2022) and how it can be used to influence understandings of both Anthropocene texts and the Anthropocene reality. Flinker's work, thereby, provides a more extensive perspective on econarratology, as James' outline primarily focuses on postcolonial text.

The econarratological method enables an investigation of how literature can affect the reader's understanding of environmental storyworlds. In this sense, this thesis will look at what effect climate fiction such as *Solar* and *The Road* have on the readers, and how the literary structure

and the readers' contextual surroundings play a role in the readers' understanding and perception of these storyworlds. We wish to examine questions such as: how do readers interact with the environments they encounter in fiction? How are readers influenced by these environments on a cognitive, emotional and transformative level? How do environmental storyworlds invite readers to care for literary characters? And how does the way in which a story is told influence readers' understanding and perception of them? As we try to answer these questions, the field of econarratology will be used as a method to combine an analysis of both content and form in the two texts. On this basis, the analysis will consist of a comparative reading of the two novels while we pay extra attention towards the literary structure of the novels, the very different emotional stages of the two protagonists and the ways in which they evoke different emotional responses in the readers based on their attitude and behaviour.

Our use of cognitive narratology and narrative empathy will support the examination of how emotional responses are evoked in the readers and how these responses may contribute to an environment friendly transformation in some readers. Throughout the analysis we will take the context of the Anthropocene into account in relation to how cultural knowledge of this era can influence the text. Furthermore, the two novels are analysed, written and read in the modern Anthropocene, which may contribute to a prevailing and relevant storyworld that the reader can identify with on some levels. Moreover, the aspect of cognitive narratology and narrative empathy is applicable to the two novels as they represent two very different characters with different values, behaviours and ideologies, with whom the readers probably will have contrasting emotional resonances.

The examination of the literary structure of the two texts will focus on the level of the storyworld and the level of discourse - what is told and how it is told. On the level of the storyworld, we will have special attention to events, characters and setting as it supports the analysis of the reader's emotional responses to the ecological home wherein the literary characters exist. On the level of discourse, we use devices such as plot, narrative voices and focalisation in order to look at the narrative situation of who speaks and who sees. These devices are essential as it reveals the constructed nature of a narrative and how it can be used to manipulate the reader.

Aspects of satire and tragedy are additionally essential when it comes to the readers' emotional responses to the narrative text as it creates different atmospheres both within the narrative and for the reader. We will also be looking at the cultural aspects of satire and tragedy in terms of the assumption that satire is an approach primarily associated with British culture while tragedy is often categorised as something culturally bound with America. This assumption will be discussed as a

continuation of the analysis in relation to the case that the satirical novel *Solar* is written by a British author and the tragic novel *The Road* is written by an American author.

3. Approaching econarratology and environmental storyworlds

In order to examine the abovementioned thesis, it is necessary to establish a theoretical framework. We will divide the theory into two larger sections. The first section will consist of a delineation of econarratology in terms of how it pairs the environment and narratology. In this section, we will look at how econarratology is defined and how it combines ecocriticism, classical narratology and cognitive studies. The second section will look more intensely into cognitive studies in relation to how the reader is able to cultivate different feelings for literary characters. In doing so, this section will examine the function of the reader's mirror neurons in relation to Theory of Mind and mind-reading abilities. Lastly, it will conceptualise the working definitions of empathy, sympathy and antipathy as well as comment on narrative empathy.

3.1. The fusion of environment and narrative

Environmental humanities have, thus far, been focussing on humanistic questions about meaning, culture, values, ethics and responsibilities in order to address the pressing environmental issue we face in the era of the Anthropocene (James & Morel 2). However, in their work *Narrative and Environment: New Directions in Econarratology* (2020) Erin James and Eric Morel suggest that narrative studies should be part of the environmental humanities as "the modern environmental crisis, in addition to being partly a crisis *of* narrative, also promises to have a strong effect *on* narrative and narrative theory" (Emphasis in original, 1). Thereby, James and Morel argue that narrative stories about the environment influence the reader's experiences of that environment and vice versa. For James and Morel, the implementation of narrative studies in the environmental humanities opens a door for understanding environmental storyworlds in a different and more diverse sense. Narratology contributes with narrative devices such as story, discourse, characterisation and focalisation that contribute to an understanding of more ethical, political and cultural matters while providing the opportunity to examine how readers perceive and interact with ecological homes (1). Thereby, this pairing allows a way to discuss and examine the relationship between the environment, narrative and the reader.

The combination of the environment and narrative has mainly been part of ecocriticism, but ecocritics have not really reached for narrative theory in their exploration of environmental story-

worlds. Instead, ecocriticism has been focused on proposing a field of inquiry rather than creating a set of tools that could be used for examining environmental literature. However, James and Morel state that new materialist ecocritics, such as Serienella Ioviano and Serpil Oppermann, have contributed to a shift in the ecocritical conversation by proposing that the Earth itself can be read and interpreted as a text with a narrative (3). Thereby, they argue that "today's environmental crisis is not only a crisis of narrative; today's environment is also capable of producing *its own* narratives" (James and Morel, emphasis in original, 3-4). Also scholars like Timothy Morton and Timothy Clark have started to pay attention to the benefits of bringing narrative theory into conversations about the environment as narrative structures have much to offer when it comes to crafting literary and cultural responses to both present and future environmental challenges (4).

Ecocriticism as we know it from, for example, Greg Garrard is focused on the relationship between nature and humans, and studies the way in which the world can be analysed and criticised through different representations in environmental literature (4-5). In this sense, Garrard argues that ecocriticism can "help to define, explore and even resolve ecological problems in this wider sense" (6). Garrard's ecocriticism draws on Cheryll Glotfelty, who, in her chapter "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis" (1996), defines ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its readings of texts, ecocriticism takes an Earth-centered approach to literary studies" (xviii). Garrard's ecocriticism is, thereby, about cultural and political issues in relation to the environment as it focuses on the cultural construction of different tropes such as apocalypse, the pastoral, wilderness, animals etc. Garrard's criticism is hence really a cultural criticism that is interested in the way in which tropes are produced, reproduced and changed in society, and it is thereby, as Glotfelty states, no different from feminism or Marxism. While ecocriticism is based on the content in a narrative, narratology is focused on the form and what different forms can do to the cultural knowledge that we bring to a text.

Ecocriticism evolved as a response to the publication of Rachel Carson's novel *Silent Spring* (1962) wherein she predicted an environmental disaster brought on by an unregulated use of pesticides after the Second World War. Carson's novel was fundamental for the introduction of ecocriticism in the 1970s as her novel's use of scientific material as well as rhetorical strategies allowed a more cultural and literary analysis (Garrard 1-3). In *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (2005), Lawrence Buell argues that there is no definitive

map of the evolution of ecocriticism in literary studies, but its development can best be described as a course of a first and a second wave of ecocriticism (17). The first wave of ecocriticism focussed on the celebration of nature and perceived 'environment' as 'natural environment'. Their goal was to examine the effects human culture had on the natural world and challenge the hierarchical separation between the binaries of culture and nature. In this sense, this wave of ecocriticism seeked to "redefine the concept of culture itself" in order to contribute to "the struggle to preserve the 'biotic community'" (21). The second wave of ecocriticism was a revision of the first wave's horizons on environmentalism, but it aimed at expanding the ecocritical definition of both environment and environmentalism. The second wave was, thereby, characterised by both a larger historical and social awareness, and it established a more stable theoretical framework for ecocriticism. As a response to the more social and historical models of ecocriticism, second wave ecocritical work concerned itself with redefining the principles of environmental justice and the issues of environmental welfare and equality (22). Buell's 'wave' theory does not expand to a third wave of ecocriticism, but in their article "The Shoulders We Stand On: An Introduction to Ethnicity and Ecocriticism" (2009) Joni Adamson and Scott Slovic takes Buell's theory one step further with a third wave. Adamson and Slovic agree with Buell's outline of the two waves of ecocriticism, but they suggest that the community of ecocritics have been non-diverse and neglected the categories of ethnicity. Their work on a third wave of ecocriticism is, therefore, concerned with multiculturalism, where a more diverse range of authors is included in the ecocritical canon. Adamson and Slovic argue that the appreciation of the ethnic and global dimensions of environmental literature allows an exploration of "all facets of human experience from an environmental viewpoint" (7). The third-wave of ecocriticism is thus concerned with the human environmental experience and understanding with a more globalist agenda that can teach us something about the role everyone across the globe has in the preservation of the planet. As Adamson and Slovic claims: "We must find a way to maintain appropriate focus on reforming situations of injustice through our work as scholars, writers, and teachers, and we must reach toward a condition where we appreciate and celebrate the stake we all have in protecting the Earth" (21). Through the delineation of these three waves, ecocriticism is described as the exploration of the ways in which the environment is represented through literature. The field of ecocriticism is based on a fundamental premise that human culture is genuinely connected with the physical world in the sense that it both affects it and is affected by it. Ecocriticism thus examines the interconnection between nature and culture, but it also aims at transforming the reader's orienta-

tion towards the environment and challenges their ability to rethink their role in both the environmental conversation and conservation.

In *The Storyworld Accord,* Erin James develops and defines what she calls econarratology. Simply put, this concept is a merge of ecocriticism and narratology, where the focus is shifted from the content to the form. James' development of this concept started as an interest in exploring "the ways in which literary structure might offer up environmental insight" (xiv) and how narratological elements can influence the depiction of a physical narrative storyworld. In this sense, econarratology is a pairing of ecocriticism's interest in literature and the physical environment and narratology's focus on how writers compose narratives through literary structure and devices (xv). Through her conceptualisation of econarratology, James is especially interested in cognitive narratology as it "studies the storyworlds that readers simulate and transport themselves to when reading narratives, the correlations between such textual, imaginative worlds and the physical, extratextual world, and the potential of the reading process to foster awareness and understanding for different environmental imaginations and experiences" (xv). In this sense, the narratology that econarratology uses, borrows elements from both classical narratology and postclassical narratology. Through our delineation of econarratology, we will, therefore, account for each of these fields and explain how econarratology applies the narrative devices from classical narratology such as focalisation and narration, and the knowledge of cognitive science within postclassical narratology. James' development of econarratology is mainly focussed on postcolonial narrative in terms of how they offer insight into how readers inhabit and imagine their environments in different ways based on the context they read in and the cultural knowledge they bring into the text. However, before we look into these different fields of narratology, we will provide a definition of econarratology.

3.2. Defining econarratology

Econarratology presents a new method for studying environmental storyworlds, where the pairing of ecocriticism and narrative theory, as mentioned above, enables a broadened consideration of both content and form. Econarratology started as a case study when James "set out to develop ecocritical readings of well-known Caribbean texts" (James xiv). However, James found that many of the texts that she was studying were not centred on the environment and did not place the same emphasis on nature as the literary scholars and ecocritics she was using for her theoretical framework. Therefore, she realised that she needed a new approach to these Caribbean texts as many of them, given their social, economic and cultural history, did not "seem interested in representing the environment at

all" (xiv). James' answer to this problem was to shift the focus from content to form and by doing so she noticed that narrative structures could provide environmental insights and offer up ecocritical discourse to texts that earlier had been insufficient for ecocritical readings (xiv). In *The Storyworld Accord* James highlights "the ways narratives grapple with the often-collapsed concerns of subjectivity, representation, and environment by bringing together narratological and ecocritical concerns" (xv). In this sense, econarratology seeks to provide an interdisciplinary field that pays attention to ecocriticism's focus on the connection between literature and the physical environment and narratology's interest in the literary structure and devices writers use to construct a storyworld (xv).

James' econarratology takes its idea of storyworld from the narratologist David Herman. James draws on the definition of storyworld that Herman provides in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (2005), where he argues that transportation and storyworlds are interlinked in the sense that storyworlds open up channels of communication, but for the reader to fully receive this information, they must transport themselves into the narrative and come to understand what it is like to live in the storyworld. Herman defines storyworlds as "mental models of who did what and to whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion in the world to which interpreters relocate [...] as they work to comprehend a narrative" and suggests that "in trying to makes sense of a narrative, interpreters attempt to reconstruct not just what happened but also the surrounding context or environment embedding storyworld existence, their attributes, and the actions and events in which they are involved" (570). This level of reconstruction is, for Herman, linked to transportation as it is the readers' ability to transport themselves into the storyworld that determines their ability to reconstruct and imagine the storyworld. Furthermore, Herman brings attention to the connection between storyworlds and the extratextual world as what experiences and cultural knowledge the readers bring into a text plays a significant role in the reconstruction of a storyworld. In this sense, storyworlds are "mentally and emotionally projected environments in which interpreters are called upon to live out complex blends of cognitive and imaginative response" (570). Inspired by Herman's conceptualisation of storyworld, James argues that "storyworlds are simulations of autonomous textual domains that readers must temporarily inhabit mentally and emotionally while reading" (21). These elements of the extratextual world and cognition within this definition of storyworld are something James has brought into her notion of econarratology and will be accounted for later in the theory section.

As mentioned above, econarratology is an attempt to yoke together the fields of ecocriticism and narratology and it does so with sensitivity to "the key concerns of each of its parents' dis-

courses" (James 23). Econarratology looks at ecocriticism as a tool that connects literature and the environment through a study of how environmental concerns are represented in literature and how literature treats the subjects of nature and culture. By applying narratology to ecocriticism, James argues that we are able to examine the ways in which literary structures and devices can be used to communicate representations of the environment (23). In this sense, James explains that her "hope is that econarratology will not only allow literary criticisms to appreciate better the ways in which we tell each other stories about our environments but also recognize the site- and culture-specific nuances encoded in many of the cues that readers use to construct storyworlds" (23). James' interest in econarratology is thus to examine how narratological influx can contribute to and influence the cultural responses to environmental challenges, and thereby, also help ecocritics to read these culturally specific nuances and imaginations in narratives (24).

James' econarratology is further developed in *Environment and Narrative*, where Erin James and Eric Morel explore the different mechanics of storyworlds from a structuralist, cognitive, emotional, cultural and political point of view. James and Morel stress that the link between the environment and narratology is essential as

> stories about the environment significantly influence the experience of that environment, and vice versa, and [...] scholars can do a much better job understanding those stories and suggesting alternatives. Further, these essays acknowledge that understandings of narrative change as the environment changes - that the modern environmental crisis, in addition to being partly a crisis *of* narrative, also promises to have a strong effect *on* narrative and narrative theory. (Emphasis in original, 1)

James and Morel's volume is divided into three key directions: the first concerning representation of the nonhuman in environmental storyworlds; the second focussing on discussions of narrative ethics; and the third touching aspects of cognitive science. This thesis is mainly focused on econarratology in relation to cognitive science, but it will also bring up questions of ethics. These ethical questions will be examined in relation to the literary characters' ethical behaviour and how environmental storyworlds have an ethical message that may affect the reader's green morale. This is also relevant in relation to how a narrative theory is a deeply anthropogenic approach to narrative as it is somebody communicate something to someone else. Thereby, James and Morel argues that while "narrators and/or characters do not necessarily need to *be* human" (Emphasis in original, 6) the foundation of a narrative rhetorical situation relies "on human capacities for language" (6). In this sense, James and Morel claim that "narrators must narrate, and narratees must have the ability to receive a narrative. But two recent essays query how this anthropogenic genre can help readers better understand the relationship between humans and the organisms and material with which we

share the world" (6). Thus, this anthropogenic genre of econarratology can contribute to the reader's understanding of the "relationship between human and the organisms and material with which we share the world" (6).

Jens Kramshøj Flinker has also provided an outline of econarratology. Flinker's article "Econarratology, the Novel, and Anthropocene Imagination" (2022) builds on James' initial version of econarratology but takes it one step further by connecting it with Anthropocene realities and imagination. According to Flinker, the era of the Anthropocene, a new geological epoch defined by humanity's exploitation of natural resources

> has catalyzed an ongoing discussion among cultural theorists, historians, and artists on how the humanities and art are expected to raise awareness and convey a sense of urgency regarding the Anthropocene [...] that is why it is worth reflecting on the usefulness of how literature - in this context, the novel - can help us enrich our understanding of the Anthropocene. After all, a crucial claim in ecocriticism is that the environmental crisis is a crisis of imagination, and new ways of imagining humanity's relation to the physical world in literature can be at the vanguard of this. (92)

However, drawing on Timothy Clark, Flinker points out a crucial complication of the Anthropocene in relation to how literature can be used to confront Anthropocene realities and activate Anthropocene imaginations. This complication is that the Anthropocene is a rather complex entity that cannot directly be seen, touched or localised, whereby it can be difficult to "fix" or "tackle" (93). Flinker argues that this intangible nature of the Anthropocene causes scholars such as Greg Garrard to perceive the global environmental crisis as a crisis of representation. What is here meant by 'crisis of representation' is that we cannot directly see or localise the concerns and problems of the climate crisis which naturally makes it difficult to know what it is all about and how to change it. This does not necessarily mean that the novel's greatest advantage is to represent the Anthropocene in its totality, but instead that "it represents different human (or human-like) experiences of the environmental change, climate change, etc. Precisely because the novel is centered on the particular - a how-it-is-to-experience-perspective - it prompts its readers to activate a storyworld that is completely different from modes that seek to transcend the particular" (94).

Just as James, Flinker believes in the world building power of a narrative and how "readers use textual cues to build up 'mental representations' of the worlds evoked by stories [and] how readers in the reading process construct, reconstruct, or co-construct the narrative world" (94). In this sense, Flinker uses James to argue that readers use their context, real life experiences and cultural background to fill in the gaps in a narrative text. Different from James' take on econarratology in relation to postcolonial text, Flinker is preoccupied with econarratology and the Anthropocene

and especially in relation to temporal dimensions of storyworlds and disruption of the storyworld in order to explore how structures in a narrative text can challenge and evolve the reader's perception of the Anthropocene.

James, Morel and Flinker have thus had an impact on the definition of econarratology and how the fusion of two different literary fields contributed to a new interdisciplinary field that explores the relationship between the narrative environment, the literary structures and the reader. They acknowledge that econarratology can be used as a method to bring humans closer to the physical world which enhances the importance of econarratology and humans' perception of the world. Thus, humans become aware of the anthropogenic problems that are connected to econarratological texts and the message behind these. Through the above outline of econarratology, we see that content and form are linked together in the sense that econarratology focuses on what the text conveys (content) as well as the way in which it is conveyed and arranged (form). In *Handbook of Narrative Analysis* (2005), Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck argues that "we consider interpretation precisely as the effort to connect the content of a particular object - in this case a literary text - with its form. This connection works both ways. Form always implies content, and content in its turn clarifies the meaning of form" (7). In the following sections, we will look into form by means of narratology and the way in which econarratology uses narratology in its examination of ecological storyworlds.

3.3. Classical, structuralist and postclassical narratology

Early work on narratology which is now labelled structuralist narratology stems from French structuralists such as Roland Barthes, Tzvetan Todorov and Gérard Genette. Structuralism, as explained by Todorov, "does not deal with the literary text as it presents itself to the reader but rather with an abstract deep structure" (as cited in Herman & Vervaeck 41). Herman and Vervaeck outline Genette's structuralist division of a narrative into three different levels: *narration, récit* (narrative) and *histoire* (story). These three levels refer to how deep the interpreter through narratology can delve into a narrative text. The level of narration is considered the surface level and looks at how a story is formulated and "the concrete and directly visible way in which a story is told" (Herman & Vervaeck 42). This level allows an examination of, for example, the story's choice of words, the length of sentences and the narrating agent. Below the surface level, Genette situates the second level, récit (narrative) which concerns itself with the way in which characters are presented to the reader in relation to how "the story plays out in the text" (Herman & Vervaeck 42). So, while the

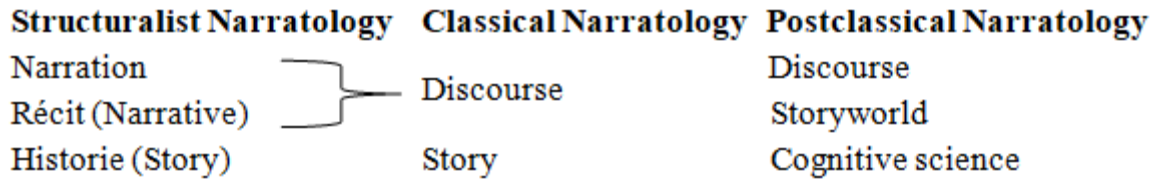
level of narration works with the surface, the level of narrative focuses on the characters and how they unfold along with the events the characters experience throughout the narrative text. The third and deepest level "is not readily available to the reader […] Instead it amounts to an abstract construct" (42). On this level, we find what Genette calls histoire (story) where it is possible to look into the chronological sequence of events within a narrative text. Here, the narrative devices such as characters, events and settings will no longer just be concrete elements of a text, but it will be possible to see that these elements' role in an abstract system and how they are constructed by the author's cultural codes (42). In this sense, Genette's model for examining the deep literary structures of a text is a structuralist inspired theory of narrative that provides concepts and methods for studying narrative texts.

The French structuralists recognise Russian formalists as precursors of this structuralist approach to narrative theory, and Herman and Vervaeck argues that particularly Vladimir Propp's analysis of fairy tales could be considered a premature version of structuralist narratology. Before Genette developed the three-level structure outlined above, the Russian formalists had proposed an approach to narrative that only consisted of two levels. The Russian formalists labelled these levels *fabula* and *sjuzhet* which is translated as *story* and *discourse* in English. While story refers to how the chronological sequence of events creates a story, discourse covered the specific way in which the story was presented in the text (Herman & Vervaeck 46). Genette's first two levels, *narration* and *recït*, should be considered an expansion of classical narratology's level of discourse as illustrated in the figure below. Even though this thesis will use the two Russian formalists' two level structure, it is still relevant to look into Genette's approach as he delivers the narrative devices that we will use in our examination of the level of the story and level of discourse in the two texts chosen for our thesis. Within the level of the storyworld, we use narrative devices such as events, characters and settings and within the level of discourse, we use narrative devices such as narrative voices and focalisation.

