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All Aboard for Ararat: Islands in Contemporary Flood Fiction

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ALL ABOARD FOR ARARAT

ISLANDS IN CONTEMPORARY FLOOD
FICTION

One of the most striking things about speculative literature of the twenty-first century has been its increasingly focused interest in imagining impending disaster: from the escalating likelihood of biblical deluge on a planetary scale to looming ecocatastrophes of drought and desertification, the return of “last man” narratives of global viral pandemic, as well as the collapse of oil-based petroconsumption. Analyses of fiction that deal with climate change (what has been called climate change fiction, or “cli-fi,” among the online commentariat) have started to recognize a fundamental shift from literary fiction’s preoccupation with characters’ psychological interiority, to the grander-scale attempt to understand the place of human subjects within a broader ecosphere at a time of rapid change.

As BILL MCKIBBEN writes in his introduction to the short-story collection *I’m With the Bears* (2011): “Instead of being consumed with the relationships between people, they increasingly take on the relationship between people and everything else. On a stable planet, nature provided a background against

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which the human drama took place; on the unstable planet we're creating, the background becomes the highest drama."¹

However, scholarship of contemporary literature has thus far overlooked an important set of narratives dedicated to examining the "highest drama" of literary setting as a subject in and of itself: *flood fictions*. These fictions depict a range of cataclysmic floods and encompass both the small scale of texts whose tsunamis and deluges are local, partial, and/or provisional, as well as the larger-scale and planetary accounts of rising sea levels, global disaster, and pluvial shifts in meteorology. Among this caucus of fictions, we might identify a number of prominent examples, including: literal journeys to Ararat and the retelling of the Genesis flood narrative in David Maine's *The Flood* (2004; released in the U.S. under the title *The Preservationist*) and Yann Martel's phantasmagoric best-seller *The Life of Pi* (2001), Geraldine McCaughrean's *Not the End of the World* (2004), and Meg Rosoff's YA novel *There Is No Dog* (2011); apocalyptic deluges caused by impact events, such as the meteorite-induced tsunami in Maggie Gee's *The Flood* (2004) or the alien invasion in Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon* (2014); and the disastrous effects of rising sea levels caused by global warming, as in Marie NDiaye's genre-melding memoir *Autoportrait en vert [Self-Portrait in Green]* (2005), Kim Stanley Robinson's SF thrillers *Forty Signs of Rain* (2004) and *New York: 2140* (2017), Will Self's *The Book of Dave* (2006), Stephen Baxter's *Flood* (2008), Paolo Bacigalupi's young adult novels *The Drowned Cities* (2013), *Ship Breaker* (2011), and *The Windup Girl* (2009), the graphic novel *IDP: 2043* (2014), David Sachs's *The Flood* (2015), Don DeLillo's *Zero K* (2016), Megan Hunter's *The End We Start From* (2017), Philip Pullman's fantasy prequel to the His Dark Materials trilogy, *La Belle Sauvage* (2017), and Abi Curtis's *Water & Glass* (2017). These texts take up the mantle, as McKibben puts it, of addressing the gaps in scientific- and policy-based research relating to climate change and global warming by "help[ing] us to understand what things *feel* like,"² something that the novel form is privileged in being able to accomplish.

In the blending of *speculative* with *realist* literary imaginaries, flood fictions return us to the experimental period of Science Fiction's New Wave in the 1960s: a time that was similarly preoccupied with stories of cataclysmic climate change in texts such as J. G. Ballard's early catastrophe novels *The Wind from Nowhere* (1960), *The Drowned World* (1962), *The Burning World* (1964; expanded and

republished as *The Drought* in 1965), and *The Crystal World* (1966), and John Christopher's post-apocalyptic survivalist texts *The Death of Grass* (1956) and *The World in Winter* (1962); as well as earlier ur-texts of flooding, including Richard Jefferies's *After London; or, Wild England* (1885), Garrett P. Serviss's *The Second Deluge* (1912), S. Fowler Wright's *Deluge* (1928), and John Wyndham's alien invasion *The Kraken Wakes* (1953). As Rob Latham notes, although New Wave speculative fiction encroached upon traditionally science fictional territory, the genre-melding of these slipstream narratives brought avant-garde experimentation into contact with surrealism and emergent postmodern aesthetic concerns to express "the palpable weirdness of the contemporary world."³ More recently, Mark Fisher has further blurred the ontological and generic boundaries between the *real* and the *speculative*, calling this weirdness "capitalist realism."⁴ Fisher's argument is that the social, political, and ecological irrationalities of capitalism's extraction of surplus value have been so successfully naturalized that our narrative coordinates of realism now mask the deep *irrealism*, or *surrealism*, at work in twenty-first-century capitalism. As Gerry Canavan and Andrew Hageman similarly note, capitalism's weirdness has been fluently theorized through the lens of global warming and climate change by Thomas Friedman, who coined the term "global weirding" to describe the unpredictability of anthropogenic global warming.⁵ At a time of planetary meteorological instability when common reality has become saturated with inescapable weirdness, it is those genre-blurring, slipstream, and science fictional narratives, rather than traditional literary realism, that offer the closest representational mode to mimesis.