More recent work on narratology has increased the attention on the ethical, emotional and cognitive influence of narrative on real world readers. This attention has resulted in a shift from the classical narratology to a postclassical narratology. Herman and Vervaeck argues that "[t]he postclassical approaches partly resist structuralism but at the same time rarely if ever make a complete break from it" (103). Postclassical narratology should be considered a development of classical narratology that recycles the key concepts, but adds cognitive studies as a third level, as illustrated in the figure below. In this sense, postclassical narratology does not erase classical narratology, but it

creates an adapted version of it. James and Morel argue that the postclassical shift in narratology views texts "as purposeful communicative acts, in which narrative tellers seek to engage and influence the emotions and values of their readers" (8). Postclassical narratology recognises that texts are motivated acts created with a certain agenda wherein the interaction between narrators and characters consists of ethical, emotional and cognitive dimensions. Thereby, postclassical scholars of narrative view the study of narrative as not only consisting of narrative categories and classification but also as a multisided ethical interaction (8). In "Narrative Way of Worldmaking" (2009) David Herman argues that the classical, structuralist narratologists "failed to come to terms with the referential or world-creating properties of narrative" (71). This world creating potential can, according to Herman, be considered a subdomain within postclassical narratology which pays attention to how cultural cues "build up representations of the worlds evoked by stories, or *storyworlds* (emphasis in original, 72). In this sense, Herman argues that postclassical narratology studies the ways in which storyworlds are made and remade, and thereby, they use the term storyworld when they analyse the level of the story in their narratological approach.

In this section, we have tried to map out the most important elements of the different phases of structuralist, classical and postclassical narratology, and in the figure below we have summarised the differences between these three different models. For this thesis, we will use postclassical narratology as one of the key aspects of econarratology because it believes that "readers must mentally model and emotionally inhabit the context of a narrative's characters to understand a narrative" (James & Morel 10).



4. Econarratology and cognitive science

James' conceptualisation of econarratology, on which we frame much of our definitions and approaches, is centered around the relationship between the storyworld and the reader in relation to that reader's cultural understanding of the storyworld. For James, a focus solely on a text's structure is not adequate to achieve a diverse narrative comprehension as the world outside the text is just as important both on a contextual level and on a reading level (x). In his entry on cognitive narratology

in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, Manfred Jahn advocates the same scepticism as James towards the classical, structural narratology, as it ignores the cognitive and contextual context the reader's interpretation will be based on. As Jahn argues: "Classical narratology tended to place an arbitrary focus on a restricted set of core genres, treated narratives as self-sufficient product rather than as texts to be reconstructed in an ongoing and receivable readerly process, and ignored the forces and desires of psychological, social, cultural, and historic contexts" (67). Following this argument, Flinker states that "[w]hile structuralist narratologists failed to adequately investigate issues of narrative referentiality, storyworld, or the reader's world-modelling, cognitive narratology is about how readers in the reading process construct, reconstruct, or co-construct the narrative world" (94). These moves towards a cognitive approach to narrative theory indicated a turn in the classical narratology, where narratologists began to implement cognitive science in their examination of the storyworld which then was labelled postclassical narratology or cognitive narratology.

In the following section, we will look at the role of cognitive science within econarratology in terms of the reader's experience of a storyworld. In doing so, we want to examine how environmental storyworlds can have emotional effects on the reader in relation to how it invites them to care for and feel with the characters when they are put at risk, or the opposite when experiencing someone not caring about anything or anyone other than themself. We are especially interested in how different emotions such as empathy, sympathy and antipathy are produced through what Suzanne Keen calls narrative empathy and how this emotional experience has the power to change the minds and lives of the readers. Empathy, sympathy and antipathy will allow us to analyse the ways in which the emotional, ethical and cognitive interactions play out between the readers and the two novels we have chosen for this thesis. Moreover, the definition of these concepts provides both cultural knowledge and comprehension of why we feel the thing we feel with the literary characters in the two texts.

4.1. The role of cognitive narratology: Experiencing narrative environments

In his entry for cognitive narratology in *Handbook of Narratology* (2014), David Herman describes cognitive narratology as a subdomain within classical, structuralist narratology that studies mind-relevant aspects of narrative practices. Cognitive narratology can be considered a nexus between narrative and mind which functions as a resource for comprehension that helps the audience to structure and make sense of their experience. Cognitive narratology is, thereby, an expansion of the original framework of traditional narratology that challenges the ideas about human intelligence in

relation to the audiences' ability to construct mental models of a narrative (Herman 30). Similar to Herman, Erin James suggests that a central focal point within cognitive narratology is that it "studies the human intellect and emotional processing of narratives to query how narratives and readers interact" whereby it becomes possible to "explore readers' understanding of the emotional stages and experiences of characters" (16). Much like postclassical narratology, cognitive narratology is an interdisciplinary field that pairs cognitive science and narrative theory in order to acknowledge that cognitive processes in the reader are essential for their narrative comprehension.

Moreover, James looks towards Blakey Vermeule in her account of cognitive narratology. In her book, *Why Do We Care About Literary Characters?* (2010), Blakey Vermeule frames the ways in which reading fiction can make readers develop mind-reading abilities in relation to why readers are able to care about literary characters. In doing so, she deals with cognitive simulation theory and mirror neurons by connecting that to the reader's ability to indirectly experience whatever a character experiences. In this context, Vermeule argues that people's interest in narratives is based on the way in which it enables the ability to read another person's mind. In most circumstances, for example, the reader will invest their full attention towards the protagonist of the story and make their way through the narrative via that character's actions and experiences as if the reader was walking in that character's shoes. This attention is, according to Vermeule, so focused that the reader has difficulties concentrating on other narrative objects that are not closely connected to the protagonist and that character's actions. Thereby, she suggests that people's attraction towards literary characters and narratives is based on the way in which they are allowed to look into someone else's mind as if they were granted the ability of mind-reading. Through these mind-reading capabilities, the reader is able to test different scenarios without risking anything themselves (41).

Both James and Vermeule address the work of Lisa Zunshine, who deals with cognitive psychology and how reading fiction should be seen as a mental exercise that develops our Theory of Mind. The concepts of mind-reading and Theory of Mind can be used interchangeably to describe the human ability to explain and interpret other people's behaviour in relation to their thoughts, feelings, beliefs and desires. This mind-reading ability that allows us to interpret and explain the behaviour of a person may seem to be quite obvious and such an integral part of what it means to be a human being. However, it is our Theory of Mind that makes reading fiction possible. Without the ability to read the mind of others, it would not be possible to imagine or interpret the consciousnesses of the characters we encounter in fiction. Zunshine suggests that

> by imagining the hidden mental states throughout the narrative, and by comparing our interpretation of what the given character must be feeling at a given moment with what we assume could be the author's own interpretation, we deliver a rich stimulation to the cognitive adaptations constituting our Theory of Mind. Many of us come to enjoy such stimulation and need it as a steady supplement to our daily social interactions. (24-25)

Reading fiction can thus be considered an educational model that helps the reader develop a social function that influences their ability to interact with other people. When we are able to read the mind of others, we are more likely to understand and interpret the mental states of these people which is an essential skill and requirement of our social lives. So thereby, we can develop our Theory of Mind through the cognitive stimulation delivered to us by reading fiction, where we compare ourselves to the fictional characters and interpret their emotions through mind-reading, which is just as essential for narrative comprehension as it is for nonnarrative life. Nevertheless, we will always compare and interpret other people on the basis of our personal perception of the things that surround us. Viewed within this context, the interpreter will presumably have their own, subjective interpretation of the narrative, and hence, a different experience of the narrative than other interpreters. In this sense, Zunshine argues that "even the act of misinterpretation of the protagonist's thoughts and feelings does not detract from the cognitive satisfaction allowed by the reading of fiction […] a misinterpretation of a character's state of mind is still very much an interpretation, a fully realized and thus pleasurable engagement of our Theory of Mind" (25). Thereby, Zunshine suggests that there is no right or wrong interpretation of a text, but that it is determined by the interpreter's individual context.

This way in which the reader creates a subjective interpretation of a narrative is coherent to cognitive narratologists' view on how the readers must place themselves within the narrative in order to fully achieve narrative comprehension. As James states: "cognitive narratologists […] highlight the idea that reading narratives demands that readers construct mental simulations of narrative worlds" (19). Constructing a mental simulation of a narrative storyworld is quintessential for narrative comprehension, as it helps create a mental picture of the narrative, and thereby, makes it easier for the reader to imagine what it is like to live in that environment. In this context, James argues that reading is a process of transporting yourself into the narrative environment in order to experience it as a character within that narrative. Inspired by the work of Richard Gerrig, James claims that readers can be considered travellers, who travel to new and unfamiliar storyworlds, and when they return to their immediate reading environment, they are often changed by the narrative journey they have been on (20). Despite a book only consisting of black dots on a piece of paper, it gives access to a portal that transports the reader into a different time and space that they inhabit both

mentally and emotionally. The reader's experience of the narrative storyworld will, however, still be determined by the reader's individual reconstruction of the storyworld in terms of how the reader imagines what it looks like. This mental simulation of the narrative will also influence the reader's emotional experience in relation to what kind of emotional response the reader gets (21).

A central key point of both cognitive narratology is, thereby, the relationship between the narrative and the reader, and how the reader reconstructs and interprets a narrative based on their contextual surroundings and cultural knowledge. In this sense, narrative storyworlds give us access to an inner and outer world; we build the outer storyworld through both fictive and non-fictive cultural knowledge, whereas the inner storyworld is built through processes in the brain. Cognitive narratologists are thus interested in the construction of the inner and outer storyworld that follows certain mechanisms that we use in our everyday life. The concepts of mind-reading and Theory of Mind are essential tools to understand how the reconstructions of storyworlds are based on the pictures we form in our mind of what this storyworld looks like and how it would be to live in such a storyworld. This picture is not only based on the literary descriptions in the text, but also on the cultural knowledge we bring to the text; such as the knowledge of the Anthropocene and the climate crisis. From an ecological perspective, these concepts are furthermore significant to consider, as it has an influence on how the reader will be affected by the ecological homes they inhabit. As James argues, ecological approaches to literature "can provide readers with access to culturally diverse understandings and experiences of global environments in ways that other nonnarrative text simply cannot. Narratives […] allow readers to simulate and live in environments they would otherwise be denied and experience those environments from an alternative perspective" (24). In these storyworlds, the readers come to recognise the similarities and differences between their own physical environment and compare it to the mental constructions they are directed towards through reading fictional narratives. The combination of ecocriticism and cognitive narratology is thus an essential element in James' econarratology as it supports a better appreciation of how we, through narrative communication, can create a larger understanding of what it would be to live in an environment different from our own. So, by depicting an environment different from our world of origin, these narratives may influence the reader's perception of their environmental surroundings and change their orientation and attitude towards the environmental crisis.

The reason why readers are able to model a storyworld mentally and inhabit it emotionally can be explained in a variety of ways. In *Affective Ecologies: Empathy, Emotion, and Environmental Narrative* (2017), Alexa Weik von Mossner takes a neuroscientific account to explain what

happens to the readers when reading about fictional characters and storyworlds. She argues that the notions of embodied cognition and embodied simulation are essential in order to understand and explore the emotional responses activated by environmental storyworlds. Weik von Mossner argues that reading is a highly embodied activity. Embodied in the way that we use our senses when we read in order to perceive things, and also in the way "that our bodies act as sounding boards for our mental simulations of storyworld and of characters' perceptions, emotions, and actions within those virtual worlds" (*Affective Ecologies* 3). When we read literature, we imagine the actions of the characters by mapping their movements in our brains. In this sense, a narrative is processed in the brain where we share the events and actions in the narrative with the characters, and thus, we use our bodies to understand the fictional characters and imagine the environments that surround them (3). In her chapter "Feeling Nature: Narrative Environments and Character Empathy" (2017), Weik von Mossner elucidates this function of the brain in terms of how the mirror neuron system is involved when we recognise other people's actions and movements, real or imagined:

> [W]hen we see another person act, we map those actions onto our premotor cortex, the part of the brain that is also active when we engage in actual movement. Remarkably, something related also happens when our brains process literary texts [...] Whereas in the case of direct perception the premotor cortex 'mirrors' the movements we see in other agents, in reading (or listening), the perception of movement this plays out on the *imaginary* level with our brains reacting in the same way they would respond to personally performed movements. This is what cognitive scientists call *neuronal reuse* since the same neurons that are active in performed movement also fire in response to perceived movement and imagined movement. (Emphasis in original 132-133)

However, she notes that it is not only the actions of others that the readers respond to but also the recognition of sensations, attitudes and emotions whereby readers can be strongly moved by them and the surroundings they find themselves in. These emotional resonances with fictional characters and their storyworld can be positive as well as negative and can be triggered when readers feel empathy, sympathy or even antipathy. Weik Von Mossner furthermore argues that "we might feel along with a character even more fervently than with an actual person because a literary text can give us a degree of access to the emotions and sensations of another being that is rarely possible in real life" (*Affective Ecologies* 133). Understanding this process of embodied simulation, are to Weik Von Mossner essential for econarratological reading as it not only explains our empathic engagement with the fictional characters but also because it influences our narrative experience of the environments surrounding these characters.

In order to examine how emotional responses invoked by fiction influence and are activated in the readers, we will first look at the working definitions of empathy, sympathy and antipathy.

Our delineation of these three concepts will be based on their psychological and philosophical use and understanding. We will take our point of departure in Suzanne Keen's conceptualisation of empathy and sympathy and from there move towards a definition of antipathy. Lastly, we look at Keen's theory of narrative empathy in relation to character identification and how different narrative categories and devices may contribute to the feeling of empathy.

4.2. Cultivating emotions: Empathy, sympathy and antipathy

In *Empathy and the Novel* (2007) Suzanne Keen investigates the relationship between novel reading, empathy and altruism. Keen states that readers, in some way, always will have an emotional resonance with fictional characters and other aspects of fictional works, as human empathy is an inherent quality of our social nature (vii-viii). She, furthermore, argues that a text stimulates the readers, consciously or unconsciously, to feel and act in a certain way based on the author's wishes. In this sense, "the very fictionality of novels predisposes readers to empathize with characters, since a fiction known to be 'made up' does not activate suspicion and wariness as an apparently 'read' appeal for assistance may do" (4). Keen here advocates that fictional worlds can be considered safe zones for readers as they are allowed to feel empathy without any actual real life action at stake. This freedom, as Keen claims, "opens up the channels for both empathy and related moral affects such as sympathy, outrage, pity, righteous indignation, and (not to be underestimated) shared joy and satisfaction" (4). Even though Keen is mainly preoccupied with empathy, sympathy and altruism, she also accentuates other related responses and moral effects of fiction such as apathy and antipathy.

Empathy, as Keen defines it, is "a vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect [...] provoked by witnessing another's emotional state, by hearing about another's condition or even by reading" (*Empathy and Novel* 4). This spontaneous sharing of affect happens when we mirror the feelings we expect another person to have in a given condition or context and compare it to the feelings we expect ourselves to have in that same condition or context. It is not necessarily a conscious response, but in many cases, it is something that happens naturally because the mirror neurons in the human brain "possess a system for automatically sharing feelings" (4). Before empathy was introduced in the English language, in the early twentieth century, people used the term sympathy to describe the aspects and feelings we now know to be empathy. Now a common psychological distinction between empathy and sympathy is that empathy is the feeling of something we believe other people feel: "I feel what you feel. *I feel your pain*" (5); while the feeling of sympathy occurs when we feel

concerned for another person: ”I feel a supportive emotion about your feelings. *I feel pity for your pain*” (emphasis in original, 5). In this sense, empathy is about the ability to put oneself in another person's shoes and imagine oneself in their position, whereas sympathy is about showing compassion and feeling sorry for somebody. Antipathy, on the contrary, is the opposite of empathy and sympathy and is a feeling that occurs when we experience a “strong feeling of dislike” (“Antipathy”) and aversion towards something and someone. Though antipathy is not explicitly represented in empathy studies, the feeling of antipathy and how antipathy can be evoked in the reader is particularly important for this project, and especially in relation to the emotional resonances between the reader and *Solar*’s protagonist.

4.3. Narrative empathy

Furthermore, Keen combines empathic responses with narrative techniques by arguing that devices “such as the use of first person narration and the interior representation of characters’ consciousness and emotional states” support the way in which the reader will compare themselves to a fictional character. Keen calls this mode of comparison *character identification,* which influences the empathic experience as it opens the readers’ minds to others (*Empathy and Novel* x). As mentioned above, Keen claims that first-person narration, to a greater extent, evokes empathy and feelings rather than third-person narration. The first-person narration “may be enhanced or impeded by narrative consonance or dissonance, reliability, discordance, an excess of narrative levels with multiple narrators, extremes of disorder, or an especially convoluted plot” (xi).

The pairing of classical, structuralist narratology and cognitive narratology allows us to read the two novels both in relation to which literary structure and devices the authors, consciously or unconsciously, have used to compose the narratives while looking at how the narrative influences the readers cognitively. Keen uses empathy in accordance with multiple cognitive fields such as psychology, philosophy and social cognition as her view upon narrative empathy attaches importance to the growth and development of cognitive and affective ways to read literature (xi). Keen cites Peter Stockwell who suggests that

> Cognitive poetics aims to extend its coverage to encompass sensations such as feeling moved by a literary work, feeling immersed in the world of a text that seems almost as real as life. The psychologizing of character has been a prestigious feature of valued literature for the past two hundred years relies on readerly reconstruction of character that include identification and empathy, ethical agreement and sympathy, and other forms of emotional attachment that readers defend very strongly. (xi)

Character identification plays a prominent role when examining the theory of narrative empathy as it, according to Keen, "often invites empathy, even when the fictional character and reader differ from each other in all sorts of practical and obvious ways, but empathy for fictional characters appears to require not only minimal elements of identity, situation, and feeling, not necessarily complex or realistic characterization" (*Empathy and Novel* xii). Even though character identification often invites empathy, it has to be taken into account that the readers' experiences are individual, and one does not necessarily feel emotionally affected by the same thing another reader does. This differentiation has to do with the individual reader's empathic state as it has to be emphasised that all people are not equally empathic; hence, it also has to be considered that the current audience might feel less empathic than the future audience due to societal changes, and so forth, that might change or evoke certain feelings within the specific reader (xii).

As aforementioned, cognition has a great impact on the level of empathy. In Suzanne Keen's article "A Theory of Narrative Empathy", she claims that "contemporary neuroscience has brought us much closer to an understanding of the neural basis for human mind reading and emotion sharing abilities - the mechanisms underlying empathy" (207). As a matter of fact, Keen stresses that within the studies of neuroscience with a particular basis in literature, it has been proven that the level of empathy is higher among people who read fiction wherefore changed attitudes, improved motives and better care are seen as the positive outcome (208). In this sense, the changed attitudes correspond with the way in which Martha Nussbaum delineates the positive outcomes of empathic reading. In her book *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (1997), Nussbaum claims that "arts [literary work] cultivate capacities of judgment and sensitivity that can and should be expressed in the choices a citizen makes (86). Thus, Nussbaum argues that all kinds of art shape how we as human beings cultivate ourselves and express our emotions towards certain perspectives of life, as art contributes to represent the specific circumstances and problems people face every day.

Furthermore, James and Morel outline a more specific definition of narrative empathy that draws on Keen's in *Empathy and the Novel.* They claim that "narratives help us improve our everyday interactions with real-life others, as they permit readers to project themselves into other consciousnesses and thus experience *what it is like* for others to move about the world" (James & Morel 11). Thus, their focus is based on how the readers can investigate the emotional effects that occur when studying the field of narrative environmental literature and how this emotional resonance can help change the experience of particular environments (12). Through emotions, people both

interact with each other, but it also produces a certain perception of others and our surroundings that likewise enables the reader to create their own opinion.

5. Surviving in the age of the Anthropocene

The following analysis will use econarratology as a method to examine the narrative structure and rhetorical devices within the two novels. In terms of the two novels' environmental rhetoric, it will pay attention to the narrative design and how both narratives tackle ethical and moral questions about climate change and human behaviour. Through this approach, the thesis aims at revealing the ecocritical elements and mimetic mode hidden behind *Solar*'s allegorical and satirical facade and the environmental warning that can be found within *The Road*'s apocalyptic and tragic storyworld.

5.1 The comedy of survival: The function of satire and allegory in Solar

In Ian McEwan's *Solar,* the reader is met with a satirical story about one of the most contentious subjects of the era of the Anthropocene: climate change. McEwan's novel takes the form of an allegory that through satirical and ironical representations of overconsumption and egocentrism addresses the issues of climate change and criticises humanity's lack of response to it. This criticism is anchored in the novel's allegorical approach and comes across at the level of the storyworld, especially through the protagonist Michael Beard and the events in both his professional and personal life. However, satire also appears at the level of discourse, as the structure and plot framing the storyworld employ comedic elements to produce an ironic experience at the level of reading.

5.1.1 Literature review

When the British writer Ian McEwan announced that he was working on a book about climate change, people had high expectations that his "novel could powerfully contribute to raising public awareness of the reality of climate change" (Wally 171). However, when *Solar* was published in 2010, most reviews were negative because of McEwan's use of satirical allegory, narrative structure and lighthearted approach to a grave issue such as the climate crisis (Lehtmäki 89). Since then, *Solar* has been subject to a diverse palette of readings from scholars who both praise and criticise the novel as a piece of environmental literature that addresses the anthropogenic climate crisis.