Reading twenty-first-century flood fictions with an awareness of the formal ambiguity of these earlier ecocatastrophe texts thus reveals the generic slippages at work in the unpredictable weather patterns of global weirding, as well as the need to move beyond a critical approach that situates itself in relation to either the utopian or the dystopian, understood as opposing modes of futurity. An examination of the function of the flood as part of a broader cultural imaginary of *disaster and renewal* therefore offers a useful jumping-off point to consider questions of *the locatedness or dislocatedness of human habitation within the ecosystem*, as part of an ongoing critique of anthropocentric and liberal conceptions of the subject and of history. This, as I will suggest, is an inescapably temporal problem. As Rob Nixon argues in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), a structural violence occurs when the "spectacular time" of blockbuster representations of catastrophe (think of films like *Armageddon* [1998], *The Day*

After Tomorrow [2004], *The Perfect Storm* [2000], or *The Wave* [2015]) encounters the “unspectacular time” of environmental disaster: slow-moving, insidious, and accretive. The violent unfolding, for example, of radiological mutations in cellular structure that go undiagnosed, or the eco-ravages wrought by turbo-capitalism’s colonial dispossession in the form of outsourced toxicity.⁶ In conceptualizing the colliding timescales of slow violence, Nixon explains his decision “to foreground questions of time, movement, and change, however gradual.” As he writes:

The explicitly temporal emphasis of slow violence allows us to keep front and center the representational challenges and imaginative dilemmas posed not just by imperceptible violence but by imperceptible change whereby violence is decoupled from its original causes by the workings of time.⁷

The “representational challeng[e]” of thinking about anthropocentric historical duration and the rich variety of non-anthropocentric timescales within which it unfolds is, as Nixon suggests, a temporal challenge. Narratives of flooding are particularly suited to examining alternative timescales that critique the hegemony of linear historical time and its Enlightenment narrative of progress. Their stories bring ancient myths of deluge—Plato’s sunken island of Atlantis, the Epic of Gilgamesh, or the legend of Aztlán projecting its mountaintop above the flooded waterline—into contact with prehistoric flood events such as the Shuruppak flood in Mesopotamia and the Gun-Yu flood in ancient China. Tales of flooding speak of a time long before written historical records, but they also,

as twenty-first-century flood fictions remind us, anticipate different modes of futurity that persist beyond capitalism’s Anthropocenic regime. Contemporary flood fictions are thus responding to the challenge of positing multiple temporal frameworks in the twenty-first century: offering readers not just the end times of environmental catastrophe but, rather, a complex series of imagined futures in which *anthropocentric time slides toward geological duration*. In such imagined near- and distant-futures, industrial modernity is wiped out and its frenetic, globalized temporality of production and

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consumption becomes replaced with older forms of social and even utopian time that anticipate post-capitalist futures in which linear, progressive time has come to an end and multiple forms of subjective and collective times become possible.

This is nowhere more evident than in the islands that flood fictions tend to privilege, which suggest different kinds of temporal experience and, as I will show, dramatize a discourse of utopian possibility that stretches back to the Renaissance. While flooding obliterates former coastlines, inundating densely populated port cities and low-lying littoral areas, as well as smashing sea walls and barriers, its destructive ingress transforms the landscape to create pockets of habitation above the raised waterline, which mark out new islands. I'd like to focus on four contemporary flood fictions that privilege such islands: the island of Ham (formerly Hampstead) in the post-diluvian archipelago of twenty-sixth-century Ing in Will Self's *The Book of Dave* (2006); the exodus to the Scottish Highlands and Islands in Megan Hunter's *The End We Start From* (2017); the desperate global race for rapidly vanishing islands among former mountainous regions, such as the Appalachians, the Peruvian Andes, and the Himalayas in Stephen Baxter's *Flood* (2008); and the restoration of Manhattan as an island in the "post-pulse" years of mid-twenty-first-century Manhattan in Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York: 2140* (2017). These four contemporary flood fictions foreground islands as new sites of community, and also of power. Their transitional status and provisional pooling of people and resources betoken the new islands in post-diluvian fictional worlds with a sense of possibility in terms of social organization and reconstruction.

THE ISLAND AS UTOPIAN LOCUS CLASSICUS

Islands, of course, have a special place in the history of the novel. Early eighteenth-century novels, such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), drew on an insatiable public appetite for tales of exotic travel and adventure, featuring islands, shipwrecks, castaways, and fantastical societies hidden away across the seas. As the cartography of the New World expanded through colonial sea-crossings, European imperialism shaped new capitalist frontiers as well as the literary imaginary that was giving expression to their ideals of individualism and self-reliance. Predating the "rise of the novel," the classical utopian tradition is itself a literary genre grounded in pelagic crossings. Thomas More's ideal commonwealth in *Utopia* (1516) is