In her article "An Air-Conditioned Global Warming, the Description of Setting in Ian McEwan's *Solar*", Elisa Blochi looks at *Solar* as a novel that "might prove a new and effective way for climate fiction" (42). Through ironical allegory, she argues that McEwan manages to raise aware-

ness about climate change by focusing on human behaviour in everyday life. She reads the novel as an allegory of humanity's exploitation and overconsumption of the Earth's resources that, through the annoying and overweight protagonist, Michael Beard, criticises humanity's negligence towards the climate crisis and the issues of consumption. Blochi's reading of *Solar* is based on a description of the three main settings where Beard situates himself through the novel: the Arctic, the city of London and the Desert. She especially emphasises that Beard lives in these places through their non-places: airports, cars, hotels, etc. and that the settings, such as Beard's apartment, function as an allegory of his greedy personality and the Boot room in the Arctic Expedition serves "as an allegory of our role towards the planet" (41). Through an analysis of these three settings, Blochi suggests that the reader becomes more aware of Beard's extremely consuming behaviour as well as his allegorical function in the novel. In this sense, she claims that if we look at *Solar* as an allegory of humanity's selfish and greedy overconsumption, then "this allegory is made more explicit through the description of setting" (41) and thereby, the novel should be considered a piece of climate fiction that can teach us something about climate change and what role humans play in it.

Also, Markku Lehtmäki notes that *Solar* takes part in the discussion of the environmental problems we face in the era of the Anthropocene just as any other novel about climate change. It is just through a different approach than the typical dystopian and apocalyptic model we often associate with ecocritical storyworlds. Instead, *Solar* takes a satirical approach to climate fiction, where the protagonist takes the form of a hero as he almost saves the planet, humanity and most significantly himself, by developing new technologies for utilising solar energy (87). Much like Blochi, Lehtmäki suggests that McEwan uses his protagonist as an allegory of humanity's lack of response to the climate crisis as if this "mimetic-thematic-synthetic character holds up a mirror to human behaviour in our age of the Anthropocene" (88). Here, Lehtmäki argues that some readers are likely to recognise themselves in Beard, and through these elements of identification they may begin to question their own attitude and behaviour towards the planet. Lehtmäki provides an econarratological reading of *Solar*, where he through an analysis of the plot, characterisation and narrative progression examines the way in which McEwan uses a fictional narrative as a rhetorical form to "say something worthwhile about climate change" (88). He especially relates to how climate fiction in the age of the Anthropocene is considered a discourse about the actual world in the sense that it imitates real life issues of the climate crisis. This aspect of imitation places a strongly mimetic mode within the plotting and characterisation of *Solar* which

> deals with the many-sided rhetorical dialogue associated with the climate-conscious talk. Just as the novel as a rhetorical and dialogical form complicates this talk, the ecocritical concern about the heating planet complicates the premises of a human-centred narrative. The novel also critically asks whether climate change is a *narrative* and whether the solution to this larger-than-human-life question is telling better and better *stories* that we can agree on. (Emphasis in original, 88)

In this sense, Lehtmäki addresses the anthropocentric nature of narratives and argues that climate change contains its own narrative. However, environmental problems are not texts themselves, but when they are discussed in fiction or debated in real life, they are produced through a narrative that can "offer the problem of climate change rhetorically to the larger public imagination - as McEwan does with *Solar*" (101). This perspective of narrative is especially significant for Lehtmäki's reading of the novel, as it allows him to consider both the novel's narrative progression and the ways in which it tackles the issues of climate change through the plot and characters. The methodological combination of narrative theory and ecocriticism allows Lehtmäki to analyse both the narrative structure of the novel and how it communicates ideas and values about our living environment. Through this approach, he shows how "rhetorical theory of narrative helpfully delineate the communicative designs and purposes of a fictional narrative such as *Solar*" (89). Thus, Lehtmäki provides an econarratological analysis of *Solar* wherein he examines how the satirical and allegorical approach criticises the relationship between humanity, the environment and the climate crisis while it questions the literary and theoretical approaches to the Anthropocene.

As both Blochi and Lehtmäki argue, McEwan's climate fiction uses satirical allegory as a genre which is also recognised by Katrine Berndt. She argues that "the novel's comic representation of science confronts society with its weaknesses, satirically exposing self-indulgence, corruption, and the dangers of unrestrained consumption that distinguish twenty-first-century culture" (86). For her, *Solar* is a comic, hyperbolic representation of both science and society in the age of consumption, where McEwan uses Beard as an example of humanity's reluctance to face the consequences of overconsumption. Berndt considers the representation of the damage Beard inflicts on himself as an approach to satirise the characteristics of the Anthropocene and humanity's selfish exploitation of the Earth and its resources (89). Berndt is primarily interested in examining how *Solar* "presents science as comedy" (98) as a way to mimic the human belief that the climate crisis can be solved through technological advancement. In doing so, she found that McEwan's novel, through Beard and his colleagues, demonstrates the personal and professional flaws of scientists "and by denouncing the political and economic interests that impact contemporary research culture, it maintains that scientific knowledge must not be expected to solve problems that have resulted from the destructive

nature of mankind" (99). Thereby, Berndt reads *Solar* as a novel that does not provide an uplifting message or instruct the readers on how to deal with environmental changes, but instead, it uses satire to expose the moral delusion of humanity on both a scientific, economic, political and social level in order to challenge humanity's self-conception and attitude towards the environment.

This perspective of *Solar* as a novel that portrays science as comedy is also examined by Adam Trexler who claims that it "is likely to be the most lauded" (46) climate change novel so far. For Trexler, the novel is strongly informed by and committed to scientific realism and evolutionary psychology which is "explicitly positioned against postmodern literary criticism" (46) and represented within the novel's protagonist as a scientific and psychological allegory. Furthermore, he examines the way in which *Solar* "displays a qualified hope that science will discover objective solutions to climate change (53). Designed as a literary comedy wherein anthropogenic climate change is presupposed, *Solar* represents a character

> driven by evolutionary impulses to eat, reproduce, and dominate. The plot follows the necessary effects on Beard's body, society, and environment. This account of human character refuses to provide a vision for a sustainable Utopia; Beard's character suggests that calls to curb personal consumption and join in collective action are scientifically uninformed approaches to climate change (46).

Through this character, Trexler argues that McEwan proposes that the solution for climate change can be found in science with a particular focus on creating a sustainable energy force that can maintain the needs for human development. For instance, McEwan draws satirical comparisons between his protagonist and Albert Einstein which according to Trexler suggests "that human ingeniousness, through science, is needed to overcome our evolutionary shortcomings" (46). However, the representation of genius in *Solar* becomes rather problematic, as science is not of significant concern in Beard's life. Usually, scientists in climate fiction are portrayed as Earth-saving heroes or used by the author to dump information and data on the readers; but Trexler claims that this is not the case for McEwan's novel. He states that Beard is a self-centred and narcissistic scientist who, many years later, still benefits from the Nobel Prize he won in his twenties. Despite his position as head of a newly established renewable energy research centre and the opportunity to save the world, Beard is still more concerned "with his next meal and the repercussions of his last, foggily fighting the effects of drinks he didn't mean to take, pursuing women and mitigating the effects of his affairs, keeping sinecures and securing patents, and attracting undue credit to consolidate his reputation" (47). This way in which action is displaced by Beard's need to immediately fulfill his desire for food, alcohol, women etc., is, for Trexler, the novel's comic force. He argues that the novel's

representation of genius and science "rejects collective political action and the insights of the humanities, while science is left so ignorant of individual motive that fiction becomes essential ones again" (46-47). Like most reviewers, Trexler recognises that *Solar* is an allegory, but he also argues that the novel questions the function of allegory as something that will reveal the underlying principle of human reality. In doing so, the novel denies the apocalyptic character of climate change which affects the urgency that, in most cases, is provided by allegory. In this sense, Trexler argues that "not even Beard is so vain as to believe he is a Last Man or an Everyman. Instead, Beard is a specific case that is productively representative of the wealthy West at this moment in history. *Solar* is undergirded by a scientific account of the human mind, rather than the ideal moral order of classic allegory" (49). Through allegorical humour, the novel mocks humanity's ability to act on environmental warnings. It portrays a protagonist who is uncomfortably familiar, which for Trexler indicates that the novel suggests a "common human inheritage that supersedes individual subjectivity" (49) and influences humanity's ability to address climate change. The novel confronts humanity's moral compass knowing that the "[a]ttempts to regenerate human morality, even on pain of apocalypse, are doomed to fail" (49) so instead, the novel endeavours to attach its hopes of overcoming extinction on its account of scientific realism. By basing hope and the solution for climate change on science, Trexler suggests that McEwan believes that the material, natural world is more changeable than human nature (52). Furthermore, he proposes that the portrayal of science "serves to justify fiction as an essential means of understanding the world" (53) where Beard's apathetic attitude towards climate change may illustrate "the need for greater self consciousness" (53). When the reader, through Beard, is forced to receive climate scientific information, they may learn about the dangers of exploiting Earth's natural resources. Additionally, the account of evolutionary psychology might make the readers acknowledge their own behavioural problems, and thus, understand why climate change is hard for them to address. Despite these possibilities to influence the readers through allegory, character identification and science, Trexler looks at *Solar* through a more critical perspective:

> Scientific realism grants absolute truth to scientific claims but makes them too general, too inhuman to apply to human experience. The novel's literary realism allows it to trace the subtleties of a mind preoccupied with the quantum principle of photosynthesis and the self-satisfaction in a packet of crisps. The novel also traces the complex effects of six-figure salaries, stipends, and business-class travel; relationships with civil servants, postdocs, and builders; romantic attachments to shop owners, scientists, and waitresses. Scientific realism is too abstract to deal with such human minutiae, necessitating the novel. In short, science holds reality, while art stands above it [...] Solar agrees that scientific fact must defer to the omniscient discourse of the novel. (54)

Here, Trexler argues that even though *Solar* provides a compelling account of scientific claims and information, it is not without problems since it might be difficult for the reader to comprehend the complex and abstract nature of science - especially if science is not already part of the reader's knowledge or lived experiences. Moreover, Trexler criticises the novel's approach to influence on an individual level rather than a collective level which is necessary in order to have any influence on the climate on a larger scale. In this sense, Trexler's reading of *Solar* is focused on its commitment to scientific realism and its representation of genius where he examines the tension between Beard's scientific genius and personal selfishness. Through his reading, Trexler acknowledges the function of the novel's allegorical nature as a way to influence the readers', but he is also critical towards the complexity of the scientific model and the way in which the allegory of Beard disables collective approaches.

In his article "Collective Unconscious: Climate Change and Responsibility in Ian McEwan's *Solar*", Chris Maughan also perceives *Solar* as an allegory to and mirror of the real life climate crisis and humanity's attitude towards it. However, he is more preoccupied with looking at how the novel links the issues of responsibility, blame and climate change. In this sense, he offers a reading of *Solar* that is not focused on how the novel can change the readers individual self-perception, but instead he suggests that the novel teaches the readers about humanity's collective responsibility, about how blame is easily apportioned in climate change discourse and about how humans single handily cannot do anything to change the outcome of the climate crisis. So, while Trexler criticises *Solar* for its negligence of collective approaches to climate change, Maughan argues that there are still elements in the novel that centers on the importance of collective action. Maughan does not see Beard as an individual person's negligence towards the climate crisis, but instead he draws similarities between his environmental position and experiences as a privileged white man and the "mainstream collective inaction on climate change" (25). The ask for collective action in *Solar* "will certainly not be enacted by the Beards of this world, but by those able to read beyond his failings, to devise and develop models of collective action that for now can only be glimpsed at the margins of our societies, in our collective unconscious" (33). However, Maughan argues that the lessons in *Solar* are hidden in its playful and ironic allegorical approach, which undoubtedly makes them harder to detect. McEwan uses allegory "as a way to open up interpretation" (32), but he does so in a way that negotiates and challenges the limits of allegory.

Similarly, Evi Zemanek argues that the allegorical model of *Solar* camouflages the ecocritical aspects of the novel as Beard's "turbulent private life clearly catches more attention" (51). This

overwhelming attention towards the protagonist and his rather trivial challenges in life is, for Zemanek, the reason for the misunderstandings among the novel's readers. Zemanek's reading of *Solar* is based on Ulrick Beck's notion of risk society and through a combination of discourse analysis and allegorical interpretation she approaches the novel as a risk narrative that "relies on the potential of anticipation" (51). She argues that the novel's quality depends on its allegorical concept since it, through the protagonist and his risk management, treats the anticipated threat of climate change. In this sense, Zemanek argues that the novel only uses climate change as a framework for its plot; without examining the allegorical meaning of the "disastrous course and ends in a personal, professional and financial catastrophe for its protagonist" (51), the novel would not be interesting for ecocritical readings. Furthermore, Zemanek claims that the novel's allegorical approach solves a challenge of representation, as it does not depict natural catastrophes in the same dramatic way as is characteristic of apocalyptic and dystopian climate fiction. Here, she speaks in favour of McEwan's approach as she argues that the amount of dystopian and apocalyptic fiction have made readers become numb to the sense of urgency that this subgenre of climate fiction instils. *Solar* is not built on extreme natural events that threaten the existence of the human race, but rather on a world similar to the present situation in the era of the Anthropocene that contains a protagonist with an apathetic attitude towards the planet. This perspective of *Solar* as a novel that sets a negative example through Beard proves, according to Zemanek, "more effective than instructing by good examples" (54) as it alarms the reader to be better examples themselves. In this sense, the novel challenges the readers' ability to recognise the negative impact such behaviour will have on the climate and thereby they are invited to reconsider their own position towards the planet.

In his article "Ian McEwan's *Solar* Through a Psychoanalytic Lens", Ilany Kogan provides a different angle of *Solar* as she dives a step further into the conscious and unconscious processes of Michael Beard in order to explore the protagonist's character traits from a psychoanalytic perspective. In doing so, Kogan outlines the different psychological characteristics of Beard through which he illustrates the complex dynamics of the character and his relationships. These characteristics are "manic defenses, an inability to mourn or love, parricidal and filicidal wishes, castration anxiety, fear of death" (1299). This psychoanalysis of Beard may create some understanding of his personality, and thereby provide an explanation of his actions and mentality. For example, Kogan argues that the lives of Beard's parents had a significant influence on his adult life. His mother was depressed and threatened by psychosis through Beard's childhood and as a way to "flee depression and fragmentation" (1300) she had multiple affairs over the course of eleven years. Beard's father

was traumatised by the experience of war, but instead of working through his trauma, he accepted a loveless marriage and the inability to love his son in order to gain a "life of tranquility as a small-town solicitor" (1303). Kogan argues that Beard's complicated relationship with his parents created an oedipal conflict where Beard wanted to erase his father but continue the search for his mother's love. Moreover, Kogan suggests that the father's inability to serve as a role model affected Beard's lack of desire to become a father himself. When the young physicist Tom Aldous comes into his life he "transfers his unconscious wish to erase his absent, 'dead' father to his 'professional son'" (1303) which, for Kogan, is the reason for the conflict between the two. Through this psychoanalytical examination of *Solar*, Kogan presents different reflections of Beard's character traits and discusses the conscious and unconscious processes of his life. She argues that the novel addresses themes such as the fear of death, mourning and growth and by looking into these psychological aspects of the novel, the reader might see Beard from a new perspective as they come to know and understand him as well as his attitude and behaviour. Furthermore, the reader might come to realise their own fears, flaws and limitations and become aware of their conscious or unconscious attempts to deny their existence (1311). Thereby, Kogan argues that McEwan's protagonist provides the opportunity to acknowledge and become akin to human weaknesses that to some degree inhabit us all.

As presented above, *Solar* makes room for a profound amount of different arguments and analyses that can be considered instances of how the novel, through satire and allegory, criticises the anthropocentric view on the planet, which dominates the era of the Anthropocene. The novel addresses climate change through an unfamiliar and very different approach than what is usually associated with climate fiction which some readers and scholars find problematic. However, as mentioned in the articles, the novel is able to influence the readers' environmental orientation and attitude towards the planet as Michael Beard functions as a mirror directed at humanity. Despite the negative responses of *Solar,* it is, thereby, evident that the novel still contains lessons that can teach the readers something about climate change, but it is necessary to penetrate the allegorical barrier in order to see the ecocritical aspects. If doing so, one might agree with Johns-Putra statement that "McEwan's *Solar* is probably the best known satirical treatment of climate change, centring, as it does on the flawed and unlikeable physicist Beard, who functions as an everyman (a representative of humankind) but represents us at our selfish worst" (269-270). A reading of the novel, explicitly using an ecocritical or narratological approach will, therefore, not be as effective as a combination between the two fields. A methodological combination of narrative theory and ecocriticism, as the one provided by Lehtmäki, will allow a much more in-depth examination of the novel, and grant a

reading that looks beyond the life of Michael Beard and discover the allegories hidden in both the narrative structure and rhetorical design of the novel.

5.1.2. Holding up a mirror to human behaviour in the Anthropocene

Solar portrays a recognisable storyworld similar to what the contemporary reader experiences in the era of the Anthropocene. The reader follows the privileged white scientist Michael Beard who as a theoretical quantum physicist won the Nobel Prize for the Beard-Einstein Conflation early in his career. The Beard-Einstein Conflation is a hypothesis that builds on Albert Einstein's early work on quantum mechanics and photovoltaic cells in relation to the emission of electrons that suggested new methods for converting sunlight into electricity. As a Nobel Prize laureate, Beard becomes a celebrity in his field which ensures him honorary degrees as well as multiple prizes and medals while he for two decades did not produce any original hypotheses himself (McEwan 15-16). Despite Beard's contribution to advanced research activities on solar energy as a young physicist, it becomes clear to the reader from the very beginning of the novel that Beard does not have the same commitment to science and research as he once had. By plagiarising his colleague's notes on artificial photosynthesis, Beard develops new technologies for utilising solar energy, which has the potential to solve the climate crisis. However, Beard's plan to save the planet fails when a lawyer accuses him of stealing intellectual property, whereby Beard becomes a representation of an anti-hero.

The novel begins in medias res and the narrative progresses from the year 2000 through 2005 to 2009 which are also the three sections in which the novel is organised. The narrative has thus singled out three years of Beard's life, where the reader follows his development through certain stages and conflicts in his life. Through the narrative progression of these three different stages, the novel also formulates three different perspectives of the topic of climate change. Part One in the year 2000 represents Beard's apathetic attitude and profound scepticism about it; Part Two in 2005, Beard outlines the benefits of solar energy; and Part Three in 2009, the reader follows Beard's actions towards saving the planet, and most significantly his own life. So, while Part One shows Beard's doubt about the reality of climate change, Part Three shows that Beard eventually is convinced of the reality of climate change. Through these years, the reader is introduced to a personal and private Beard as well as a professional and public which gives the reader a full picture of his inner and outer identity. In this sense, the narrative becomes heavily plotted as everything happens for a reason and is included for a specific purpose. Already from the first few sentences of the novel, McEwan demonstrates his deliberate use of narrative techniques.

> [h]e belonged to that class of men - vaguely unprepossessing, often bald, short, fat, clever - who were unaccountably attractive to certain beautiful women. Or he believed he was, and thinking seemed to make it so. And it helped that some women believed he was a genius in need of rescue. But the Michael Beard of this time was a man of narrowed mental condition, anhedonic, monothematic, stricken. (3)

Here, the anonymous heterodiegetic narrator offers a vivid description of Beard narrated from an omniscient point of view with access to unlimited information on which he comments and evaluates. In the passage, it becomes evident that the narrator moves freely inside and outside Beard's mind: First, the narrator comments on Beard's appearance as an obese, short and bald man; and second, the narrator enters Beard's consciousness by commenting on his thoughts of himself as an attractive man which exposes him as self-deceiving because only the thought of it made it a reality. Moreover, the narrator becomes present in this passage as he comments on the Beard of *this time* which makes clear that the narrator is narrating the reader through the first section of the novel - year 2000. In this year of his life, the narrator states that Beard is a man of 'narrowed mental condition' which then displays what the reader can expect from the protagonist. In this sense, the reader knows more than the character as no perceiving character is present in the passage which makes it zero focalisation, but it also makes the novel a dramatic irony. The narrator, thus, operates on two levels: one in which the narrator communicates Beard's consciousness and one wherein Beard's folly is exposed through satire and ridicule.

Through the first section, year 2000, Beard is 53 years old (8). He is portrayed as an obese, spoiled and egocentric opportunist who depends on his social status as a white, heterosexual and well-educated male authority. He takes advantage of his reputation as an acclaimed physicist but relies upon the work of others as he lacked the will, the material and the ideas to do any real work himself (16). Beard still speaks at large conferences, lends his name to scientific institutions and secures the title as first hand and scientific director at the National Centre for Renewable Energy. The Centre is a newly established government-backed research initiative that aims at finding a way to use chaos theory and quantum photovoltaics to make the production of wind and solar energy more efficient, and thereby, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change.

Furthermore, in this year of Beard's life, his fifth marriage is floundering and his wife Patrice's affair with a tall contractor named Rodney Tarpin catches a lot of attention. Beard himself had had adulterous escapades in all his marriages, but this time it was different, as she was the one having the affair. As a result of the affair, Beard's desire for Patrice increases and he starts to question if his status is enough to make her stay with him. Beard begins to see Patrice in another light; he could now see the resemblance between her and Marilyn Monroe that his friends used to talk

about. Though he could not see it before, he always accepted the acknowledgement from his friends, because it for him was a status-enhancing comparison (7). Beard himself is impressed with "his ability to think of nothing else" (9) than Patrice, and Patrice and Tarpin, which makes Beard appear immature and childish because of jealousy. Here the narrator narrates internally through Beard, as the narrator knows what he thinks. This internal focalisation through Beard continues through the rest of the novel.

In an effort to make Patrice jealous and make her come back to him, Beard fakes a conversation with a woman from his bedroom. By turning the volume of the radio up and down while a woman was speaking, Beard hoped that Patrice would think he was also having an affair. He takes the scheme as far as he a couple of hours later gets out of bed to say goodbye to his fake companion and does so in such a way that even the narrator compares him to a madman:

> At four, after a long silence suggestive of tranquil intimacy, he opened his bedroom door while keeping up an instant murmur, and went down the starts backwards, bending forward to beat out on the treads with his palms the sound of his companion's footfall, syncopated with his own. This was the kind of logical plan only a madman might embrace. After seeing his companion to the hall, saying his goodbyes between silent kisses, and closing the front door on her with a firmness that resounded through the house, he went upstairs and fell into a doze at last after six, repeating to himself softly, 'Judge me by my results'. (10)

This situation is a great example of Beard's foolish behaviour and how it sets the scene throughout the novel. It is early in the reader's encounter with Beard and functions as a foundation of their perception of him. Moreover, it functions as an example of Beard's apathy towards important things such as climate change since he is much more focussed on his wife's infidelity and how he can restore his status in his marriage. Beard's apathetic and indifferent attitude towards the planet and climate change is, thereby, significantly represented at the level of the storyworld through events, happenings and characterisation as climate change gets very little attention compared to Beard's life. The reader's encounter with the protagonist is instantaneous, as the novel begins in medias res with the short description of Beard included above. By placing the narrative focus on Beard already from the beginning, the reader is transported directly into the selfabsorbedness of Beard's life, which is also a result of the internal focalisation through Beard. In this sense, it is not only within the rhetorical content of the narrative that Beard catches a lot of attention but also within the form and narrative structure.

Through those three years where the reader follows Beard, there are not only changes in his life but in the world's climate as well. These changes in the climate are seen as Beard relocates multiple times: He is mainly situated in London, but in the year 2000 he goes to the Arctic and in 2009

he goes to New Mexico. McEwan uses the complete opposite nature of the Arctic and the desert for rhetorical purposes. They are each their own extreme ecological pole and by situating Beard and the reader first in the "frozen shores" (88) of the Arctic and afterwards in the "savage heat" (258) of the desert, McEwan forces the reader to think about the changing natural environment that they experience in the Anthropocene. The reader experiences these extreme environments through the effects that the freezing cold and the burning sun has on Beard's body, or rather his physical health. The experience of the freezing cold is exemplified when "he discovered that his penis had attached itself to the zip of his snowmobile suit, had frozen in hard along its length, the way only living flesh can do on sub-zero metal [...] And he was already in pain from the cold" (65). The effect of the burning sun comes across through his experiences of the "external temperature of one hundred and twelve degrees Fahrenheit, hotter than either man had ever known" (258). In this sense, the reader experiences climate change through Beard's bodily experience of two extremes of nature. These environments and the effects they have on Beard's body, make him come across as a comical figure as he continuously denies the reality of global warming though he, throughout the novel, is given constant signs of its existence, especially in terms of his explicit bodily experiences of it.

Another ecological element that plays into the novel's portrayal of climate change is, furthermore, the recurring motif of polar bears throughout the first section of the novel. Early on, the narrator explains that Beard despised the polar bear rug (an anti-ecological object) that decorated the polished floor in his living room because he once had slipped on it and "come close to breaking an ankle" (14). Furthermore, Beard was in close encounter with a living polar bear during an excursion on snowmobiles on his visit to the North Pole. This episode is comically focalised through Beard's consciousness as he, despite the danger he was in, only 'half ran' back to the snowmobile because of his need to retain his dignity:

> Even with the prospect of being eaten alive, dignity prevailed and they only half ran to the machines. As he reached his, Beard knew what to expect [...] He pushed the button. Nothing. Fine. So let his sinews be stripped from his bones. He tried again, then again [...] Rather than turn and have his face ripped away, he hunched his shoulders in expectation of the worst. His last thought – that in his carelessly unchange will he had left everything to Patrice for Tarpin's use – would have been a dismal one, but what he heard was the guide's voice. "Let me do it." The Nobel laureate had been pressing the headlight switch. The machine came to life at first touch. (78)

It is here noticeable how Beard, in this moment, fails to react as a result of fear, how he instead takes his time with thoughts of Patrice and Tarpin and how it turns out that he despite his title as a Nobel laureate, as the narrator comically and strategically states, was pressing the headlight switch

instead of the power switch. Moreover, in a following passage, the narrator reveals how Beard sees this experience as an opportunity to tell a good story, and thereby, as something he can use for his own benefit:

> Beard glanced back again, hoping to catch sight, for anecdote's sake, of the animal he was about to outpace. In the narrow perimeter of semi-clarity that surrounded the google's frozen fog patch there was movement, but it may have been the guide's hand or a corner of his own balaclava. In the account he would give for the rest of his life, the one that became his true memory, a polar bear with open jaws was twenty metres distant and running at him when his snowmobile started forward, not because, or not only because, he was a liar, but because he instinctively knew it was wrong to dishonour a good story. (79)

Beard makes the best of what, according to him, becomes a dramatic near-death experience. His choice to bend the truth does not only make him an unreliable character, but it represents his ability and extreme need to exploit the material world for his own self-interest. He strongly believes that a story must have an ending that is more perfect than the truth real life offers in order to be legitimate.

The polar bear motif occurs once again when Beard returns from the Arctic and discovers that Tom Aldous, a young physicist and Beard's colleague at the research centre, is having an affair with his wife after he finds him in a bathrobe in his living room. Angry about his discovery, Beard threatens to ruin Aldous' career after which the situation escalates as Aldous makes a sudden move, slips on the polar bear rug and hits his head against the rounded corner of the glass table. In much the same way as with his experience with the live polar bear, Beard makes the best of his circumstance by framing Tarpin, Beard's antagonist, for the murder. However, the narrative language uses a simile to compare Beard's behaviour to that of a "murderer covering his tracks" (105). This simile makes the reader question if Beard is in fact like a murderer because he fails to report the accident, and instead makes use of the situation and improves it for his own benefit. Beard's situation is further improved when he, after Aldous' death, comes in the possession of the young physicist's, Beard's other antagonist, research notes that look into two possible ways of utilising sunlight in the same way as plants do. The first idea was to "exploit direct energy from sunlight to split water into hydrogen and oxygen" and the other was to "combine carbon dioxide from the atmosphere with sunlight and water to make an all-purpose liquid fuel" (115). The irony is thereby further evident considering Beard and Aldous' very different attitudes towards climate change. Beard, who defines global warming as the "hot breath of civilisation" (121) had escaped the live polar bear, but Aldous, who seems to be one of the few characters in the novel who is engaged in and informed by the consequences of global warming ends up being killed by the very symbol of it as if the dead polar bear

rug "came alive [...] with its open mouth and yellow teeth bucking into the air" (99). This polar bear motif can be considered an econarratological principle in *Solar* as it is an ecological object placed within the narrative for ecocritical purposes. By foregrounding the species on Earth that is most endangered by global warming and reminding the reader of that fact through the narrative, McEwan offers up environmental insight.

It is, moreover, essential to look at Beard's health and his doctor's warning about it in relation to Beard's allegorical function as a mimetic character as well as the environmental aspect it contains. Even though Beard in Part Three, through science, seems to contribute to the solution of global warming, his indifferent attitude towards it is reflected in his personal life and his health. Beard is characterised as a man with immoderate appetite for women, acclaim, alcohol, fattening foods, and especially crisps. Despite his fifteen pounds overweight and his multiple attempts to go on a diet, he cannot control his appetites and continuously avoid the warnings he is given about his unhealthy lifestyle: "Act now, or die early" (81). Not even a reddish-brown blotch that starts to appear on his wrist makes him take the proper medical action although his doctor, Eugene Parks, repeatedly warns him about the critical state of his health.

> As he listened to Parks enumerate his possible futures, he decided not to mention his recent acquisition of a classic symptom, the occasional sensation of tightness around his chest. It would only make him appear even more foolish and doomed. Nor could he admit that he did not have it in him to eat and drink less, that exercise was a fantasy. He could not command his body to do it, he had no will for it. He would rather die than take up jogging or prance to funky music in a church hall with other tracksuited deadbeats. (267)

After a biopsy, Parks conforms that the blotch was melanoma and that there was "[n]o time to lose, on the edge of no return, metastasis a possibility" (265). Beard needed to change his eating habits if he was to avoid death: "'Don't be a denier,' Doctor Parks had said, appearing to refer back to their climate-change chats. 'This won't go away just because you don't want it or are not thinking about it'" (265-266). Beard is much like the species to which he belongs, avoiding the warnings of the unpleasant fact that he, if no action taken, is going to die. Even when the warning becomes extremely visual through the blotch, he is still unable, or rather unwilling, to change his lifestyle. Beard's comical figure is mimetic of human actions that, thus, becomes a useful narrative device for McEwan for allegorical purposes. Beard's developing skin cancer functions as an allegory of global warming which is known to be caused by the gluttony of human behaviour and gluttony is highly representative in Beard. In this sense, Beard becomes an allegory of the Earth itself where the self-inflicted abuse on his body is an allegory of the abuse humanity inflicts on the Earth by exploiting its recourses. Furthermore, his denial and effortless attempt to recover becomes an allegory of hu-

manity's lack of response to climate change. By using words such as 'denier' which is, as the narrator states, connected to climate change rhetoric makes doctor Parks' warning directed, not only towards Beard, but also towards climate change deniers and those who prefer not to think about or do anything about the alarming state of the planet, either because they do not believe in its existence or because it is less complicated to deny it than acknowledge it. In this sense, Beard represents many of the anthropocentric characteristics of humanity that are associated with the era of the Anthropocene.

5.1.3 Structuralising science as comedy: Science as a solution of the climate crisis

The novel's focus on exposing the gluttonous anthropocentric characteristics of human behaviour is furthermore evident in the novel's comic portrayal of Beard's lack of interest and awareness towards climate change. As mentioned above, the first section of the novel portrays Beard's profound doubts about climate change as the narrator explains that he does not care much for art or climate change and especially not "for art about climate change" (81). This outlook comes across as rather ironic given that Beard himself is a character in a modern piece of art about climate change. It was not that Beard was wholly sceptical about climate change, but he just expected others, such as the government, to meet and take action as he had other things to think about (16). Furthermore, he was not especially impressed by "the wild commentary that suggested the world was in 'peril,' that humankind was drifting towards calamity, when coastal cities would disappear under the waves, crops fail, and hundreds of millions of refugees surge from one country, one continent, to another, driven by drought, floods, famine, tempests, unceasing wars for diminishing resources" (16). Such a perspective displays an apathetic and indifferent attitude to the climate crisis, a recognisable human behaviour in the Anthropocene. As the narrative rhetoric reveals that Beard, as a scientist, does not believe that the perils listed above are a consequence of the warming of the planet, Beard appears unalarmed by these scenarios. He is portrayed as a person who is rather unsympathetic towards and annoyed by the apocalyptic rhetoric connected to climate-conscious talk concerning the critical state of the planet. However, this disclaimer about Beard's attitude towards the climate crisis functions as a warning, as the alarming scenarios will bring about both visual pictures and emotional responses in the readers and, thereby, potentially make them rethink their ecological position by not wanting to be like Beard. In this sense, this example illustrates how McEwan strategically makes his protagonist think that he is rejecting that these alleged perils are associated with global warming. Yet, Beard's perspective actually invites McEwan's readers to reflect on whether or not they

believe in Beard's allegation, and thus, provide an alternative dialogue and negotiation in relation to the environmental discourse. Furthermore, this example from the novel contains an important key point from ecocriticism in terms of the way in which it advocates for environmental awareness and challenges the reader's orientation towards and role in the environmental conversation and conservation.

Through this scepticism towards global warming, the novel represents science as comedy by tying science with Beard's personal ambitions and self-interests. The novel's comic portrayal of science is illustrated through Beard's contextualisation of science through which he sarcastically challenges the ambitions associated with the phenomenon of quantum mechanics:

> Quantum mechanics. What a repository, a dump, of human aspiration it was, the borderland where mathematical rigour defeated common sense, and reason and fantasy irrationally merged. Here, the mystically inclined could find whatever they required, and claim science as their proof. And for these ingenious men in their spare time, what ghostly and beautiful music it must be—*spectral asymmetry, resonances, entanglement, quantum harmonic oscillators*— beguiling ancient airs, the harmony of the spheres that might transmute a lead wall into gold, and bring into being the engine that ran on virtually nothing, on virtual particles, that emitted no harm and would power the human enterprise as well as save it. (Emphasis in original, 20)

In this passage, Beard describes quantum mechanics as something that is unscientific. He describes the phenomenon as something mystical, ghostly and spectral that has reduced common sense by being an irrational combination of reason and fantasy. Beard demonstrates a certain amount of contempt towards the philosophical nature of quantum mechanics as he disproves the way in which some people claim that it is science, and thereby, ironically ridicules the ambitious hope that quantum mechanics and its scientific advancement will solve the problems of human nature and save the planet. In this sense, McEwan sarcastically portrays science as a plausible solution for climate change that would allow humanity to continue their exploitation of Earth's resources. The hope that science is our salvation and that it will compensate for the harm that humanity inflicts on the planet is even further emphasised when reading Beard as an allegory of human behaviour and their actions because his personal overconsumption does not leave much hope for a sustainable utopia.

In *Solar*, science and art are frequently placed in opposition to each other and especially that of literary art. This opposition between science and art is satirically represented in Beard's optimistic view on science and his pessimistic view of art. Beard's pessimistic view of art is first introduced when Aldous suggests that Beard should look at art as something that can communicate climate change: "There were novels Aldous wanted him to read – novels!—and […] documentaries about climate change" (31). Beard's reaction to this suggestion comes across as ironic because he as

a scientist almost seems appalled by the idea of reading a novel. Another scene that depicts Beard's pessimistic view of art is when Beard is invited to the Arctic to "see global warming change for himself" (51) as an environmental initiative to bring artists and scientists together. However, as it turns out, Beard is the only scientist among twenty climate change artists, who is preoccupied with aesthetically portraying climate change through art. The artist, nonetheless, is convinced that Beard is "the only one [...] doing something 'real'" (83), which comes across in a satirical manner as "[e]veryone but Beard was worried about global warming" (74). Ironically, what the artists are unaware of is that Beard has not done any serious science in years, but their support towards and view of science was of value to him as their favouritism of science positions Beard's line of work as superior. Moreover, Beard encounters a Spanish ice sculptor, who is known for creating sculptors of polar bears where the uncertain future of the species depicted is mirrored through the fleeting nature of the artwork itself. Beard was surprised by the artists' idealism and profound belief that aesthetics can purposefully address climate change:

> Beard would not have believed it possible that he would be in a room drinking with so many seized by the same particular assumption, that it was art in its highest forms, poetry, sculpture, dance, abstract music, conceptual art, that would lift climate change as a subject, gild it, palpate it, reveal all the horror and lost beauty and awesome threat, and inspire the public to take thought, take action, or demand it of others. He sat in silent wonder. Idealism was so alien to his nature that he could not raise an objection. He was in new territory, among a friendly tribe of exotics. (86)

It is almost as if Beard was experiencing a form of cultural shock being thrown into 'silent wonder'. These scenes are filled with merry people who neither lacked goodwill nor ideas and Beard "could not stand it, the optimism was crushing him" (74). These artists represent Beard's pessimistic view of art and his optimistic view of science. He does not believe in "profound inner change" (74) and remains reluctant and questionable towards the optimistic view that art can generate change. This belief contradicts Garrard's notion that environmental literature can engender environmental awareness through a critique of the human impact on nature and the idea that literary art can contain some kind of moral idealism. However, much like Garrard, the artists are under the assumption that art is able to 'lift', 'palpate' and 'gild' climate change and inspire people to take action. Solar can, in this sense, be read as a parody that ridicules environmental literary studies' pessimistic view of humanity's impact on nature and its optimistic belief that literary art such as *Solar* can bring about change.

This tension between Beard's scientific worldview and that of artists is, moreover, illustrated when he behaves impertinently towards the novelist Meredith because of her suggestion about ap-

plying ethics to the natural sciences. This leads to a discussion about "the loss of a 'moral compass'" (86) where Beard challenges the meaning of right and wrong in physics: "Beard was peevish in his interruption [...] Heisenberg's Principle would only have application if the sum of right plus wrong divided by the square root of two had any meaning. [...] So come on. Tell me. Let's hear you apply Heisenberg to ethics. Right plus wrong over the square root of two. What the hell does it mean? Nothing!" (85). In Beard's view, the combination between ethics and science has no value as he argues that it would not provide any result if one put 'right' and 'wrong' in a mathematical equation. It becomes apparent that Beard is liable to discard messy calculations because "these days there were simply too many add-ons and modifications" (23). This work method is something Beard has stuck to since he was a schoolboy and "his maths teacher had told the class that whenever they found an exam question coming out at eleven nineteenths or thirteen twenty-sevenths, they should know they had the wrong answer. Too messy to be true." (23). In this sense, when something in life comes out too messy it would not be a viable solution for Beard which is the reason for his outraged reaction to the novelist's suggestion. For Beard, physics is "free of human taint, it describes a world that would still exist if men and women and all their sorrows did not" (9). This perspective of physics as an almost sacred space that is not contaminated or affected negatively by humans and their emotions seems to be the very reason for his pessimism towards art as it is a field inevitably influenced by humans, emotions and ethics. Beard becomes an embodiment of scientific favouritism and of the belief that science can provide a recipe for problem solving, but because he discards the importance of morality and ethics, Beard comes across with a certain amount of coldness and detachment.

The novel does, in this way, not leave much room for ethical and moral discussions as Beard's favouritism of science shelters him from contemplations about his own amoral and unethical behaviour. This is especially evident when Beard unethically plagiarises Aldous' notes on artificial photosynthesis. These notes contain a possible solution of climate change, but Beard is ignorant of that concern as he is not really interested in the research because it may save the planet and the human species, but rather because he sees it as commercial and economic gain. In the third part of the novel, Beard and his assistant, Toby Hammer successfully manage to build a solar energy plant using Aldous' initial research. However, Beard's plan collapses when a lawyer named Barnard, who is representing Beard's former colleague Jock Brady and the Centre accuse Beard of theft of intellectual property. Despite Hammer repeatedly giving Beard the opportunity to come clean, Beard continues to mislead him by assuring nothing is wrong. As the project is ready to be pre-

sented to the world, which Beard describes as "his world-historical event" (292), he receives a call from Hammer who explains that "[s]omeone's s taken a sledgehammer to the panels. They've gone down the rows and taken them all out. Shattered. We've lost all the catalysts. Electronics. Everything" (309). Furthermore, Hammer had discovered that Beard had been lying all along: "Braby is going to take you for everything you have and will ever have. And in the UK that dead boy's father has persuaded the authorities to move against you on criminal charges, basically theft and fraud. I hate you, Michael. You lied to me and you're a thief [...] You deserve almost everything that's coming to you. So go fuck yourself" (309). Even though Beard does what is right and almost saves humanity from climate change, he does it for the wrong reasons wherefore he, as a result, fails and his true motives are exposed. Thereby, Beard becomes a representation of an anti-hero who is symptomatic of the self-interest that makes humanity fail to prioritise the health of the planet above their own desires.

5.1.4. How do we feel about "The Unwitting Thief"

Through our reading, we have been transported into a storyworld where the spatial and temporal dimensions look very much like the reality, we find ourselves in in the age of the Anthropocene. Our mental model of the storyworld in *Solar* will therefore be based on the personal image we already have of the real world. However, we experience this familiar world through the internal focalisation of Beard, and the reader will, thereby, reconstruct the storyworld according to his image and experiences of the world, but it will still be based on a simulation of the world we know and our personal experiences with it. McEwan intentionally traps the reader in the sole company of Beard and his rather limited worldview. The omniscient narrator gives us access to Beard's mind and consciousness which grants us the ability to read his mind. Thereby, we use our Theory of Mind to interpret the behaviour of Beard which not only helps us understand his thoughts, beliefs and feelings but also allows us to examine why he is the way he is. We will thus experience the storyworld as if we were walking in his shoes. Through the mind-reading we will compare ourselves to Beard based on both our personal perceptions and surroundings, but also on the cultural knowledge we bring into the text which will affect our perception of the storyworld and how we feel about Beard.

As suggested by the analysis so far, Beard is very much a dislikeable character, who is blinded by his own self-interest. The reader is thereby likely to respond negatively to him especially as we see him self-destruct as a result of his self-created disasters that tear apart both his personal and professional life. In many ways, Beard is an unlikely saviour of humanity, who might not be the

hero or the protagonist the readers want. Instead of creating a sympathetic and idealist character who the reader can become friends with, McEwan has created an anti-hero, who because of his self-absorbed and unethical behaviour is difficult for the reader to care about. However, the novel's satirical and allegorical function also indicates the reader's ability to identify with Beard, as he serves as a mimetic character of human behaviour in the Anthropocene. He is described as "a modern monster in the flesh" (153) who "comfortably shared all of humanity's faults" (191). Though it might be difficult for the reader to identify with a character who is described as a monster, Beard's weaknesses and flaws are realistically human. In this sense, McEwan challenges the reader's ability to identify with a 'monster' that is so much like us that he becomes uncomfortably familiar which implicitly forces the reader to ask if they would be perceived as monsters too.