situated on an island in an equatorial location somewhere in the South Seas. The relationship between the enactment of a utopian society and the isolated island setting that gives rise to such a social experiment was one that stimulated the Renaissance imagination. Prospero's "desolate isle" (III.iii.80) in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611), which inspired Gonzalo to imagine a Commonwealth government of "such perfection" (II.i.160), thus anticipated a wave of treatises situating (and interrogating) paradise societies on tropical islands, including Richard Bernard's ministerial handbook *The Isle of Man* (1620), Francis Bacon's Pacific island of Bensalem in *New Atlantis* (1624), Phineas Fletcher's pastoral poetic allegory *The Purple Island, or the Isle of Man* (1633), Bishop Godwin's depiction of the island paradise of St. Helena in *The Man in the Moone* (1638), Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines* (1668), and Denis Vairasse d'Allais's *The History of the Severambians* (1677). These latter two texts use their remote island settings to reconceive gender relations and social hierarchy. As Richard H. Grove notes, "[i]t is significant that the island context appeared to permit (perhaps through a psychological distancing) otherwise socially unpalatable experiments in the meaning and social control of gender."⁸ With their palpable sense of exotic isolation, the islands that early modern capitalism revealed to its European colonists, and which Renaissance writers eagerly incorporated into allegorical reworkings of the body politic, became a privileged signifier of utopian possibility through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The scientific expeditions of George Anson, Louis Antoine de Bougainville, and James Cook bolstered this symbolic discourse and islands like Otaheite (Tahiti) and Mauritius became, as Grove observes, "symbolic and practical locations of the social and physical Utopias beloved of the early Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment."⁹

Read within this longer historical context of colonial expansion during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, More's *Utopia* can be identified as an early exemplar of the Renaissance interest in the island as a site of social experimentation, as well as a metaphor for bodies; both at the individual level, as well as the level of the body politic. This has a particular relevance for King Utopus's island in More's text, since the South Sea "island" over which he rules was originally a peninsula that Utopus fortifies by ordering his freshly enslaved Indigenous laborers to dig a fifteen-mile-wide channel. *Utopia* thus marks a foundational moment of topographical construction in which the sovereign body is established by severing the peninsula ("the head") from its surrounding landmass ("the body"). As Marc Shell notes, Ambrosius Holbein's fictional maps of More's island of

Utopia resembles a skull or human cerebrum (Figure 1). Similarly, Plato's dialogue *Timaeus* associates the "lost" island of Atlantis with the human brain.¹⁰

This *reimagining of bodies* to which the Renaissance island-utopias give dialogic literary form—recasting the human body, the body politic, and the geographical island-body that contains them—brings into focus two aspects of literary islands that will be central to my reading of twenty-first-century flood fictions. Firstly, that the unique geography of the secluded island furnishes it with an inescapably utopian quality of possibility. And secondly, that the journey that leads to discovering the utopian *locus classicus* of the island necessitates some kind of disaster: whether shipwreck caused by a tempest (as Raphael Hythloday experiences in More's *Utopia*) or the rising sea levels that produce new islands in the deluged futures of contemporary flood fictions.

This blending of the utopian with the catastrophic returns us to the temporal problematic raised above: how should we approach what Rob Nixon calls the "representational challeng[e]" posed by the irreconcilable timescales of ecological duration, with its multiplanar rhythms and almost-invisible slowness, and an anthropocentric human history that Western philosophy has consecrated into a linear narrative of technological progress? Islands offer a productive heuristic for rethinking ideas about historical time and the kinds of subjective temporal experience to which collective temporal regimes give rise. As Marc Shell has recently argued, the discourse of "islandology" (or, the study of "how we speak about islands") opens up fascinating philosophical questions of boundaries

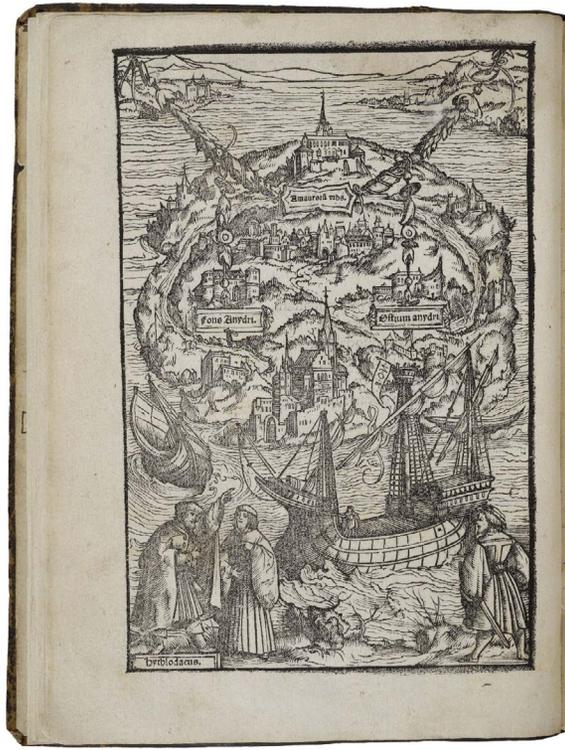


Figure 1. Utopiae insulae figura. Woodcut by Ambrosius Holbein (1516). Public Domain.