According to Suzanne Keen, this level of identification will often invite empathy and it is partially true in *Solar*. However, before the readers come to empathise with Beard, we respond to him with antipathy. The antipathy we feel for Beard is intensified as the narrative progresses and we witness his unethical actions: Beard consumes, steals and exploits everything around him which makes it difficult for the reader to view him with either empathy or sympathy. Moreover, antipathy is evoked due to his apathy towards climate change as it makes us dislike him. One of the most revealing conversations that portrays this apathy appears when Beard's assistant Hammer begins to worry about the rumours on television proclaiming that the planet is getting cooler. Beard tries to convince that the rumours are false:

> "Here's the good news. The UN estimates that already a third of a million people a year are dying from climate change. Bangladesh is going down because the oceans are warming and expanding and rising. There's drought in the Amazonian rainforest. Methane is pouring out of the Siberian permafrost. There's a meltdown under the Greenland ice sheet that no one really wants to talk about [...] Two years ago we lost forty per cent of the Arctic summer ice. Now the eastern Antarctic is going. The future has arrived, Toby." [...] Beard laid a hand on his friend's arm, a sure sign that he was well over his limit. "Toby, listen. It's a catastrophe. Relax!" (241)

In the beginning of the passage, Beard mentions what he claims is 'good' news, but subsequently talks about death and natural catastrophes brought on by climate change, which comes across sarcastically. It is good news because Beard and Hammer need the sun in order for their solar panels to function, so as Hammer explains; when "guys in white coast come on TV to say the planet's not heating. I get spooked" (241). This comes across in an ironic manner as he thinks that what they should get 'spooked' by is that the planet is not heating and not that it is heating. The same contradictory irony is seen at the end of the passage above where Beard tells Hammer to 'relax' because it is a catastrophe. Through this passage, the reader experiences Beard's apathetic attitude towards the

future of the planet and as a result, he becomes an embodiment of humanity's refusal to take climate change seriously. As a result of Beard's apathy, the reader will view him with antipathy.

The antipathy the reader's feel for Beard is, nonetheless, depended on the cultural knowledge they bring to the text. The reader will bring the knowledge of anthropogenic climate change and the context of the Anthropocene where humanity's impact on Earth has reached a critical point due to overconsumption and exploitation of resources. These contexts will influence the reader's reconstruction of the novel and their emotional relationship with Beard; the reader is aware what negative impact people, such as Beard, have on the environment, and thereby, they view him with antipathy. If the reader did not read the novel in these contexts and with this cultural knowledge, Beard's behaviour and attitude towards climate change would not be so noteworthy, and thereby, the reader might have seen him in a different light. In this sense, the reader's antipathy for Beard will also be determined by their personal perspective of climate change. The environmentally conscious reader is likely to view Beard with more antipathy than readers who do not care as much about the environment.

Beard vices and unethical behaviour is additionally contributing to the readers antipathy for Beard. McEwan's use of satire and his comic portrayal of Beard emphasises our dislike for the protagonist as it exposes his errors much more effectively. An example that illustrates such an episode takes place on a train from Heathrow to London and includes a bag of salt and vinegar flavoured crisps Beard had bought for the trip. On the train Beard opens the bag of crisps and begins to eat, but then the passenger sitting across from him reaches over

> letting one forearm drop, crane-like down onto the bag, the man stole a crisp, probably the largest in the packet, helt it in front of his face for a second or two, then ate it, not with Beard's fastidiousness, but with an insolent chewing motion, with lips parted so that one could glimpse it turning to paste on his tongue. The man did not even blink, his stare was so intense. And the act was so flagrant, so unorthodox, that even Beard, who was quite capable of unconventional thought— how else had he won his Prize? – could only sit in frozen shock and try, for dignity's sake, by remaining expressionless, to betray no sign of emotion. (137)

Alternately, Beard and the passenger take a crisp from the bag which leads to a strange, wordless confrontation staring intensely into each other's eyes as if they were laying claim to the crisps as a competition of superiority and manhood. When only a few remained, the passenger generously "in a parody of politeness" (139) offers Beard the last two crisps. For Beard, this gesture was an insult as it was his crisps that the passenger offered him: "Beard would not be bullied" (139) and he turned away the offer. The passenger "secured his triumph" (139) as he without eating the last crisp put the bag in the waste bin and by that "Beard's humiliation was complete" (139). Beard had lost

this trail of strength and loses the silent battle with the passenger but in self-respect for himself and the underdogs like him, he ends the confrontation in "a show of resistance" (139): "He lunged forward, seized his opponent's bottle of water, snapped off its top and drank deeply – he was thirsty anyway – drank it down to the bottom, every last drop of its twenty-five centilitres. He tossed the bottle on the table with a defiant, come-and-get-me look" (140). Ironically, as Beard leaves the station, he finds his bag of crisps in his pocket and realises that he had been eating the passenger's crisps all along like "a vicious madman" (141). After the discovery, Beard experiences a moment of self-illumination: "He was so entirely in the wrong that for the moment it felt like liberation, strangely like joy. There could be no excuses, he had no defence. He also felt a mirthless impulse to laugh. His error was so unambiguous, so unsullied, he stood so completely revealed to himself, a naked fool, that he felt purified and redeemed" (141). After this episode, Beard speaks at a conference and uses the experience as an anecdote after which he discovers that his experience is an example of an old folklore named 'the Unwitting Thief'. Beard's story leads to the conclusion that first,

> in a grave situation, a crisis, we understand, sometimes too late, that it is not in other people, or in the system, or in the nature of things that the problem lies, but in ourselves, our own follies and unexamined assumptions. And second, there are moments when the acquisition of new information forces us to make a fundamental reinterpretation of our situation. Industrial civilisation is at just such a moment. We pass through a mirror, everything is transformed, the old paradigm makes way for the new. (175)

Beard here refers to his own experience of self-illumination as something that has transformed him. However, the attentive reader will not be fooled because the idea of Beard's transformation comes across ironically, as Beard just before his speech had eaten too many wedges of smoked salmon which made him feel sick all the way through his presentation. The irony is further illustrated when Beard is annoyed about the folklorist's comparison between Beard's experience and the narrative archetype of the Unwitting Thief and impatiently orders a drink: "I don't care, as long as it's not a single malt. A triple, straight up, one ice cube, and would you mind bringing it immediately." (177). Despite Beard's lecturing about how being wrong leads to transformation because it invites self-reinterpretation, Beard still overconsumes and cannot control his needs and appetite which makes him appear hypocritical. However, this conclusion is strategically placed in the novel and can be read as one of its key messages by not only compelling the reader to rethink their own behaviour in comparison to Beard's but also by appealing to their ability to look for both issues and transformation inside themself.

Beard is tragically unable to believe in the possibility of profound inner change, but he never stops to believe in his own redemption: ”He would be redeemed. Let there be light” (160). Whether or not Beard is ever fully redeemed is open to interpretation, but despite our antipathy for Beard, McEwan still manages to make the reader feel sorry for Beard; though it at times is more that we pity him because he is pathetic. The reader watches him with a kind of fascinated unease as his situation develops and self-created disasters overwhelm him. The reader laughs as he is humiliated and ridiculed by the exposure of his follies, and yet the reader pities him. Not so much in the sense that we feel compassion for him, but rather a kind of contemptuous pity marked by his pathetic endeavours. However, the reader still watches him with a kind of encouragement and supportiveness because we want to believe in his redemption and transformation; the reader wants him to succeed and fail at the same time, which might be because he is so much like us in both his weaknesses and strengths.

The reader does, nevertheless, begin to foster some compassionate feelings for Beard, as he in Part Three begins to reminisce about his childhood and parents. Through these flashbacks, the reader becomes aware that Beard had a troubling childhood. His mother and father lived a loveless marriage and Beard never learned to discuss “feelings, and [had] no language for them now” (219). Beard’s father Henry “never embraced Michael, and rarely laid an affectionate hand on his shoulder” (216). The medium of his mother’s love was food. She struggled with depression which she treated by having multiple affairs; “Without them [...] she would have hated herself and gone mad” (218). In this sense, Beard grew up with a form of neglect from both his mother and his father. However, it is evident that the missing affection and love from his mother have affected his behaviour as an adult, more than that of the father’s. While Beard’s uncontrolled appetite reflects his craving for his mother’s love, his inability to sustain a loving relationship without always seeking a new one reflects his mother’s promiscuous behaviour. As a result of Beard’s neglect, he constantly needs acceptance socially, personally and professionally. These psychological reflections serve as an explanation for Beard’s behaviour, and they indicate an element of atonement for the protagonist. Some readers may begin to sympathise with Beard because they feel sorry for his loveless childhood while other readers who have experienced similar neglect may be able to empathise with him.

After Beard has lost everything in terms of his solar energy project, the ending does however rebuild some hope for the protagonist. His conversation with Hammer had been unpleasant for the reader to observe and left them in a strange place where they do not really know how they feel

about Beard. Before this episode, the reader started to foster compassionate and sympathetic emotions for Beard, so when Hammer tells him that he deserves everything that is coming for him, it may be difficult for the reader not to feel pity, or even sympathy, for him. The reader may even begin to empathise with him, because failure is something everybody is familiar with. In this sense, the reader might be able to emphasise more with Beard because of his failure and function as an anti-hero. The same element of identification may not have been present if Beard had ended up being a hero. Thereby, portraying Beard as an anti-hero functions as a strategic choice of McEwan's as it has a larger impact on the reader. After the unpleasant conversation with Hammer, Beard, as usual, seeks comfort in food, but is distracted when he again notices the blotch on the back of his hand: "It was larger, he thought, since he last looked, and was an angry purplish brown under the Blooberry's fluorescent lights. Was he really going to deal with this now, along with everything else? He thought it unlikely. It would take care of itself. Nor would he go to the site tomorrow to speak to the angry crowds. Nor would he be saving the world" (310). Despite everything that has happened, Beard is still naïve enough to think that his melanoma would take care of itself. However, it still distracts him from the food he was about to eat, which indicates that he is slightly more attentive to it now than earlier and if the melanoma is an allegory of climate change, this indicates that Beard is slightly less sceptical about it. Furthermore, the conclusion of the novel transforms the moment of loss suggesting that there is still love and happiness waiting for Beard despite all his misdeeds as he still has his loving daughter Catrinona: "She saw her father before the women did and was running towards him, coming to claim him, calling out something indistinct, skipping between the crowded tables. As Beard rose to greet her, he felt in his heart an unfamiliar, swelling sensation, but he doubted as he opened his arms to her that anyone would ever believe him now if he tried to pass it off as love" (310). However, the conclusion can also be interpreted as Beard having a heart attack as a result of his unhealthy lifestyle. Considering Beard and his unstable health as an embodiment of the planet, as mentioned above, this can also be read as the annihilation of the planet. Beard did not stop consuming food, alcohol and crisps as his doctor advised him to, and as a result, he had a heart attack. In much the same way, the Earth will collapse if humanity does not stop consuming and exploiting the natural resources.

6.1. Surviving the apocalypse: An analysis of the tragic portrayal of the end in The Road

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* explores a distinctly ecological eschatology where everything is dark, grey and ashen and all boundaries between nature and culture have collapsed. The novel is, in

many ways, about relations, especially the relationship between a father and his son. This is already seen in the novel's dedication, as McCarthy has dedicated the novel to his son, John Francis McCarthy. The novel is a tragic and post-apocalyptic story where the reader witnesses the end of the world through the eyes of an unnamed man. By depicting such a storyworld, the novel functions as a warning to the reader in the context of the Anthropocene, as it portrays the possible future of the world. The novel's tragic and post-apocalyptic elements appear at the level of the storyworld in terms of the characterisation of the man and the boy and the events that take place on their journey through the post-apocalyptic landscape. Yet, the apocalypse is also present at the level of discourse as the narrative structure, language and the plot employ apocalyptic elements that produce a tragic experience at the level of reading.

6.1.1. Literature review

Since the publication of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), the novel has positioned itself as a modern classic within the conversation around contemporary climate fiction, and thereby, it has a firm place within what is considered part of the climate fiction canon. Having won the Pulitzer prize, *The Road* has been the target for many different readings through the years where scholars have investigated themes such as morality, apocalypse, climate fiction and empathy. McCarthy's novel has both been described as "the first great masterpiece of the globally-warmed generation" (O'Hagan) and in 2008 *The Guardian* included McCarthy in their "50 People Who Could Save The Planet" list, stating that *The Road* was "the most important environmental book ever" (Monbiot).

Throughout Andrew Estes' chapter in *Handbook of the American Novel of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, he brings out the most momentous problems that the protagonists meet when being on the road. Estes proclaims that "*The Road* depicts the same theme as through a glass, darkly [as] McCarthy tends to depict the lone individual or the small group faced with inhospitable environments" (417). Estes believes that McCarthy purposely exposes his protagonists to cruel environments that challenge their chance of survival in order to illustrate and learn something new about human beings and their exploration of the environment. In this sense, the materialistic culture generates uncertainty as no one knows what tomorrow brings. This level of uncertainty is highly influenced by dystopian and apocalyptic fictional media due to the number of visual constituents located in films; Estes thus argues that *The Road* is influenced by fictional apocalyptic media, such as *The Day After Tomorrow*, as media have the "ability to convey overwhelming amount of gripping imagery" (419). Thereby, readers are able to imagine the world within *The Road* as a result of

fictional media illustrations that enables the readers to draw parallels between the media's perception of an apocalypse and *The Road.* Furthermore, Andrew Estes praises McCarthy's style of language owing to the lack of insight into the characters. He mentions that

> the challenging, stripped-down nature of McCarthy's prose means that readers must work harder to interpret the text. This means more freedom, as multiple interpretations are possible. If the aesthetic mode of realism implied an unproblematic transfer of ideas from author to reader, *The Road* establishes itself at the opposite pole. Here, the distant removed narrator effaces himself as the world folds in upon itself, reducing and simplifying down to a harder core of meaning. (419)

In accordance with McCarthy's style of language, Estes states that the absence of subjectivity and freedom to interpret is connected to the world outside where overconsumption generates big conflicts and massive environmental destruction. In this sense, Estes sees this overconsumption as the canned goods the man and boy find, "reflect the mundane contents of a typical American supermarket but they achieve epic status in this post-apocalyptic world" (420).

Estes finishes his chapter by putting all of his assumptions into a theoretical perspective in proportion to climate change and ecocriticism. To substantiate his postulate, Estes cites Paul Sheehan's article "Cormac McCarthy's Post-America" as he does not believe *The Road* makes any assumptions about climate change. On the contrary, Sheehan sees *The Road* as "an extended nature poem, though its nature had more to do with sublime terror than with bucolic or pastoral poetic traditions" (422). Estes seems to oblige this critique, as he draws parallels between the early stages of ecocriticism where ecocritics "tended to embrace overtly political positions and that intellectual nuance was discarded in favour of fervent activism. Today's ecocritics however show much more theoretical sophistication. A text like *The Road* does not have to be a political call for action on global warming to be read ecocritically" (422). Instead, he believes that *The Road* was seen as a reaction to 9/11 that happened only a few years before the book was published as "all of the people encountered in *The Road* are bloodthirsty opportunists wanting only to stave off their own demise" (424). Thus, Andrew Estes proclaims that the novel is all about a meditation on morality and survival.

In each of their chapters in *Against Nostalgia: Climate Change Art and Memory* (2016), Sebastian Groes and Claire Colebrook address *The Road* as a work of apocalyptic climate change. Groes describes *The Road*'s perspective on climate change as "a kind of 'preliminary' or 'proleptic' mourning, whereby we lament our fate and grieve for ourselves as if we were extinct already" (141). Moreover, Colebrook states in her chapter that

> The motif of humanity mourning its own failure is common enough, but what becomes intense in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century is a sense of irreversible species destruction that carries whatever is left of nature to an early grave. Futurist science-fiction dystopias have a cautionary moral imperative, pointing out where we might go if certain tendencies remain unchecked; but in what has come to be known as post-apocalyptic fiction, stories that are set in the future are presented less as possible scenarios and more as thought experiments in how we might imagine destruction *when* it arrives. (148)

In this context, Colebrook subjoins *The Road* as an example; she claims that the novel does not directly point out the cause of the apocalypse and as a result the reader has to imagine how the destruction had occurred. In this sense, another world or future is not an option as the world within *The Road* has already turned into a world of barbarism. Thus, Claire Colebrook emphasises that it is "*memory* in *The Road* that is at once the only possible future - where the father and son must voyage through the world holding onto the 'fire' - while the past is also a violent and delusional haunting" (148). These memories lie within the man and boy's dreams from the past as it, according to Colebrook, stresses the safe and secure society that suddenly has been replaced with destruction and loss of fate.

In Inger-Anne Søfting's article "Between Dystopia and Utopia: The Post-Apocalyptic Discourse of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*", she examines the oppositions that occur throughout the novel as well as the physical and psychological world of the characters. She claims that the novel is based on the contrasted juxtapositions in terms of the characters, who serve as the good guys, while they are surrounded by disaster and destruction. According to Søfting, the contrast is not only evident when examining the overall plot but enhances when reading the novel and getting to know the characters. In this way, it is the characters' emotional bond that generates a stark juxtaposition to the landscape they are living in. Hence, Søfting claims that "the setting is more relentlessly bleak than in any of McCarthy's other novels; it is hard to imagine a landscape closer to hell on earth than the one we meet here" (Søfting 705) wherefore readers retain the emotional and affectionate relationship between the man and the boy who face the brutality of the intangible changes in the environment. Moreover, Søfting stresses that *The Road*

> is also playing with opposites as its discourse contains elements of utopia as well as dystopia. External space, the natural physical world, constitutes a strong dystopian element, while inner space, the psychological inner life of the characters, constitutes a utopian element. In other words, the opposition between the land and the two main characters is the novel's discursive *locus geni*. (705)

In this sense, Søfting seeks to emphasise the importance of the juxtapositions within the novel as it is, according to her, what brings out and enhances the brutal nature they live in. Even though she claims that the juxtapositions and emotional relationship bring the reader closer to the novel, the

novel likewise appears 'non-specific' (706). Much like Estes, Søfting believes that the post-apocalyptic novel blurs both time and space as the reader does not specifically know if the plot is set in the past or future; thus, *The Road* differs from other dystopian, post-apocalyptic novels as these are explicitly set in the future (706). The non-specific plot is also, what strikes Søfting as the most interesting element in the novel since it is what makes the reader believe that the novel could be set in our present time wherefore it provokes a frightening feeling within the reader. Despite that, Søfting stresses, just as Estes, the absent consumer society, as the characters only carry a shopping cart around in the homogenous landscape. Hence, Søfting emphasises the similarities between our contemporary time and the time and space of the novel given that the shopping cart is the only material thing the readers can recognise (706).

As Søfting argues, neither the readers nor the characters know or ask any questions about what has caused the ecological climate change. She believes that

> in *The Road* we cannot blame global warming, political despotism, chemical warfare or any other easily identifiable factor. Since the situation has no clear cause there is no one and nothing to blame for it, and also nothing to be done about it. There is no regime that needs to be overthrown, no moral effect that can save the world and its people. Threatened humanity is a common theme in dystopian fiction, but often in such literature civilization and humanity as sensual, complex phenomena are threatened by human despotism in one shape or another. (708)

Furthermore, Søfting argues that the reason why *The Road* does not blame global warming or perceives climate change in the novel as Anthropogenic has to do with the cruel fate the protagonists are up against; there is nothing within the world of *The Road* that could possibly help humanity out as the cause of climate change is something that neither humanity nor technology can cure. Therefore, Søfting assumes that *The Road* "does not argue a specific case in point, it enacts a horrible vision of what existence can become if the world for some reason should collapse" (708). By enacting a possible collapse of society, anxiety is induced within the reader, as they suddenly fear what they might be facing in the future. One of the things Søfting suggests a collapse of society brings along is a threat against humanity and what she calls nihilism. Nihilism, which is the belief that nothing in the world has a real existence, exists in most of McCarthy's novels though the difference between his earlier novels and *The Road* is the portrayal of time and space; neither does the reader get to know the characters by their name or any characteristics, nor the space they are in due to the lack of specificity as everything has been neutralised (710). Moreover, Søfting argues that in accordance with the neutralisation of both time, space and characters, humanity seems to change into brutal beings that survive through cannibalism and wickedness except for the man and the boy. Especially the boy is the only one who still believes in and hopes for the best in humanity wherefore

Søfting claims that he "could clearly be seen as a Messianic figure, as representing hope for the future [as he] has a very strong sense of what is right and what is wrong, and he seems almost more preoccupied with morality than with finding something to eat" (710). Thereby, Søfting states that *The Road* contains both dystopian and utopian elements, and in this sense, it can be read as a warning sign towards the possible future.

In his article "Embodied Reading and Narrative Empathy in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*", Christopher White sees the novel as a representation of empathy being a necessary human resource (532). He believes that "[t]he novel imagines a reality in which the social and cultural institutions responsible for cultivating empathy have all been destroyed. The central miracle of the novel, and the spark that gives the light to its heart-rendingly dark tale, is the boy's irrepressible inclination to feel with other people in spite of the extreme vulnerability and threatened state of his and his father's existence" (532). Throughout the novel, the boy several times generates empathy within the reader when the man and the boy encounter other people. White explains this as being affective empathy between the boy and the people he encounters because he is able to feel what they are feeling. White explains that "we may attribute this reception both to the novel's dramatic portrayal of radical empathy and to the pathos of the love story between the father and son" (532-533). The empathic difference between the man and the boy emphasises the portrayal of good and evil which has a huge impact on the perception of the novel. Regardless of that, White likewise argues that the narrative strategies are remarkable and unique as he proclaims that due to the narrative style, the readers are able to identify with the novel's two characters.

In this sense, White draws on Paul Armstrong who in his book *How Literature Plays with the Brain* insists that owing to mechanisms in the brain, the readers are able to display empathic responses that prompt character identification. Character identification, as according to Armstrong, is emitted by the reader who in some senses can identify with the protagonist (533). Hence White supports Armstrong's statement as he suggests that

> [r]ecent work in cognitive-oriented narrative theory and aesthetics helps to illuminate the formal and stylistic features through which *The Road* elicits a powerfully immersive, empathetic experience in its readers. A greater appreciation of these formal features and their resonance with the novel's thematic treatment of empathy, suggest an alternative way of thinking about McCarthy's occasional use in his novel of a distant third-person narration that critics have frequently identified with his more general style. (533)

Thus, White draws on the narrative voice and point of view as he suggests that empathy and character identification are implied in the characters whom readers feel a great amount of empathy with. As abovementioned, White claims that much of the affection is generated through the switch from

third-person narration to first-person narration in the dialogues between the man and the boy; when the switch happens, the reader is more able to feel empathy as it "enhances the experiential dimension of the narrative - the sense of *what it would feel like* to have the experiences that the man [...] undergoes in course of the novel" (Emphasis in original, 533). In continuation of this, he argues that the empathic experiences the reader undergoes when reading the novel are a segment of the sensorial and physical aspects of the protagonist, and therefore, cause simulations within the reader's mind. According to White, the empathic simulations are activated already at the beginning of the novel, where the protagonist describes how he and the boy wakes up in the woods wrapped up in stinking robes; thus, the physical simulations are activated within the reader as White describes the brain's cognitive process begins when the reader can identify the fictional world. Here, White states that

> [t]he narrative from the opening sentence onward, is closely keyed to the man's bodily movements and sensations, and the cognitive process of constructing the fictional world projected by the novel involves, even requires to some extent, the reader's simulation of these movements and sensations. This embodied simulation is crucial to the reader's phenomenological experience of being transported to the novel's storyworld. (534)

Moreover, White employs Rolf Zwaan who suggests that along with physical and sensorial simulations, language helps assemble the simulation within the reader. In this sense, Zwaan argues that in order to understand the language in the context of a simulation, the reader has to have experienced the events unfolded in the plot. Despite that, readers also draw on past affairs as they are able to identify the experiences due to embodied knowledge. Along with Zwaan's work with language as a simulation, White uses character identification and language as a way to understand and perceive the novel's storyworld. He proclaims that "the reader's identification with the protagonist is heightened by the novel's tendency to project its storyworld through the embodied perspective of the protagonist" (535). These simulated experiences unfold, as according to White, throughout the whole novel in the light of the novel's most prominent themes which include darkness, morality and anxiety (536).

As aforementioned, morality is one of the greatest themes that have been treated by various scholars, such as Erik J. Wielenberg. In Wielenberg's article "God, Morality, and Meaning in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*", Wielenberg states that "Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* is, among other things, a meditation on morality, what makes human life meaningful, and the relationship between these things and God" (Wielenberg 1). In this sense, Wielenberg attempts to describe the relationship between God and the novel and how this relationship remains somewhat hazy

throughout the plot. Despite that, he seeks to address the moral code and how the characters, the man and the boy, conform to the moral code while not being reliant on God's will (1). Throughout the novel, it becomes clear that the characters, especially the man, have an undefinable relation to God and religion. At the beginning of *The Road*, the man declares his question about God's existence while at the same time not entirely clarifying his decision about whether God exists or not wherefore it endures a mystery for the reader (1). In this sense, Wielenberg questions whether or not the incidents the man and boy have throughout their travel are coincidences or simply made by God. As he is not able to answer the question himself, he describes the man and boy's encounter with an old man: "a particularly tantalizing illustration of this ambiguity is the father and son's encounter with an old man who may or may not be named "Ely" (McCarthy 161). This character resembles the Old Testament prophet Elijah in certain ways" (Wielenberg 2). According to Wielenberg, several passages throughout *The Road* and the Bible are hardly distinguishable, for instance the catastrophe and the encounter with Ely. In the Bible, Elijah is the one who has predicted the catastrophe and will turn parents to face their children before Doomsday which is transparent to what happens in the novel when the man and boy encounter Ely (2).

Furthermore, Wielenberg reasons the continuous suspense about God's existence and presence in the novel as he further suggests the absence, or presence, of God within the mind of the man. Throughout the novel, the man both believes and disbelieves in the existence of God, wherefore Wielenberg clarifies that "[t]he man's predicament illustrates the following paradox. Great suffering appears to constitute evidence against the existence of a loving God, but it also has the capacity to produce or strengthen belief in such a God. It is when we suffer that we most need belief in a loving God to keep ourselves going. The more reason we have to doubt God's reality, the more we need to believe" (3). Even though the man does not seem to be particularly religious, Wielenberg argues that his belief is set in his affection for his son. Therefore, it is their faith that keeps them going as it motivates and encourages them. The end of the novel also illustrates how the motivation and affection for the son were worth the challenges they faced through their trip even though the father died.

6.1.2. Framing the end of the world

In *The Road* the reader follows a man and boy on their journey towards the southern coast to seek a warmer climate during the cold winter. They travel on foot along the road through a climatic altered America where everything appears to have burned to the ground. The novel takes place after an

unknown apocalyptic event that had nearly caused total annihilation of the Earth. The apocalyptic event had occurred before the boy was born and the man is the only one who can recall a time before the catastrophe. The boy's mother had disastrously decided to take her own life when the boy was younger, and as a result, the man and boy only have one another. Although they have to travel across America, they survive by scavenging food from abandoned buildings in different towns while they try to survive at night in the cold and dangerous landscape, in a world, where plants and animals are extinct and cannibalistic communes and other travellers threaten their safety.

The landscape McCarthy introduces in the novel is not only seen by the way in which the storyworld is unfolded but also through the narrative structure of the novel. Within the first paragraph of the novel, the novel opens in medias res where the reader is thrown directly into the storyworld and encounters the unnamed man and boy in the dark cold night in the woods. The reader becomes aware that something is peculiar about the landscape the man and boy are living in as they are waking up in the woods covered in stinking robes and blankets:

> When he woke up in the woods in the dark and the cold of the night he'd reach out to touch the child sleeping beside him. Nights dark beyond darkness and the days more gray each one than what had gone before. Like the onset of some glaucoma dimming away the world. His hand rose and fell softly with each precious breath. He pushed away the plastic tarpaulin and raised himself in the stinking robes and blankets and looked toward the east for any light but there was none. In the dream from which he'd wakened he had wandered in a cave where the child led him by the hand. Their light playing over the wet flowstone walls. Like pilgrims in a fable swallowed up and lost among the inward parts of some granitic beast. (McCarthy 1)

Through this passage, a disastrous and disrupted world has been presented to the reader where the man and boy have to survive outside in the cold. The description of the characters waking up in the woods is told by a third person narrator who stands outside the storyworld watching as it gives the sense that there is a camera watching. In this description, a simile is used to compare darkness to 'glaucoma', an eye disease that slowly causes blindness, which suggests that blindness is slowly eradicating the image of the world. The blindness is thus carrying off the world as it was before and erasing it from the characters, and hence, the reader's mind. The description of the characters' surroundings, 'nights dark beyond darkness' and the comparison between the night and glaucoma, indicates a presence of experience which demonstrates that the narrator bases the narrative on a specific character's experience of the storyworld. In this sense, it becomes clear that it is the narrator's voice the reader hears, but until now it has not been evident whose point of view the storyworld is experienced from. However, the description of how the man had woken up from a dream, indicates that the narrative is focalised internally through the man, as the reader is placed inside the man's

consciousness. This internal focalisation is definitively established in the second paragraph as the reader gains full access to the man's thoughts: "He thought the month was October, but he wasn't sure" (McCarthy 2). Thereby, the cataclysmic storyworld is focalised internally through the man's experiences, thoughts and feelings.

In order to situate the landscape of *The Road* in the reader's mind, McCarthy utilises several adjectives and physical verbs such as "stinking" and "his hand rose" that all help portraying the tragic landscape for the reader which makes the reader feel like they are present in the novel. In this sense, it is the sensory imagination that helps the reader feel present in the novel as to the use of the physical descriptive verbs. For instance, we can almost smell the stinking robes and blankets and we can feel our hand rise as the boy breaths.

McCarthy interprets the word 'fable' when describing how the boy had led the man around in a cave in a dream. A fable is a literary fictional genre that features anthropomorphised animals, plants and creatures that in some way either illustrate or refer to a moral lesson. In this sense, the reader might wonder whether *The Road* is a fable or not; the world is described as a glaucoma, in which the world is attributed human qualities, and thereby, anthropomorphistic characteristics. In addition, the novel can be compared to a fable as *The Road*, in much the same way as a fable, contains of a moral lesson and a survival story. As aforementioned, the title indicates both hope, freedom and an idea of social mobility in which survival likewise is connected to. The man has self-reliance wherefore he believes in survival and that the road can provide him with what he is seeking in terms of both hope and freedom. His strong belief in his own self-reliance makes him a representation of the idea that the road can lead to a better life, and thereby, rescue him and his son from all misery. The boy does survive at the end of *The Road*, but the man ends up dying due to the effects of the inhospitable environment wherefore his self-reliance do not manage to keep both of them alive; he appears rather naïve in his belief that they would survive in the inhospitable and tragic world. In this sense, a rather comic suggestion is being made in a deeply tragic apocalypse.

However, language plays an important role in situating the storyworld through the language. Simile is used as figurative language to emphasise how tragic and dystopic the world of *The Road* is. Through a simile, McCarthy compares the world to that of a charcoal drawing: "the shape of a city stood in the grayness like a charcoal drawing sketched across the waste" (7). This simile accentuates the portrayal of the city and landscape as achromatic, blank and grey, and as a result, the city appears almost two dimensional. Thus, the portrayal of the grey city corresponds with the very first encounter with the man and boy sleeping in the woods because the night is 'dark beyond dark'. The

description of the day as being grey like charcoal only accentuates the sun's inability to shine through the grey atmosphere during the day. Additionally, a reflection of the level of sensory stimulation can also be seen as the narrator describes the landscape as grey, ashy and disappearing: "When it was light enough to use the binoculars he glassed the valley below. Everything paling away into the murk. The soft ash blowing in loose swirls over the blacktop. He studied what he could see" (2-3). As a result of the missing sun, the current place the man and the boy are located in have become too cold and inhospitable because of the fast approaching winter. Therefore, they have to move south in order to reach warmth and the sun and dream of a better and hospitable environment at the coast to the south. However, as they reach their destination, their dream turns out to be nothing but a dream as the south is also "[c]old. Desolate. Birdless" (230).

The figurative language helps not only to portray the storyworld to the reader, but it similarly illustrates the world seen through the eyes of the man and his experience of it. When the man in the beginning of the novel walks into an abandoned house, few but descriptive words are used to narrate what he sees: "Good half-inch drive sockets. A ratchet. He stood looking around the garage. A metal barrel full of trash. He went into the office. Dust and ash everywhere" (5). The way in which the things he sees are described, seem almost enumerative as if they are starting to forget language and how to explain themselves. For instance, the man and boy stumble upon some mushrooms, which is an episode that illustrates a desire and urgency to word and voice everything that is not grey, dark and ashy. So, instead of just calling them mushrooms, the man introduces them to the boy as 'morels'; "Something in the mulch and ash. He stooped and cleared it away. A small colony of them, shrunken, dried and wrinkled. He picked one and held it up and sniffed it. He bit a piece from the edge and chewed. What is it, Papa? Morels. It's morels. What's morels? They're a kind of mushroom" (40). The man's urge to call the mushroom by its specific rather generic species can be argued to be an attempt to delay or even prevent that the word would become extinct from language and his memory.

The man forgets things connected to the world before the catastrophe as he tries to maintain his own remembrance of his former life: "The color of it moved some things in him long forgotten. Make a list. Recite a litany. Remember" (31). He attempts to recall the colour of a fly, though fails to remember; thus, the man encourages himself to 'make a list' of the things he remembers, so they will not forget. In connection with this, it may be remarked that the lack of language in *The Road*, furthermore, is evident in the dialogues between the man and boy: "And we're still going south? Yes. So we'll be warm. Yes. Okay. Okay what? Nothing. Just okay" (9). There seems to be a scar-

city of language that appears almost non-existing and monotone whereby it could be argued that the man and boy, along with the catastrophe and loss of civilisation, are deprived of their language. In this sense, the loss of language can be interpreted as a note and warning sign to the readers suggesting that when reality is lost, language is lost as well. Thus, the semiotic terms of signifier and signified can be utilised in order to understand the meaning of the loss of language; the signifier is the loss of language in the novel that McCarthy applies to affect and connect the signifier with the signified, such as reality. The loss of language indicates a world without culture and civilisation which discharges into a world of monochrome sameness. Thereby, non-human nature becomes the foundation of humanity as they have lost their social ability to communicate whereas there happens to be a disruption between the signifier and what is signified. Language seems to blend together as signifiers are absent; readers only know the protagonists by 'the man' and 'the boy' and, which will be analysed below, punctuation in terms of apostrophes and quotation marks are lacking. Thus, civilisation collapses wherefore it brings the flawed society closer to the reader and creates an alteration between the signifier and what is actually signified. Consequently, the deprivation of language's function warns the readers of the consequences of losing their common sense of humanity and forgetting that humans need language in order to survive and prevent further extinction.

Another interesting element in the narrative language is found at the level of discourse in relation to the novel's minimalistic use of punctuation, which has an influence on the level of reading and the way in which the storyworld is unfolded for the reader. This is evident on the sentence level where there are almost no commas, unsignalled dialogue and no chapters to guide the readers leaving them with no indication of rhythm and tempo. This does not only make the text seem cold and flat, but it makes the plot lack organisation which is already seen in the beginning of the novel; within page two and three, there are three different paragraphs that do not exceed fifteen lines. Moreover, events are non-linear and achronological as the plot shifts between the present time of the man and boy, flashbacks of the man's former life and the boy's deceased mother. Thereby, the narrative structure seems almost episodic like a diary as the punctuation often is replaced by conjunctions: "He pushed the cart off the road and tilted it over where it could not be seen and they left their packs and went back to the station" (5). The conjunction 'and' is used three times within this sentence, where one would have chosen to use punctuations instead. Yet again, the lack of sensory stimulation is used to present the changes that happen within the characters, the storyworld and the narrative structure as it emphasises the apocalyptic elements within the novel. The text is left cold and flat in order to emphasise the disastrous storyworld within *The Road* and through that affect the

reader to acknowledge the chaotic survival mode the man and boy are in. Thus, the level of reading reflects the obscurity the man and boy experience when interacting in the storyworld as the lack of coherent paragraphs, punctuation and flashbacks provoke a feeling of danger and peculiarity within the reader. Thereby, at the level of reading, the reader becomes aware that something is not the way it should be.

As aforementioned, flashbacks are an important part of the plot as these help construe what has happened to the man, the boy and the tragic landscape. As a reader, one might question where the boy's mother is wherefore one of the flashbacks gives an insight into what has happened to her and why she is not with her family:

> She was gone and the coldness of it was her final gift. She would do it with a flake of obsidian. He'd taught her himself. Sharper than steel. The edge of an atom thick. And she was right. There was no argument. The hundred nights they'd sat up arguing the pros and cons of self destruction with the earnestness of philosophers chained to a madhouse wall. In the morning the boy said nothing at all and when they were all packed and ready to set out upon the road he turned and looked back at their campsite and he said: She's gone isn't she? And he said: Yes, she is. (60)

The flashback indicates that the mother has been there but decided to take her own life due to the circumstances of the changing environment and the fear of being offer of rape or cannibalism. Thus, the flashback of the mother taking her own life is a significant event as she has given up on the world while the man believes that there is still hope (59-60). As the boy finds out his mother has committed suicide, he does not seem very surprised about her choice and does not ask about it. Thereby, one could argue that he neglects his feelings as he and his father continue on the road keeping up their hope. Similarly, the aspect of tragedy is enhanced as the man does not comment on the boy asking about his mother as if the man tries to avoid any conversations about the deceased mother; thereby, the boy does not get the consolation and comfort he might need taken into consideration that he has just lost his mother. Instead, the man brings the boy further on the road; his hopefulness seems to be his way of protecting the boy and by finding a path through the disrupted landscape hoping for a brighter future for the both of them. However, the flashback scenes of the mother are some of the few moments where women are involved in the plot wherefore there happens to be an absence of women. Arguably, the mother is the one who motivates the man and boy to continue on the road. The absence of the mother generates a greater feeling of empathy with the boy as he is lacking a loving and caring mother in which most people can empathise with. Moreover, the absence of women is thus connected to the extinction of humanity; in this sense, the lack of women causes a further extinction to happen as the plot never examines encounters with women wherefore

it can be argued that the storyworld after the apocalypse almost only but implies men. In the end, hope is regained when the boy, after the death of his father, is united with a new group of people involving a woman:

> The woman when she saw him put her arms around him and held him. Oh, she said, I am so glad to see you. She would talk to him sometimes about God. He tried to talk to God but the best thing was to talk to his father and he did talk to him and he didnt forget. The woman said that was all right. She said that the breath of God was his breath yet though it pass from man to man through all of time". (McCarthy 306)

Thus, a reproductive imperative is reborn as the presence of a woman obliterates the fear for extinction and exploits the fear with hope. Despite that, the lack of a woman in the boy's life is past by when she meets him; she greets him with all the hugs, love and happiness that he never got from his own mother. However, it has to be noted that even though the ending appears happy and hopeful, it is still an open ending wherefore the boy's destiny is not decided; the people could be good guys like themselves, but they could likely be the bad guys for which reason his life would be in danger if they, as the other bad guys, were part of the cannibalistic community.

The man's death is interesting to look at in terms of focalisation. Throughout the novel the reader has, as commented on above, experienced the storyworld through the man. In this sense, the man's death indicates a shift in focalisation as the internal focalisation has died with him, and the reader no longer can experience the storyworld through his experiences, thoughts and feelings. After the last dialogue between the man and the boy, the narrative only focuses on the characters' actions and behaviour. The focalisation is, thereby, placed outside the storyworld, and the reader experiences the world as it is seen through a camera: "He slept close to his father that night and held him but when he woke in the morning his father was cold and stiff" (300). The reader never gets into the head of a new internal focaliser but instead it is suggested that there is a presence that observes: "He smelled of woodsmoke" (303). It is not a character inside the book that smells the woodsmoke, but rather it is the presence that smells it. In this sense, the action of smelling is not directed at a character within the story which indicates that the focalisation has shifted to an external focaliser who observes the characters and the world from the outside.

In the last paragraph of the novel, which functions as an epigraph, the focalisation shifts again. This is evident as the narrator becomes omniscient and knows more that the characters:

> Once there were brook trout in the streams in the mountains. You could see them standing in the amber current where the white edges of their fins wimpled softly in the flow. They smelled of moss in your hand. Polished and muscular and torsional. On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming. Maps and mazes. Of a thing which could not

> be put back. Not be made right again. In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man and they hummed of mystery. (306-307)

Zero focalisation is used to narrate this concluding paragraph which makes the narrative more externally focussed. This allows McCarthy to deliver the narrative through a more detached and authorial narrator from a vantage point outside the storyworld. In this sense, the reader is relocated to a different time and space before the novel's post-apocalyptic setting. This authorial voice is also interesting considering the paragraph before McCarthy's epigraph as it focuses a lot on God. Just after the woman explains that God's breath 'pass from man to man', as quoted above, the narrator shifts to zero focalisation with this detached and authorial narrator which then indicates that God is the narrative speaker in the epigraph. Through the use of 'once' the focaliser addresses a world before the apocalypse where the fish in the streams symbolises the life that is not present in the apocalyptic storyworld. The paragraph displays an idyllic and almost pastoral picture of nature where the trout seems to be in calm and harmonious communion with its environment which comes across like a striking contrast to the apocalyptic and bleak context of the storyworld. The future and the past merge together on the back of the trout in a vermiculate pattern that 'were maps of the world in its becoming'. The novel depicts an apocalyptic world that 'could not be made right again', but yet, the 'once' suggests that it could have been prevented. In this sense, the epigraph addresses the potential for another future than the one depicted in the novel. The reader is never told what have caused the apocalypse, but the narrator directly addresses a potential narratee through the use of 'you' and continues by explaining that 'they smelled of moss in your hand' which indicates a human hand that takes the trout out of the stream where it lived in peaceful surroundings. This human hand indicates humanity's impact on nature and in this sense, it serves as a warning as once the trout has been taken out of the functioning ecosystem it 'cannot be put back'. McCarthy's conclusion of his novel illustrates, in this sense, the fragility of the natural world which, considering the post-apocalyptic world depicted, indicates humanity's dependence on ecological stability. Thereby, the passage addresses the reader's ecological consciousness by directing the reader's attention towards the interrelationship between nature and humans. This function of McCarthy's conclusion offers up an ecocritical reading of *The Road*, as it serves as an indication of humanity's exploitation of the natural resources, and thereby, a raised warning finger to those who take nature and its ecological aesthetics for granted. The novel's tragic portrayal of the end of the world can be seen as something that frightens the reader and speaks to their potential anxieties about climate change. Humanity has to face the consequences of consuming nature's resources as humanity already by now experiences several critical catastrophic threats; volcanic eruption, flooding and other natural

calamities make their entry in the world. Thus, the paragraph seeks to address the importance in conserving what we have left instead of exploiting and consuming.

6.1.3. "Carrying the fire": Good and evil

Morality and hope are central and significant focal points in *The Road* where a lot of it is set in the phrase "carrying the fire". This is a phrase, or so-called motto, the man and boy say to each other when they need to be encouraged and get the strength to keep going and survive in the storyworld: "We're going to be okay, aren't we Papa? Yes. We are. And nothing bad is going to happen to us. That's right. Because we're carrying the fire. Yes. Because we're carrying the fire" (87). In an attempt to bring some meaning into a world that is very much in lack of meaning, the man creates little narratives such as 'carrying the fire' in order to give the boy something he can hold on to other than bad things and tragedy. This is also what the man does when he starts distinguishing between 'the good guys' and 'the bad guys'; they are the good guys, and the cannibals are the bad guys. In this sense, these little narratives, created by the man, are related to hope and morality, because they are what makes the man and the boy keep going and surviving in the storyworld because that "is what the good guys do. They keep trying. They dont give up" (145). During their journey, the readers become aware that the man is sick as a consequence of the inhospitable environment, and therefore, he is preparing the boy to be alone and keep up his courage to live after the man's potential death. In addition, the phrase 'carrying the fire' appears almost biblical as they use it to maintain their beliefs for a brighter future although the man often stresses his lack of belief in God. The man maintains his belief in God because he compares the boy to be the word of God: "He knew only that the child was warrant. He said: If he is not the word of God God never spoke" (3). Thereby, even though the man has a hard time believing in God, he persists in the assumption that the boy is heaven-sent wherefore one could argue he still believes in God when he makes a comparison between the boy and the word of God. As the boy, according to the man, reflects the man's persistence in his belief in God and hope, the saying could be compared to the religious assertion 'Amen' which is used at the end of prayers and translated means 'so be it' as a certification of the prayer. Thus, there is a correlation between the man and boy's belief and the religious outcome that is reflected throughout their loving relationship and them keeping hope alive in a hopeless world.