and limits and is rooted in natural history and geological analysis.¹¹ Even the etymological instability of the word “island” itself, Shell notes, acts as a useful device for considering questions of subjectivity, community, and collective destiny. Caribbean studies has similarly drawn on the rich metaphoric appeal of islands and the sea—as well as the sunken city of Atlantis—in addressing central disciplinary questions of universal history, colonialism, and marginalized, or submerged, cultures relegated to the periphery of modernity. The Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite introduced the term *tidalectics* to address this problem within Caribbean discourse. As Brathwaite explains, tidalectics means “dialectics with a difference”: “instead of the notion of one-two-three Hegelian, I am now more interested in the movement of the water backwards and forwards as a kind of cyclic, I suppose, motion, rather than linear.”¹² By introducing this critical neologism, Brathwaite presents an Indigenous philosophy of history that challenges the teleological direction of Hegel’s classic dialectical synthesis and its application within accounts of global “progress.” Whereas the Hegelian dialectic suggests the forward linear thrust of colonial expansionism, tidalectics, by contrast, connotes a centripetal eddying of cyclical historical time in which “‘success’ moves outward from the centre to circumference and back again.”¹³ Furthermore, Brathwaite argues that Plato’s myth of the sunken city of Atlantis underpins Caribbean consciousness. “The islands that we inhabit,” he writes, “are in fact the sunken tops of a mountain chain and the people who inhabit them have an echo of that catastrophe in their memory.”¹⁴

Marc Shell’s reading of islandology and Kamau Brathwaite’s tidalectics offer two suggestive ways of framing a reading of the function of islands within flood narratives. As they note, a critical interrogation of islands, as well as the bodies of water they inhabit, presents a forceful critique of Enlightenment rationalism’s philosophical correlate—linear historical time—and its naturalized unit of temporal measure: *clock-time*. This is the time that Walter Benjamin argued we need to blast wide open in his “Theses on the Philosophy of History.”¹⁵ It is the universalized time of industrial production, whose precise calibrations of social life into punctual units of commodified labor engender a disciplinary regimentation of our experience of time. Shell’s reading of islandology and Brathwaite’s tidalectics thus help us uncover the eddying, cyclical, nonlinear times described by Indigenous history as well as post-anthropocentric modes of geological duration. As such, these island-based approaches to reframing historical time offer a suggestive approach to reading twenty-first-century flood

fictions: one that is attuned to the nonlinear and multivalent temporalities being presented in these ecocatastrophic fictions. Islands, then, occupy a privileged site of utopian possibility within contemporary flood fictions, as exemplified in the novels I discuss below by Will Self, Stephen Baxter, Kim Stanley Robinson, and Megan Hunter. Contemporary apocalyptic flood narratives thus draw on an established philosophical tradition of using island geography to examine new political experiments that rethink questions of sovereignty and community. In these four exemplary texts, the island comes to represent a site of alternative community that challenges the pre-apocalyptic capitalist world order, suggesting a number of different post-apocalyptic modes of existence. From the return of pre-industrial types of pastoral or agricultural subsistence (as we find in Self's *The Book of Dave* or Hunter's *The End We Start From*), to an emerging commons that replaces private property in the post-capitalist world of rising sea levels (Robinson's *New York: 2140*), or even a post-civilized evolution of illiterate water-born children (Baxter's *Flood*): these texts depict islands as sites of utopian change that hint at different social worlds with their own temporalities beyond capitalist clock-time.

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A NEW COLLECTIVE CHILDHOOD?: MAPPING THE FETUS-SHAPED ISLAND IN WILL SELF'S *THE BOOK OF DAVE*

Will Self's *The Book of Dave: A Revelation of the Recent Past and the Distant Future* (2006) is a flood fiction centrally concerned with the workings of different orders of historical time. The novel moves between two narrative timescales: the first of which is set in contemporary London and features a misogynistic taxi driver named Dave; while the second timescale leaps proleptically into the twenty-sixth century (500 AD, or “After Dave”) and reveals a post-apocalyptic flooded world in which Ing (what's left of England) is reduced to a small archipelago of islands. Self's epigraph—“I like to think how easily Nature will absorb London as she absorbed the mastodon” (from Edward Thomas's essay collection *The South Country* [1906])—invokes a generic tradition stretching back to

William Morris's post-revolutionary meadows and villages in *News from Nowhere* (1890), Richard Jefferies's gleeful devastation of the city in *After London; or, Wild England* (1885), and the swamps and lagoons of J. G. Ballard's ecocatastrophe *The Drowned World* (1962). Self's indebtedness to the British disaster tradition is further underscored by a stylistic homage to Russell Hoban's post-nuclear holocaust novel *Riddley Walker* (1980) in the phonetic dialect spoken by the characters in the novel's post-deluge future.

These allusions establish the generic framework of disaster fiction within which we can contextualize Self's post-apocalyptic island of Ham (formerly Hampstead, and a pun that alludes to Noah's son Ham in the Book of Genesis). This is the place where Dave's Book has ended up, and its pastoral backwater status—some distance from the politico-religious maelstrom of King David's dynastic center of power in the lagoons of the former city of London—is conveyed in distinctly Arcadian terms. Referred to as “an island of the blessed,” the post-diluvian Ham (Figure 2) is a place of simple agricultural labor: primarily