During one of their first encounters with 'the bad guys', they find a running truck where they suggest there might be something to eat. However, they end up getting caught by one of the bad

guys which forces the man to kill him for their own survival and afterwards they run away and hide in the bushes. However, they hide right beside the place the group has slept overnight to which they want to investigate their fireplace in case they should have left anything:

> There was nothing there. Dried blood dark in the leaves. The boy's knapsack was gone. Coming back he found bones and the skin piled together with rocks over them. A pool of guts. He pushed at the bones with the toe of his shoe. They looked to have been boiled. No pieces of clothing. Dark was coming on again and it was already very cold and he turned and went out to where he'd left the boy and knelt and put his arms around him and held him. (McCarthy 73-74)

The man discovers that the man he and the boy had shot dead had been eaten by the rest of the group. This passage is the first time where the reader becomes aware of cannibalism though it is not an isolated case; at one point, they come across a fire where the remains of a baby is laying: "a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit. He bent and picked the boy up and started for the road with him, holding him close. I'm sorry, he whispered. I'm sorry" (212). As aforementioned, the cannibals are described as 'the bad guys' owing to the fact they break the moral code the man and boy have chosen as their way of living. Thus, the moral code, 'carrying the fire', is a phrase they use to discourage themselves from the bad stuff while maintaining their belief and refraining from cannibalism and all the other things that are connected to the actions of 'the bad guys'. Thereby, the phrase can both be seen as the way in which the man and boy deviate from 'the bad guys' while they are making their efforts to preserve civilisation and morality as before the catastrophe.

At the very end of the novel, the man and boy finally arrive at the shore, and they discover that it was not how they thought it would be: "Beyond that the ocean vast and cold and shifting heavily like a slowly heaving vat of slag and then the gray squall line of ash. He looked at the boy. He could see the disappointment in his face. I'm sorry it's not blue, he said. That's okay, said the boy" (230). Simultaneously with the man slowly dying when reaching the shore, he attempts to prepare the boy for his death and that he has to live on his own, where, yet again, the phrase is applied in their conversation: "I want to be with you. You cant. Please. You cant. You have to carry the fire. I dont know how to. Yes you do" (298). The fire symbolises the hope the man expects the boy to maintain after his death, because he still thinks, considering their disappointment about the shore, that either civilisation or nature is going to change. Their belief in hope and possible fluctuation is rather tragic; their longing to get to the shore and their last hope and possibility for change are replaced by defeat though they keep searching for a brighter future. As a matter of fact, the infinite amount of hope throughout the whole novel appears rather tragic as it seems as it is only the reader

who can see that there is no hope for them. The way in which the landscape is described as ashy and grey and the lack of punctuation and paragraphs clearly indicates a tragic apocalyptic landscape that influences at the level of reading. Moreover, the landscape diverges from the reader's real life wherefore the feeling of tragedy is highly released by the empathic feeling readers feel towards the man and boy. How empathy has an impact on the novel will be further elucidated later in the analysis.

Several incidents in the novel designate *The Road* as a work of tragedy. The occurrences of cannibalism are aspects of tragedy that really emphasise how peculiar and eerie the world has become. Somehow, there seems to appear a loss of civilisation in a variety of ways as humans have changed concurrently with the world. In furtherance of surviving, humans are changing their way of living by scavenging food, living in shelters, and even eating other people. Cannibalism is one of the biggest threats the man and boy are up against besides starvation and cold. In this sense, morality plays an important role as to why the man and boy choose not to be cannibals like 'the bad guys'; they pursue to be the good guys and 'carrying the fire' which, as mentioned above, could mean that they still have hope for a brighter future wherefore they keep travelling and each other going. As cannibalism and an ongoing fear for 'the bad guys' haunt the man and boy, their struggle for survival is challenged which appears tragic. The world seems without any sort of hope in which the man and boy are either unable to see or rather neglect. As previously mentioned, it seems as if the man and boy neglect the absence of hope. They are passionately motivated to achieve a positive outcome but tragically they never seem to admit their defeat. Moreover, the man has to face different moral conflicts such as the encounter with the old man Ely. The man and boy's loving relationship is challenged as the boy argues that they should have brought him with them, but the man decides to only hand him a small amount of food:

> In the morning they stood in the road and he and the boy argued about what to give the old man. In the end he didnt get much. Some cans of vegetables and of fruit. Finally the boy just went over to the edge of the road and sat in the ashes. The old man fitted the tins into his knapsack and fastened the straps. You should thank him you know, the man said. I wouldnt have given you anything. (184)

It is tragic that the man cannot discriminate between good and bad people anymore to the extent he has to disappoint his own son. The distinction between good and bad people is not something the reader finds recognisable from real life to the same degree for which reason the man's decision not to help anybody more than necessary is quite comprehensible. His loving relationship to the boy makes him question even the smallest things in order to save the boy from the horrendous and fatal

encounters they have. Somehow, the man appears as a tragic hero; the boy never faces the challenges of their survival the same way as the man because he protects the boy from it so that he does not have to experience such ghastly things at a young age. The encounters the man and boy have with dangerous people, the infinite starvation and vigilance exercise a profound influence on the reader as the frailness of humanity is emphasised to a great extent. In this sense, one could argue that tragedy, in particular the case of survival, is what makes the novel function as a prediction of a probable future for humanity. The aspects of tragedy are as far from humanity and the world of the reader as possible wherefore the apprehension for such an apocalyptic world enhances.

6.1.4. Empathy as a human resource

As we see in the analysis above, *The Road* imagines a reality formed by grim emptiness and serious danger with very little room for preoccupations other than the survival of the man and the boy. However, McCarthy achieves to compose a beautiful story where moral goodness, compassion and the ability to feel with other people is the central focal point. Despite the extreme vulnerability and threatened state of the man and the boy's existence, their morality and focus on being the good guys prevails. The boy especially has an irrepressible and innate capability to feel with other people which is displayed to the reader when the man and the boy encounter other people on the road to the south. The boy shows an instance of sympathy, when he encounters another boy much like him and wants his father to help him: "What if that little boy doesnt have anybody to take care of him? He said. What if he doesnt have a papa? [...] I'm afraid for that little boy" (89-90). The boy here imagines what it would be like not to have a father to look after him, which makes him sympathise with the other boy because he is scared that he will not survive if he is alone. Much the same thing happens during the encounter with the old man, Ely, who the boy feels a spontaneous shared affect with: "The boy squatted and put a hand on his shoulder. He's scared, Papa. The man is scared" (172). The boy is able to imagine and feel Ely's fear, suffering and pain as if they were his own feelings which makes him emphasise with him. Different from the boy, the man considers every encounter as a possible threat, but the boy eventually persuades the man to help Ely and give him food.

Despite the differences between the man and the boy's capability to feel for and with other people, the man and the boy have a strong emotional bond and rely deeply on each other. The man, as mentioned above, is in many ways self-reliant, but he relies strongly on the survival of the boy:

"What would you do if I dies? If you died I would want to die too. So you could be with me? Yes. So I could be with you" (9). However, the boy relies as much on the man because he is keeping him safe and making sure that the boy has the best circumstances despite the dreadful experiences and terrible living conditions. For instance, the man finds an unopened Coca Cola can which he gives to the boy: "He withdrew his hand slowly and sat looking at a Coca Cola. What is it, Papa? It's a treat. For you" (22). The boy had never seen or tasted a Coca Cola before, so it becomes an element from the old world that brings joy, excitement and colour into the bleak and dark world. It also becomes a way for the man to pamper the boy with a rather unexpected treat that stands for the luxuries of a world that is now gone. This episode also represents the shared affect between the man and the boy, as the boy wants to share the Coca Cola with the man while he insists that the boy drink it: "You have some, Papa. I want you to drink it. You have some. He took the can and sipped it and handed it back. You drink it" (23). In this sense, *The Road* is about the unconditional parenthetical love and the empathic bond between a father and a son. This empathic bond becomes their most important resource for survival as they depend on each other's compassion, support and help. Thereby, empathy becomes a human resource in a post-apocalyptic world with no social or cultural institutions that permits the cultivation of empathy or sympathy.

However, the boy is also rather naïve in this innate moral goodness and ability to feel for and with other people. This is displayed every time the man does something the boy perceives as immoral after which leaves the boy in a state of silence both as a result of trauma but also as an objection to the man's behaviour towards the strangers they encounter. This creates a tension between the man and the boy, but as mentioned earlier, the man uses narrative phrases to create meaning for the boy as 'carrying the fire' and 'the good guys'. An instance of this occurs after the man has shot and killed a bad guy that threatened the boy with a knife at his throat:

> The boy didnt answer. You have to talk to me. Okay. You wanted to know what the bad guys looked like. Now you know. It may happen again. My job is to take care of you. I was appointed to do that by God. I will kill anyone who touches you. Do you understand? Yes. He sat there cowled in the blanket. After a while he looked up. Are we still the good guys? [...] Yes. We're still the good guys. And we always will be. Yes. We always will be. Okay (80).

The emotional attunement of these narrative phrases helps the boy to get past his doubts about the man's behaviour, but it also helps him to process the trauma he experiences. Additionally, these phrases serve as an amplifier for hope, perseverance and courage that can help motivate and console the boy, but also the man. This empathic relationship between the man and the boy and the boy's empathy and moral goodness is, in many ways, governing the reader's cognitive and emotional re-

sponses to the story. However, there is also a relation between the man's narrative phrase that guides the boy's emotions and McCarthy's narrative structure that guides the reader's emotions. *The Road* depicts a storyworld very different from that of the reader's world of origin whereby the reader has not experienced and does not know what it would be like to live in the apocalyptic surroundings the man and the boy is situated in. In this sense, the reader is not able to put themselves in their shoes because they are not able to feel the same feeling as they are. Instead, we can feel compassionate feelings towards their dreadful circumstances and experiences because we can imagine how it must be like. Therefore, based on the working definitions of empathy and sympathy the reader will foster sympathetic emotions for the man and the boy rather than empathic ones.

However, if we consider the elements of transportation, immersion and simulation and the function of our mirror neurons, mind-reading abilities and Theory of Mind the conclusion may be different. Here, it is especially interesting to comment on how McCarthy's use of internal focalisation guides the reader's immersion, reconstruction, simulation, and thereby, our emotional experiences. This guiding through the man's internal focalisation produces a sense of experience as we undergo the same things as the man and, through him, the boy. In this sense, we will through immersion and transportation into the storyworld experience it as if we were there ourselves. This character-focused narrative style contributes to the reader's character identification with the protagonist as the storyworld is projected through the embodied perspective of him. This also grants us the ability to imagine and experience the storyworld in the same way as a man:

> When it was light enough to use the binoculars he glassed the valley below. Everything paling away into the murk. The soft ash blowing in loose swirls over the blacktop. He studied what he could see. The segments of road down there among the dead trees. Looking for anything of color. Any movement. Any trace of standing smoke. He lowered the glasses and pulled down the cotton mask from his face and wiped his nose on the back of his wrist and then glassed the country again. Then he just sat there holding the binoculars and watching the ashen daylight congeal over the land. (2-3)

Through the man's binoculars the readers can see the grey atmosphere and the flakes of ash that blow through the wind. Descriptions such as 'down there' and 'over the land' suggest that we are placed above the landscape we observe and we study the landscape and look for colour, movement and standing smoke together with the man. So even though readers have not experienced a post-apocalyptic world themselves, they will in some way experience it parallel with the man and the boy. The reader's emotional resonances with the two characters are thereby closely connected to the level of immersion, simulation and how the reader is able to reconstruct the storyworld.

Moreover, the mirror neurons the reader's brain will have a level of recognition with some of the objects in the novel and the movements of how things are done from their real life experiences they bring into the novel: "He pulled the blue plastic tarp off of him and folded it and carried it out to the grocery cart and packed it and came back with their plates and some cornmeal cakes in a plastic bag and a plastic bottle of syrup" (3). The reader will have some embodied knowledge about how to fold a tarpaulin and is, thereby, able to mimic the movements of it. Additionally, the reader is able to imagine what the grocery cart looks like, and they might even imagine the bottle of syrup to look like the one they have at home. In this sense, the post-apocalyptic world will appear more real, because of the recognisable objects the reader is introduced to which will have an effect on whether or not the readers are able to feel empathy.

Also, the reader's Theory of Mind and the mind-reading abilities contribute to the reader's emotional responses, as it allows them to construct a mental simulation of the storyworld. This re-construction of the storyworld enhances the reader's level of immersion and triggers the reader's embodied simulation of the man and the boy's experiences. The reader experiences this embodied simulation multiple times throughout the novel. For instance, the reader can almost feel the coldness of the boy in this description: "Cold to crack the stones. To take your life. He held the boy shivering against him and counted each frail breath in the blackness" (13). The description of how the coldness is so intense that it could take one's life and the following imagery of the man holding the shivering boy is so vivid that the reader will mimic the shiver of the boy because he can imagine how cold he must feel to be shivering.

If the reader is able to experience the storyworld as if they were there, then they also know, to some extent, how it is like to live in such an environment and undergo the events of the characters. In this sense, the experience of being transported into the storyworld in the act of reading can effectively enable the reader to foster empathic feelings with the characters' feelings and experiences. Nevertheless, the degree of empathy is coincidental as it might be affected by the reader's personal experience that they bring into the text. This ability may also be a result of the influence of other literary works or films that portray storyworlds similar to that of *The Road*'s as they in some ways have experienced a form of post-apocalyptic world. The reader's mental modelling of the storyworld of McCarthy's novel may therefore be a composition of many different images of the apocalypse that have unconsciously or consciously played a part in the reader's reconstruction of the novel. So, even though the reader does not have a direct bodily experience of the threat of cannibalistic communities or lived in a post-apocalyptic world they have and will still experience it in some

way. Another way in which personal experiences may affect the reader's empathy is, for instance, if the reader in some way have experienced the feelings the characters are feeling: i.e. fear and anxiety. This level of identification contributes to the cultivation of empathy in the event when the man and the boy are scared or in danger as we to some degree knows what it is like. This identification may for example occur when the man and the boy comes across a locked door in a house and ends of being in significant danger:

> Papa, the boy said. We should go. Papa. There's a reason this is locked. The boy pulled at his hand. He was almost in tears. Papa? he said. [...] Jesus, he whispered. Then one by one they turned and blinked in the pitiful light. Help us, they whispered. Please help us. Christ, he said. Oh Christ. He turned and grabbed the boy. Hurry, he said. Hurry. He'd dropped the lighter. No time to look. He pushed the boy up the stairs. Help us, they called. Hurry. A bearded face appeared blinking at the foot of the stairs. Please, he called. Please. Hurry. For God's sake hurry (114-117)

This passage instils a sense of urgency and McCarthy's intentional discourse conveys this on three levels. First, McCarthy uses the level of articulation to express the urgency through the word 'hurry' which is reinforced by the second level, the element of imagery, showing how they have to hurry so much that he drops the lighter (a quintessential resource for them) but do not have the time to look for it. Lastly, McCarthy communicates urgency on a sentence level through a short sentence structure which keeps the reader engaged because of the rapid pacing. This sense of urgency and the feeling of being scared that McCarthy through narrative techniques inflicts on the reader may, in some way, be a familiar feeling for the reader, which then will support the reader's ability to feel empathy for the characters in this situation. In much the same way, the feeling of empathy can be amplified if the reader has emotional recognition with the role of being a parent. As mentioned before, *The Road* is, in many ways, about the loving and empathic bond between a father and a son and their tragic survival story. It is clear to the reader that the man's primary preoccupation is to take care of and protect the boy from danger and starvation, and when he fails, he feels powerless. This feeling og powerlessness and the inherent need to protect one's child above everything else is allegedly something the reader can identify with, and thereby, they will be more likely to emphasise with the father and the impossible situation and constant stress he is put in by means of keeping the boy safe.

Even though the reader is not able to fully emphasise with and experience the disastrous events of *The Road*, it can be argued that the sympathy the reader feels for the characters can, in several ways, be connected to empathy. As examined in this section, the reader's ability to empathise with an unfamiliar world that is almost impossible to imagine relies on McCarthy's use of

internal focalisation, the level of imagery and vivid descriptions of the storyworld and the experiences of the man and the boy. Furthermore, it depends on the reader's transportation and immersion into the storyworld as well as their ability to create mental models and reconstruct the world. Because of these aspects, the reader experiences the storyworld as if they are there which can replace the feeling of sympathy with empathy. Thus, the reader's emotional experience with the storyworld and the characters and their different feeling of empathy and sympathy lies within both the narrative framing of the novel but also on the personal experiences the reader brings into the text.

7. Perceptions of satire and tragedy in American and British culture

The heterogeneities between *The Road* and *Solar* eclipse the similarities that are to be found as both novels portray worlds wherein the climate is changing, albeit in very different ways, which make the perception of the two novels' plots appear disparate: *The Road* applies bleak, imperceptible language in a tragic world described as ashy, cold and dark, wherein a father and his son struggles to survive; and *Solar* removes focus from climate change and centre around the dislikeable and self-absorbed protagonist whose follies are exposed through satire and allegory. Thus, it is the two novels' use of satire and tragedy that makes the main difference in the perception of the novels. While *Solar* takes a satirical and allegorical approach to a climate change novel where the protagonist catches much more attention, *The Road* depicts the end of the world in a tragic manner. Through our study of *Solar*, we have observed that the majority of reviews from Americans are rather negative whereas the British are mainly positive. This is also interesting to look at in terms of how the satirical novel is written by a British author and the tragic novel is written by an American author. In the following section, we will discuss the aspects of satire and tragedy in relation to whether or not these approaches and modes of persuasion are culture-bound in the sense that tragedy is associated with American culture and satire is associated with British culture.

As John T. Gilmore explains in his book *Satire* (2018), the word 'satura' had its origin in Roman literature where the literature focused on exhibiting the Greeks in different epigrams. In the eighteenth century, satire made its way into English literature and found its way to novels, plays, cartoons, cinema films, television programmes, etc. (Gilmore 3). In Lisa Colletta's book *Dark Humour and Social Satire in the Modern British Novel* (2003), she explains how satire has been a central focal point in many modern British novels. After the First and Second World War, many people were left anxious and impotent in the light of their previous experiences wherefore many literary works changed to more funny and satirical subjects (1). In this sense, Colletta appoints this type of

literature as Modernist Dark Humour; the dark humour provides a way in which the Modernist novel can develop into something rather humorous and satirical. Thus, Coletta argues that "in the dark humour of Modernist satire, the social content remains but its social purpose all but disappears" (2). According to Coletta, dark humour, or satire, often portrays the horrendous and angsty as it likewise "imposes a comedic order on the chaos and oppression represented in the text and refuses to endorse an all-encompassing ideological or philosophical view of the world" (2). Thus, Modernist Dark Humour takes serious and awe-springing subjects as its starting points in order to establish the novel's narrative stance which has been passed on to Postmodernist literature as well. Arguably, Ian McEwan, as well as several other British authors, has implemented dark humour in *Solar* in order to present a pompously and anxiety-provoking subject in a rather satirical way.

In Paul McDonald's book *Laughing at the darkness: Postmodernism and optimism in American humour*, he addresses the most common humoristic aspects of American literature. For his enlightenment about American satire, McDonald employs two philosophers, Jürgen Habermas and Christopher Norris, in order to explain American satire. Habermas clarifies in the introduction that "our last hope as 'postmodern' intellectuals are to cultivate the private virtues (compassion, tolerance, a measure of irony with regard to our own beliefs) and renounce all those grandiose Enlightenment ideas of setting the world to rights" (12). Thus, Habermas argues that Postmodernism is not to make fun of due to the connectedness between American culture in general and Postmodernism. Hereby, it is important to emphasise that both Norris and Habermas argue that the U.S. has a tendency to undermine some of the biggest moral issues, such as deterrorialisation, whereby the U.S. conceive themselves as a country of utopia rather than dystopia (13). For this purpose, they state that "the whole point about the loss in postmodernism of the sense of the future is that it also involves a sense that nothing will change and there is no hope" (13). Where the postmodernist mentality in the 50s had been highly influenced by irony created by the mass media, the new postmodernist mentality is rather impacted by critical engagement and change (14). In this sense, Robert McLaughlin emphasises the importance of converting the culture of irony; he argues that in the face of irony, all of significance fall to the ground as "no assertion can be sincerely uttered and heard, nothing positive can be built" (14). Thereby, as according to McLaughlin, irony becomes useful as it cannot bring out the most momentous aspects of culture that have a more profound meaning.

In the *New York Times*, an article called "The Planet Be Damned. It's All About Me." was written about *Solar* by American journalist Michiko Kakutani. Within the first paragraphs of the article, Kakutani expresses his dislike for the protagonist Michael Beard as he describes him as a

"self-deluding scientist [that] will come to embody just about everything that has brought about the climate-change crisis in the first place: greed, heedlessness and a willful refusal to think about consequences or the future" (Kakutani). However, while Kakutani explicitly acknowledges the novel's satirical opening, he thinks "its plot machinery soon starts to run out of gas, sputtering and stalling as it makes its way from one comic set piece to another" (Kakutani). He holds the point of view of the protagonist Beard responsible for the loss of interest; Kakutani argues that Beard's mind is claustrophobic and piggy caused by his selfish behaviour in which readers do not wish to be part of (Kakutani).