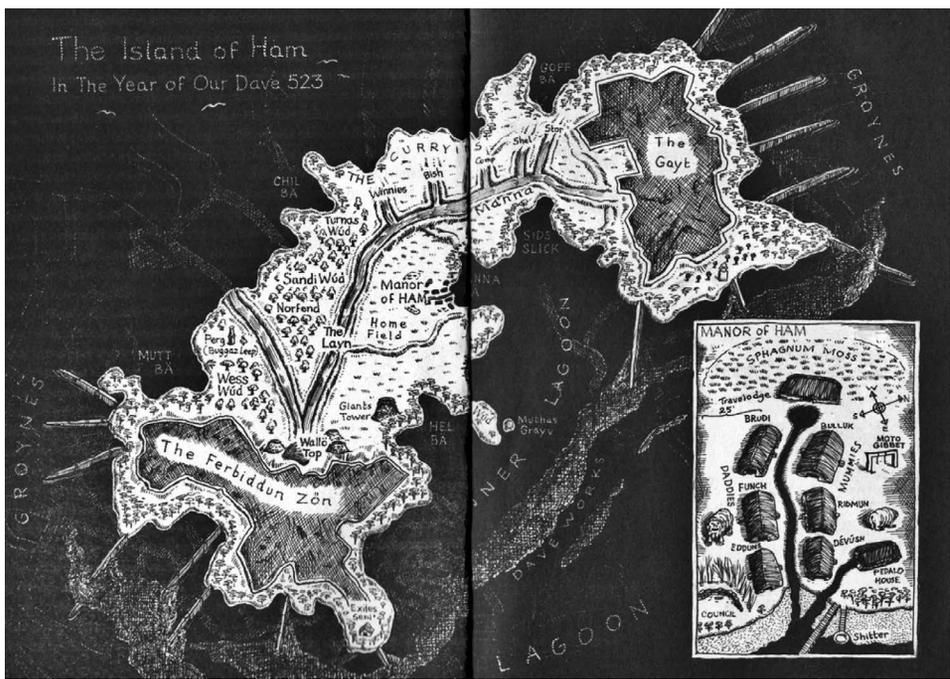


Figure 2.

The island of Ham. From Will Self, *The Book of Dave*. Image reproduced by kind permission of Martin Rowson.

shepherding an innocent, sensual breed of genetically engineered human-animal hybrids known as “motos.”

Ham is endowed with qualities of prelapsarian simplicity and nostalgic childhood memories. Even in Dave’s contemporary world, Hampstead is described as a “fantasy island remote from the rest of the world”¹⁶; a sentiment that becomes literalized in the unvarying rhythms of pastoral life in the post-deluge island of Ham. The scenery hints at the kind of Arcadian role-playing and liberation from the ordinary rules of city-states to be found in Shakespearean comedies: “the gently undulating landscape had the aspect of a stage in a playhouse.”¹⁷ This Bakhtinian carnivalesque allows characters such as Antonë Böm, a political dissident exiled to the island, to experience the de-sutured rhythms of provincial folk for whom “the concept of ordinal time was not strong.”¹⁸ Meanwhile, its island topography reveals an isolated, yet rich, culture entwined with the landscape. As Böm observes when he first arrives:

The island was a tapestry of naming, worked over again and again by the thousands of generations who had trod its leafy lanes and grassy paths. Antonë Böm, with his inquiring mind, set himself to map the foetus-shaped island, from the long groynes that projected from the northeastern shores of the Gayt, to the hidden coves and gull-haunted strands beneath the Ferbiddun Zön to the south.¹⁹

Like the cranial features of Holbein’s woodcut of More’s utopian island, and the association in Plato’s dialogue *Timaeus* between the sunken island of Atlantis and the human brain, the fetus-shaped island of Ham recalls the anthropomorphized corporeality often ascribed to imaginary islands, as well as the island’s function as a metonym for the nation-state. But if Holbein’s woodcut suggests death in its skull-like contours (reminding us that More was executed for his ideas) and, by extension, the dangers of utopian thinking, then Self’s fetus-shaped island speaks of birth and new beginnings.

Crucially, these new beginnings signal a neoteric shift in perspective for Böm, the traveler to rural, archipelagic Ing from London’s metropolitan center—a perspectival shift that gives way over time as Böm comes to realize “his imagined Arcadia” is a fabrication of his own making.²⁰ On closer inspection, the post-diluvian island of Ham becomes much more sinister. Böm discovers the men of the “tiny commonwealth” routinely rape and assault the women,

rendering Böm's imagined Arcadia a distinctly "critical utopia," if a utopia at all.²¹ In eighteenth-century island narratives such as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *La nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), remote islands "offered the opportunity for a new collective childhood and the hope for a new kind of society," as Richard H. Grove observes, "one in which a new rational unity might replace the instinctive unity of the primitive state."²² Rousseau's tropical island of Tinian in the Western Pacific signified, in particular, a consummate topographical instantiation of Romantic sanctuary from the modern industrial world, symbolically "return[ing] to the comfort and security of the womb."²³ Similarly, the fetus-shaped island of Ham represents an otherworldly rural refuge from the authoritarian control of London under the cult of the Driver. Its "new collective childhood," however, falls far short of the Romantic return to nature that Rousseau privileged in his philosophy. Rather, the island's manicured landscape and childlike inhabitants live in a stunted time of myopic presentism. Their beasts of burden, the biologically engineered motos, embody this static temporality: "Comfy in their cosy child-worlds, [the motos] had little recollection of the traumatic past and no thought for the hazardous future."²⁴

If the island of Ham represents a falsely utopian, static time of infantilization in *The Book of Dave*, then it is the archaeological "deep time" in the contemporary, pre-deluge timescale that suggests the novel's apocalyptic revelation. As he convalesces in a country cottage in Essex toward the end of the novel, Dave is "privileged with a second sight into deep time."²⁵ Dave's insight into the Parousia of a watery apocalypse through the redemptive insight of "deep time" intuits a "great wave" that we must assume presages the eventual apocalyptic flood that transforms the UK into the archipelago of Ing in the twenty-sixth-century future. With Dave's renunciation of the Knowledge, comes the vision of the flood:

The great wave came on, thrusting before it a scurf of beakers, stirrers, spigots, tubes, toy soldiers, disposable razors, computer-disc cases, pill bottles, swizzle sticks, tongue depressors, hypodermic syringes, tin-can webbing, pallet tape, clips, clasps, brackets, plugs, bungs, stoppers, toothbrushes, dentures, Evian bottles.²⁶

The shock here, of course, is that this "great wave" reveals not a flood—a final resounding gesture of global warming via irreversible ecocatastrophe—but a satirical invective of what Self has elsewhere called "moribund consumerism,"²⁷

his angry cry against a society awash with spectacle and simulacra, with its tsunami of plastics and senseless commodities. Triggered by a vision of the “great wave” of rubbish, Dave’s final revelation releases him from the present moment into the current of “fluvial time.”²⁸ This watery temporality augurs a messianic arrival that is symbolic in the twenty-first century and becomes prophetic in the post-deluged archipelagic London. But in each narrative timescale, it reveals what Maurice Blanchot calls in *The Writing of Disaster* (1980) “the now which does not belong to ordinary time.”²⁹ Finally, then, Dave’s experience of fluvial time cleaves apart a temporal experience beyond the ordered calibration of clock-time’s linear movement to reveal the singular, kairotic “now” of apocalyptic revelation.

WHERE EMBODIMENT MEETS WATER: GESTATIONAL DURATION IN MEGAN HUNTER’S *THE END WE START FROM*

Whereas *The Book of Dave* utilizes its post-diluvian setting of Ham to interrogate the island-as-utopia trope, revealing the ultimately traumatizing and static childhood time of its own island pastoral, Megan Hunter’s debut novel *The End We Start From* (2017) suggests a more robustly utopian image of island possibility. From its opening pages, as the first-person narrator goes into labor during an unprecedented flood, Hunter’s novel is concerned with how the searing new experience of motherhood connects its protagonist to a different order of time. This temporality is animalistic, primal, and part of an intergenerational continuity that predates industrial modernity and, it is suggested, will survive beyond capitalism’s apocalyptic destruction by flooding. Hunter’s sparse hallucinatory prose impressively crystallizes the emotional intensity and converged perspective of a new mother, shot through with a catastrophic awareness of the world beyond her newborn baby. The contracted timescale of the narrator’s all-encompassing present is punctuated with italicized passages recalling the biblical flood in Genesis, 6–9. “*In the ancient times,*” we read, “*the ocean rose until it covered everything in sight. It covered the trees and the beasts and even the mountains, and ice drifted over their tops.*”³⁰ These interspersed passages of the creation myth of the flood, and Noah’s deliverance from drowning in God’s safeguarding of his Ark, have a deeply mythopoeic quality to them. But they also, as Maggie Gee suggests, attest to our deep-seated awareness of the cultural significance of flooding in ancient submerged memories of pre-history:

Our ancestors must have lived through many great floods, particularly at the end of ice ages. Seas that had shrunk during hundreds of years

of ice (which takes up less room than water) melted and overbrimmed their new coastlines. Stone tools and house-beams have been discovered far out in the Black Sea; no wonder we have myths of drowned worlds such as Atlantis, lost beneath the waves. Now we ourselves live in a time of melting ice-caps and climatic turbulence.³¹

The “climatic turbulence” that marks our contemporary moment, and of which twenty-first-century flood fictions are a narrative expression, thus responds to a much longer cultural engagement with flooding across various societies, stretching back, even, to a phylogenetic memory that connects us to our distant ancestors. Phylogenesis, as Herbert Marcuse notes in *Eros and Civilization* (1956), is another pre-capitalist mode of temporality that works outside of repressive clock-time and thereby hints at a utopian experience of non-alienated time. Drawing on Freud’s primal theory of the horde, Marcuse suggests that it recalls the “subhistorical past of the genus . . . prior to all civilization.”³² As a phylogenetic memory that crosses cultures, ancient myths of flooding thus present us with a cache of alternative timescales beyond the reaches of capitalist modernity—stretching back into the distant past of antiquity and also anticipating deluged futures after the end of capitalism itself.