In Geoff Nicholson's review "'Solar,' by Ian McEwan" for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Nicholson states that "McEwan's hero, Michael Beard, is a very familiar figure from English comic fiction, a man out of Evelyn Waugh or Anthony Burgess: bald, fat, impractical, grubby, socially inept and with a far more colourful sex life than he deserves" (Nicholson). In this sense, accordingly as the only American reviewer, Nicholson seems to acknowledge the differences between American and English comic fiction, as he emphasises McEwan's usage of English satire. Moreover, Nicholson applauds McEwan's usage and interpretation of scientific information to such a degree that it appears convincing to the reader. Nicholson likewise emphasises that "one of McEwan's greatest gifts as a novelist is to make the reader fear impending doom. We know that disaster is never far away, and yet when it arrives, it's still a surprise, never precisely the disaster we were expecting" (Nicholson). In this sense, Nicholson brings out the satirical recruitment as being a stage of McEwan's disastrous narrative, bringing the reader to fear the 'impending doom', though Beard always fails to achieve what he wants. Thus, Nicholson suggests that it is rather McEwan's own morality coming through than his hero, Beard's (Nicholson). However, the satire interpreted does not impress Nicholson:

> Some of McEwan's jokes strike[s] [him] as distinctly tired. Beard gets on a train and relives the urban myth in which the protagonist eats food belonging to a stranger, believing it to be his own … The book isn't a dud, but by McEwan's high standards it does seem a bit of a misfire. Satirists always have to be moralists at some level, but the moral dilemmas that occur in "Solar" never seem quite reel or urgent enough. (Nicholson)

Thus, Nicholson claims there is a correspondence between the level of satire and the level of morality. The expansion of the global climate crisis should, according to Nicholson, have contained far more realistic aspects like the scene where Beard travels to the North Pole; here, Beard's intentions are to experience and attend global warming, where he is confronted with real life problems (Nicholson). To sum up, Kakutani and Nicholson's reviews of the novel appear to be quite similar

to several other American reviewers as they all seem to be uncomfortable with the character and the plot.

British reviewers perceive the novel much differently than the Americans. As stated in Jason Cowley's intervention in *The Guardian,* British reviewers seem to have understood McEwan's intention with *Solar* as he describes Beard as "a recognisable Ian McEwan type, a one-dimensional, self-deceiving man of science … what continues to interest him are stark dichotomies, the clash and interplay of stable oppositions. Repeatedly in his fiction he sets reason against unreason, science against art, the mind against the body, technology against nature" (Cowley). However, it is important to emphasise Cowley's agreement with American reviewers about the disliking of the loathsome character Beard. Thus, Cowley interprets the novel as being a work of comedy as to how Beard has obtained his expertise in science when he is consuming, greedy and selfish. As well as Cowley, Thomas Jones states in his article "Oh, the Irony" in *London Review of Books* that *Solar* "is extremely funny, most of the on purpose, as it plots its antihero's cynical and self-serving efforts to tackle climate change over course of the first decade of the 21st century" (Jones). Jones argue that the novel is intentionally satirical as it "takes potshots at 1970's feminists postmodernist cranks who won't listen to anyone they disagree with and whimsically reject the objective truths of science - leading to many pages of blokeish guffawing at their unthinking deployment of jargon ('hegemonic', 'reductionist' etc) and lack of common sense" (Jones).

In Anis Shivani's article "Why American Reviewers Disliked Ian McEwan's "Solar": And What That Says About the Cultural Establishment", Shivani addresses the reasons why American reviewers dislike the novel's take on momentous subjects like global warming. In doing so, Shivani utilises Charles and Kakutani's reviews as examples of American reviewers who criticise *Solar*. Some of the American reviewers seem to acknowledge McEwan's use of humour, but the humoristic part falls to the ground when they get to know the protagonist better. Shivani argues that the problem is that "the protagonist is unsympathetic (this is always a problem for American reviewers, even if reader tend to fall for the unsavory and uncouth) [...] we don't quite know where McEwan himself stands on global warming (is he totally locked into the current establishment consensus, or is he at times mocking the conventional wisdom about the coming catastrophe?)" (Shivani). Arguably, Shivani claims the problems of misunderstanding the novel's plot and intentions arise within the unsympathetic reader's, or reviewer's, mind as they do not acknowledge McEwan's aim with the novel. Thus, Shivani argues the misunderstanding of McEwan's intentions with the novel "says a lot about the failure of our cultural establishment to acknowledge any interesting creative depar-

ture in what they are insistent on calling the moribound form of the novel" (Shivani). To prove American reviewers wrong, Shivani clarifies the reviewers' misunderstandings in terms of the novel's intentions. He claims that *Solar* does not entirely revolve around global warming but in fact displays the protagonist's scepticism, interaction and conviction of the global catastrophe's presence. Moreover, Shivani insists that McEwan's choice of protagonist is closely selected; Shivani compares the protagonist Beard, who is a scientist, to the Western civilisation's scientists who often, according to him, "leave us feeling bamboozled, with their jargon and inaccessibility, their utter disdain for us non-scientific mortals who can't tell Schrodinger's equation from Schroedinger's cat" (Shivani).

Thereby, the novel becomes a clear reflection of real life events while many American reviewers perceive it as an attempt of a humorous, selfish scientist who is not concerned about global warming. Shivani claims that *Solar* has a good potential in regards to concerns about global warming, and he likewise emphasises the misanthropy and misogyny that is met by many American reviewers making their perception of the novel different from British reviewers. In this context, Shivani outdistances American and British literature and the differences in between as American literature often, unlike McEwan's dislikeable antihero, consists of an American hero who tries to be 'wholesome'. In this sense, Shivani claims "Americans are moralists on steroids, absolutely determined to do the right thing, even if it destroys the earth" (Shivani) which contradicts what McEwan is determined to account for in the novel.

According to Shivani, the misconception between American and British reviewers, and for instance McEwan's own aim with *Solar*, happens within the cultural perception of humour. In this sense, Shivani suggests McEwan has chosen to write a humoristic and satirical novel about our uncertainties and how to cope with these when it is too terrifying to bring them into our consciousness (Shivani). Thus, these uncertainties are seen in the way in which Beard, as an award-winning scientist, experiences his own defeat. Beard's fate can be passed on to real life as McEwan's intention is to illuminate the reality of mortality. Nevertheless, Shivani urges that "American civilization today, from its outermost thrusts into Central Asian empire-building to its rituals of politics as spectacle, is geared to one purpose only, and that is the denial of mortality" (Shivani). According to Shivani, the denial of mortality needs to be converted in order to question scientists' authoritarian values, wherefore Beard and his satirical persona happens to achieve an important position in this conversion. As a matter of fact, it is not only in terms of the subjects discussed in the novel that attract the American reviewers attention but likewise the protagonist Beard; Shivani here suggests that in order for

an American reviewer to accredit a novel like *Solar*, the reviewers "look for obvious signals in a character's maturity (a character must mature, become *wiser* and *saner*" (Shivani, emphasis in original).

Moreover, the ending of *Solar* has left many American reviewers shocked; global warming does not come to an end wherefore the scientist, Beard, fails to fulfil his goal. Thus, Shivani suggests that McEwan's intention with the open ending was to mirror the ongoing crises in real life:

> the crises, in fact, are fully programmed to go on and on, until a different set of crises replaces present preoccupations. Therefore, Beard in his missionary, messianic, visionary manifestation, in act three, is something that should really give us a pause. His last phase is the natural outcome of the ongoing crisis of authority - not some hurried ending patched up because McEwan ran out of time or energy, as shortsighted critics would have us believe. (Shivani)

Shivani is surprised of American reviewers disliking, or misunderstanding, a novel that represents relatable and ongoing subjects of importance as he suggests they are too preoccupied with the repulsive protagonist and his manners. In this sense, Shivani argues that Beard should be interpreted as a simulation and representation of human behaviour in the Anthropocene. Instead, American reviewers should question the role of morality within fiction and how this manifests itself through the author's own intentions or the actual achievement (Shivani). Shivani claims that the critic "tends to miss the whole point of the book and blames the writer for not having lived up to the *critic's* sense of morality" (Shivani, emphasis in original). American critics neglect the connection between moral fiction and style, form and structure that likewise exert an influence on moral fiction like *Solar*. According to Shivani, "what American reviewers have missed is that satire and history are coming together for the first time" (Shivani). McEwan has been influenced by several crises previous to the novel's publishing including political concerns like 9/11, the energy crisis in 2000 and so forth. Thus, while most Americans reviewers are unable to understand and misinterpret the meaning behind McEwan's use of satire and irony, Shivani argues that Cowley and Jones, as some of the few Americans, are able to interpret McEwan's satirical intentions.

Already before publishing McEwan was aware that he was going to receive a lot of criticism for his take on a book about climate change. In an interview with Mick Brown from *The Telegraph,* he acknowledges that: "People are going to say this is a novel against climate change, or a climate change skeptic's novel - because people are so passionately committed to the idea that we're facing a calamity and have to do something very quickly, and any novel that doesn't say that will be very irritation for them" (Brown). In his chapter "Solar: Apocalypse Not" (2013), ecocritic Greg Garrard mentions that McEwan's novel about climate change "was eagerly anticipated by those who hoped

for a dramatic shift in published consciousness of the issues" ("Apocalypse Not", 123) revolving the climate crisis. Furthermore, Garrard argues that the disappointment is complex and instructive, as the criticism results from "McEwan's choice of satirical allegory as a genre" (123). In an interview prior to the publication of *Solar,* McEwan stated that he wanted to respond to the climate change crisis through fiction by only making the crisis an underlying theme for the novel. Several climate change activists and ecocritics had hoped for a novel which had an influential impact on its readers whereby these were left deceived by the outcome. As stated by Garrard, McEwan chose to write *Solar* as a satirical allegory in the light of the selfish, loathsome protagonist Beard. Arguably, Garrard support McEwan, enforcing that "climate change is intrinsically difficult to write about in literary fiction: it is vast in temporal and geographical scale, and it is caused not by individual protagonists but by the aggregation of myriad acts of human societies - albeit that wealthy people contribute fat more than poor people" (124). Thus, the choice of intermingling a crucial subject like climate change implies moral and emotional aspects among readers and reviewers. According to Garrard, the satirical aspects of climate change in *Solar* "might induce in us, but ought to pinpoint the moral failings that contribute to it in a way that encourages us to rectify them" (124).

Though environmental activists found McEwan's expansion of *Solar* disappointing and futile, Garrard emphasises that the novel itself was written in a deceptive period. As the novel is classified into three different parts, and thereby, three different years, each part narrates crucial events from the specific years: part one narrating subsequent to the fall of the Iron Curtain and prior to the attacks of 9/11, part two dealing with the presidency of Georg Bush and part three in the middle of climate debates including the Copenhagen talks about emissions (125). It is especially the third part of *Solar* that Garrard mentions as the most remarkable due to the global climate politics exploding in late 2009 and the climax of Beard's own career (125). Thus, though ecocritics express their mortification with McEwan's take on the environmental crisis from a satirical point of view, Garrard argues that the plot reflects the disappointment of the years interpreted in the novel. In this sense, Garrard explains that "*Solar* disavows such naïve intentions; it is 'about ourselves', about human nature. It is so full of metafictional minimization of expectations, it ought to wear a badge: 'This novel will not save the planet.'" (126). Thereby, in the light of the satirical accession to the global climate crisis, Garrard suggests that *Solar* depicts humanity with reference to the critical years of both Beard and humanity's lives.

According to Markku Lehtmäki, "[t]he rather unenthusiastic critical response to *Solar* among ecocritics and other readers appears to focus on McEwan's light-hearted approach to a grave issue"

(89). In this sense, the novel is criticised for the attention it aims towards the dislikeable and egocentric protagonist, Beard rather than on the critical issues and urgency of the climate crisis. However, McEwan states in an interview with *The New Yorker* that his novel was not meant to be either didactic or about climate change - it is just a 'background hum of the book' and not a central concern. Instead, it "is a character study of the kind of idealist who'd steal somebody else's splash suit" (Zalewski), or as Garrard puts it; "a comic allegory on the destructive consequences of selfishness ("Apocalypse Not", 124). Thus, in contrast to other literary approaches to the climate crisis, McEwan's *Solar* does not depict a dystopian or apocalyptic future that through horror and extreme events speaks to the public's anxieties and consciousness about the climate crisis. Its "use of comedic, satiric, and allegorical story models is a choice rather unexpected from environmental fiction" (Lehtmäki 89).

As discussed thus far, the rather negative reviews from Americans are tied to the *Solar*'s use of allegory and satire, which is something Americans may understand. However, it is also evident that the negative response is based on McEwan's unserious approach to a crucial issue such as climate change. In this sense, it also becomes essential to look at the reviews of *The Road* in relation to its use of tragedy. In *New York Times,* William Kennedy states that

> Cormac McCarthy's subject in his new novel is as big as it gets: the end of the civilized world, the dying of life on the planet and the spectacle of it all. He has written a visually stunning picture of how it looks at the end to two pilgrims on the road to nowhere. Color in the world - except for fire and blood - exists mainly in memory or dream. Fire and firestorms have consumed forests and cities, and from the fall of ashes and soot everything is gray, the river water black. (Kennedy)

In this sense, Kennedy argues that the overall theme is the distinction between good and evil and how the man and the boy cope with that. Kennedy applauds McCarthy's ability to write as he mentions *The Road* as "the most readable of his works, and consistently brilliant in its imagining of the posthumous condition of nature and civilization" (Kennedy). Additionally, Kennedy claims that McCarthy's poetry has an impact on the interpretation of the novel as the poetic language and short, expressionless sentences indicate the scarcity of the world within *The Road* in which brings out the feeling of powerlessness.

Alan Warner mentions in his review in *The Guardian* that *The Road* is a novel that "sounds the limits of imaginable love and despair between a diligent father and his timid young son, 'each other's world entire'" (Warner). In this sense, Warner decribes the novel as 'emotionally shattering' in terms of the nuclear apocalypse that has hit America. Warner argues that "such a scenario allows McCarthy finally to foreground only the very basics of physical human survival and the intimate

evocation of a destroyed landscape drawn with such precision and beauty" (Warner). However, Warner likewise acknowledges McCarthy's ability to use the narrative as a persuasive aspect as he compares McCarthy's ability to write with the one of Hemingway and Shakespeare: "the simple declamation and plainsong of his rendered dialect, as perfect as early Hemingway" (Warner). The plot is, according to Warner, convincing and thrilling claiming that "all the modern novels can do is done here" (Warner).

Comparably, the perception of *Solar* differs a lot whether it is an American or British review. The American reviewers appear to dislike the way in which McEwan portrays a touchy subject like the climate crisis as they misunderstand the satire brought into the novel. By contrast, the British reviewers acclaim McEwan's satirical approach which has to do with the differences between American and British satire. In this sense, the misconception happens in the light of the humour as McEwan, according to Shivani, utilises the humour to illuminate a subject that makes the readers anxious. Here, it also become apparent that Americans like the tragic mode rather than the comic mode when it comes to important subjects, because they believe they should be taken seriously. As stated by the reviews employed, American reviewers have difficulty in bringing satire and humour into a morally important subject where British reviewers perceive it as a contrasting way to press coverage to the ongoing climate crisis. In this sense, it is also evident that the novel's two very different approaches to climate fiction novels are tied to the two authors cultural background; while *The Road* is written by an American author, *Solar* is written by a British author. *The Road* is a distinct tragic, apocalyptic novel wherefore it does not contain the same element of satire as *Solar*. Although both novels delineate climate change and contain elements of disastrous events it is done in completely disparate manners; thus, the reviews of *The Road* does seem more equal as tragedy is interpreted the same way in America as in England.

8. Conclusion

In many ways, econarratology is an interesting method for studying environmental storyworlds wherein environmental issues are addressed and articulated. Ian McEwan's *Solar* and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* have, in this context, been significant examples of how environmental issues and insights can be weaved into the narrative structure of a literary text. The novels depict two very different storyworlds with two very distinct approaches to portraying a world that has been brought to its current state by either environmental changes or environmental disaster. While these differ-

ences manifest in their temporal and spatial settings as well as character designs, the two novels meet in their potential to influence the contemporary reader in the modern Anthropocene.

Through the analysis of these two texts, the econarratological method has been a meaningful tool for the examination of both content and form and how different forms can produce environmental insight and offer up ecocritical discourse in much the same way as the content of a storyworld. While this thesis has focussed on analysing the level of discourse and the level of the storyworld in the two texts in relation to focalisation, characterisation and events from a structuralist perspective, it has also been a central focal point to examine the relationship between the reader and the narrative in terms of how the narrative elicit different emotional responses in the reader. In this sense, cognition has been a significant instrument by means of how the two texts' narrative structure and plot framing the storyworld employ aspects of tragedy and satire to produce different experiences at the level of reading. This combination of narratology and cognition has enabled an exploration of how the reader, through their transportation and immersion into the storyworld, processes and engages with the environmental storyworld and how the reader's interaction with these worlds may shape their real life attitudes and behaviour. In this context, Lisa Zunshine and Blakey Vermeule's notions of Theory of Mind and cognitive simulation theory in terms of the mind-reading activity that they claim is essential for the reader's narrative comprehension has, furthermore, allowed us to look at how the reader project themselves into the consciousness of the characters, and thus, experience what it is like for others to live in their specific ecological home.

Through the analysis of *Solar,* it becomes evident that McEwan aims at addressing human behaviour and attitude towards climate change by using the comic and ironic portrayal of Michael Beard as a hyperbolic and allegorical representation of humanity's overconsumption and exploitation of the Earth's resources. *Solar* depicts a storyworld that is very much like the contemporary reader's world of origin wherein the protagonist is unpleasantly familiar in both his weaknesses and strengths. Beard's apathy and self-absorbedness is mimetic of humanity's anthropocentric characteristics that are associated with the era of the Anthropocene and because of his scepticism and denial about global warming he also become symptomatic of humanity's lack of response to the climate crisis. Beard's collapsing body also serves as an embodiment of the Earth itself where the abuse he inflicts on his body imitates humanity's failure to take care of the planet.

Another way in which *Solar* criticises human behaviour is through the novel's representation of science as comedy. Through this representation, McEwan ridicules and addresses the human belief that the solution to climate change is tied to technological advancement. However, it is also in

this context McEwan uses the opposition between science and art for rhetorical purposes as Beard's pessimistic view of art and his optimistic view of science function as a parody of literary studies' pessimistic view of human impact and its optimistic notion that art can elicit change.

In many ways, McEwan intentionally creates a dislikeable character whom the readers do not like. Beard's character traits and unethical misdeeds are designed strategically to cultivate antipathetic feelings within the reader. The combination of Beard's function as a mirror to human behaviour and the reader's antipathy invites the reader to revaluate their own behaviour and attitude towards climate change because they do not want to be like him. Nevertheless, as Beard's ethical viewpoint, to some extent, evolves towards the conclusion of the novel, McEwan also manages to illustrate a sense of hope as Beard's ability to change, despite his faults, misdeeds and weaknesses, also indicates the human ability to change.

Whereas *Solar* portrays a recognisable world to the reader, *The Road* depicts one that is very unfamiliar. The novel takes the form of a tragic apocalypse, wherein the storyworld is one of monotone emptiness. An implicit disaster has burned the landscape to the ground leaving the Earth at a critical state with a thickening and colourless atmosphere and imminent danger threatening the survival of humanity. *The Road* presents itself as a fascinating case study in relation to how McCarthy's portrayal of the end not only comes across on the level of the storyworld, but also on the level of discourse. Language has become void; words and concepts disappear as the physical world disintegrates which is also displayed at a sentence level through, for instance minimalist use of punctuation. The novel functions as a warning for the reader as its tragic depiction of the apocalypse activates a sense of urgency in the reader and speaks to their anxieties in terms of the state of the environment in the context of the Anthropocene.

Despite the novel's bleak storyworld, McCarthy manages to incorporate aspects of moral goodness and the love story between a father and a son wherein empathy and sympathy for other people become the most important recourse for survival which is, in many ways, what guides the reader's emotional responses in the act of reading. McCarthy's use of internal focalisation through the man, transports the reader into the storyworld through which they experience it as if they were there themselves; this level of transportation influences the reader's ability to feel with and identify with the character's experiences and emotions in a strange and unfamiliar world. In this sense, our analysis of narrative empathy in *The Road* suggests that even though the reader has not had an explicit bodily experience of the apocalypse, they are granted access to the storyworld through the

man and experience it through his eyes, and thereby, are able to foster empathic responses to the man and the boy's experiences and feelings.

Through the discussion of how the interpretations of *Solar* and *The Road* are tied with their different approaches to climate fiction we have observed that American reviews of *Solar* are rather negative while the British reviews are positive. This tendency is bound to how Americans are liable to misunderstand the British use of satire, but even more, because they denounce the way in which McEwan takes a rather light-hearted approach to such a crucial problem. However, the British reviews of *Solar* argue that the very absence of climate change in the novel tells us more about the considerable impact humanity has on the planet than the apocalyptic tones of other climate fiction.

In conclusion, the two novels are examples of narratives where their underlying meaning is indeed embedded in their form: For *Solar,* it is the satirical and allegorical function of its protagonist that influence the readers to revaluate their environmental orientation and role on the planet; and in *The Road,* it is the implicit warning that lies within the narrative structure where the apocalyptic elements are employed to produce a tragic experience at the level of reading.

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