The connection between an ancestral time of flooding and the ecocatastrophic twenty-first-century present is mediated in *The End We Start From* through the narrator’s transformational shift into motherhood. Having been shipped onto different arks—the hospital where she gives birth is described as “a ship, a brightly lit ark housing all the new ones aloft”³³—she arrives at a refugee camp. Here, the regular temporality of ordered chronometric time dissolves into a competing array of disorientating temporal experiences. Once settled at a Scottish refugee camp, her days unravel into “hours of thinning time.”³⁴ The women are referred to collectively as the “husbandless,” the “milk-drippers,” and the “exhausted ones,”³⁵ eking out their dwindling food supplies and dreaming listlessly of their former lives of domesticity and plenty. Clock-time is replaced by the biological temporality of her mothering body: her lactating breasts now have “a kind of clock of their own.”³⁶ As Astrida Neimanis notes in *Bodies of Water: Posthumanism Feminist Phenomenology* (2017), the act of breastfeeding in Adrienne Rich’s *Of Woman Born* (1976) “connects her directly to her infant, but also to other bodies across time.”³⁷ *The End We Start From* is as much

a narrative about the temporal discombobulation of early motherhood as it is a disaster narrative. “There is nothing but this,” the narrator observes, “their small bodies, time sliding now, losing form, turning one day into the next”; and this routinization of motherhood’s daily trials and necessities gradually solidifies into the Heraclitan image of a new watery time, in which “the everyday [quickly] fills up time again . . . invisible until you’re splashing in it.”³⁸

In this ontological nexus, the image of the island surfaces as a crucial resource of utopian possibility that extends our understanding of the utopian beyond the static pastoral infantilism of Self’s escapist island of Ham in *The Book of Dave*. Hunter’s decision to locate her utopian island retreat in Scotland’s Outer Hebrides draws on a powerful literary and cultural imaginary of remoteness, escapism, and the revitalizing properties of the natural landscape. With its volcanic eruptions at the edge of the continental shelf, Scotland’s western archipelago of Hebridean islands exudes what Madeleine Bunting calls a “history of forceful geology,”³⁹ which inspired eighteenth-century travelers like Samuel Johnson and James Boswell as well as the Romantic poets Keats and Wordsworth. (And George Orwell, we might remember, wrote his dystopian masterpiece *Nineteen Eighty-Four* [1949] while secluded on the island of Jura.) Traveling to the Hebridean island with her friend, O, the narrator is told that this “golden opportunity” will allow their small group to live independently in a pastoral idyll.⁴⁰ Crossing the sea, the narrator lapses once more into incantatory, mythopoeic storytelling: “*The otherworld will be beneath the ocean, forty thousand fathoms below. In that place, there will be no pain, nor death, nor mourning.*”⁴¹ Their Styx-like passage toward the island thus recalls Revelation 21.4, in which the image of the New Jerusalem invokes the timelessness of apocalyptic deliverance—from the “sea” of temptations, passions, and conflict into the sanctuary of the shining heavenly city. Here, at the beginning and the end of time, God will provide “water without cost from the spring of the water of life.”⁴² With its doubly apocalyptic significance—in the modern sense of annihilation and catastrophe, as well as in the biblical sense of revelation—Hunter’s remote Hebridean island is explicitly figured as a utopian destination. “*In that place,*” the narrator intones in a liturgical reverie, “*honey-sweet fruit will touch your lips with gold. Sunshine will lay you down and bless you, and moonlight will fill your bones.*”⁴³

Hunter's narrator is the bearer of a revelatory vision of a different kind of life as embodied by the self-sufficient simplicity of the Hebridean island: a pastoralized version of the New Jerusalem that is both utopian community and protective ark. While the deluge in Genesis that sees Noah take refuge aboard his Ark symbolizes the approach of divine judgment and new beginnings, the fire that succeeds the biblical flood similarly presages an eschatological decree. As Jonathan Huddleston writes, "Ancient cosmic disasters, especially the flood and the rain of fire and sulfur, still stand for a coming judgment."⁴⁴ In a biblical echo, Hunter's novel thus sees a devastating fire on the mainland follow the months of flooding. Watched by the narrator and her pastoral community from the safety of their island seclusion, the fire's progress and eventual abeyance reveals a new time: "We are in the after. It is tangible, like a smell or a constant background hum."⁴⁵ This "after" time of apocalyptic new beginnings enables the narrator's return to London, once the floods have subsided sufficiently for the country's refugees to trek back to their ruined homes. Whereas the Renaissance utopias of More's original 1516 text and Bacon's New Atlantis considered the island to offer a new kind of geographical and political body (or head) that could house the *optimus status reipublicae*, Hunter's Hebridean island functions as the womb-like site in which it becomes possible for the narrator and her infant son to step outside of national collective time. Crucially, however, this is a transitional experience rather than a permanent exile. With her return to London in the novel's final pages, the island's gestational duration of pastoral, post-civilized simplicity equips Hunter's narrator to confront the "after time" of post-deluge life. Unlike Self's inhabitants of the island of Ham, then, Hunter's narrator and her infant son move beyond the island's escapist post-capitalist temporality to return to a reconfigured temporal regime.

Hunter's achievement in this short novel is to deconstruct the firm boundaries between the text's pre- and post-apocalyptic worlds, both of which are subordinated to the pressing realities of new motherhood. In poetic terms, this is achieved through a rich lexis of images of water and wateriness, images which evoke the primal relation between mother, child, and the larger connective umbilical cord of generative life. The encroachment in *The End We Start From* of external bodies of water into the sovereign body of the British nation-state thus mirrors the narrator's growing awareness of her own internal viscosity during pregnancy and lactation, as well as her son's emergence from

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Thinking about islands at a time of escalating ecological crisis and rising sea levels also necessitates a rethinking of the terms through which we understand embodiment, which have traditionally privileged discrete bounded frameworks for interrogating subjectivity as sovereign and autonomous.

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the uterine fluidity of gestation. The floodwaters, she observes, “remin[d] Z of where he came from.”⁴⁶ Hunter thus raises the question of flooding to a new level of ontological inquiry in *The End We Start From*. Thinking about islands at a time of escalating ecological crisis and rising sea levels also necessitates a rethinking of the terms through which we understand embodiment, which have traditionally privileged discrete bounded frameworks for interrogating subjectivity as sovereign and autonomous. But, as Neimanis argues, the rich imbrication of feminist phenomenology with environmental humanities allows for an explicitly posthumanist reorientation of subjectivity and embodiment. Contemporary water crises, weird weather, and the increasing number of flood events around the world thus render dramatically visible the urgent requirement to rethink previously anthropocentric ideas of sovereign bodies and discrete subjectivity. Situated within a wider ambit of environmental interconnectedness, this produces a kind of *ecological inhumanism* that finally topples the primacy of the human in relation to the broader ecosphere. As Neimanis writes:

We live at the site of exponential material meaning where embodiment meets water. Given the various interconnected and anthropogenically exacerbated water crises that our planet currently faces—from drought and freshwater shortage to wild weather, floods, and chronic contamination—this meaningful mattering of our bodies is also an urgent question of worldly survival.⁴⁷

Neimanis’s analysis reminds us that the human body is itself composed of water and wet matter: a threshold that underscores the “exponential material meaning where embodiment meets water.” Indeed, what we might call Hunter’s feminist

phenomenology of watery intersubjectivity makes this novel a vital text for our contemporary moment of water crises in an era of catastrophic climate change.

CONFRONTING THE HYDROGENE: FROM ISLANDS TO OCEAN WORLDS IN STEPHEN BAXTER'S *FLOOD*

If Stephen Baxter's 2008 novel *Flood* is less concerned with how flooding impacts upon philosophies of subjectivity, then it is no less ontological in its near-future implications of living at a time of apocalyptic sea-level rises. The new ontology, this novel starkly reveals, will be one of water-bound existence upon hastily constructed arks and a shrinking number of islands, perched atop the sunken remains of former landmasses. Spanning 2016 to 2052, the novel charts the experience of global ecocatastrophe from exceptional fluvial events and tidal flooding around low-lying and coastal areas (with sea-level rises of 1–5 meters) to the disappearance of more than three-quarters of the world's landmass as only a handful of islands remains: the former mountainous regions of the Himalayas, the Andes, and the Appalachians (which ultimately disappear when sea-level rise exceeds 8,800m, breaching Mount Everest and finally submerging the entire planet) (Figure 3).

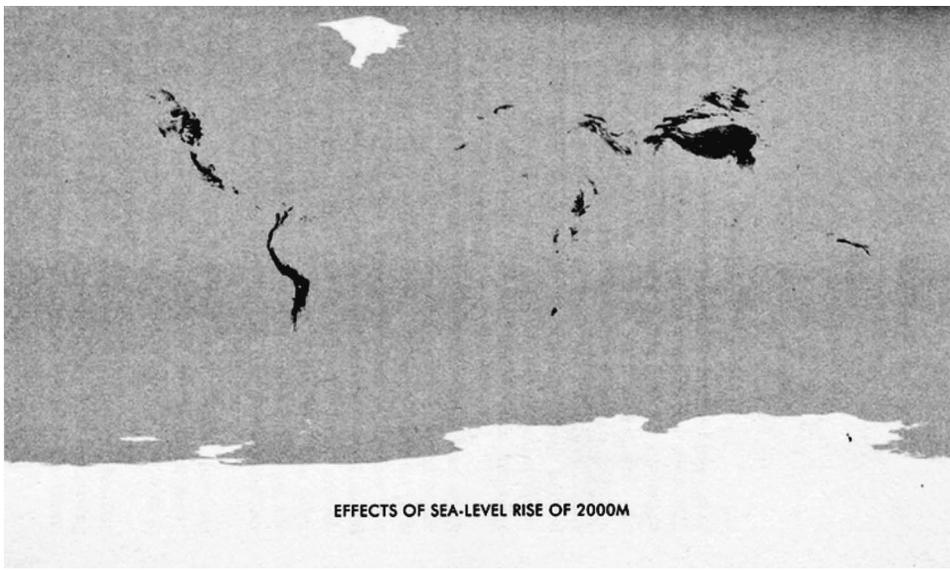


Figure 3.

Sea-level rise of 2,000m, c. 2045 (Stephen Baxter, *Flood*, 507). Image reproduced by kind permission of The Orion Publishing Group, London. Copyright © Stephen Baxter 2008.

From the novel's beginning, islands are geopolitically significant as the radical reconfiguration of the UK's topography drowns major cities and sees Wales and Scotland cut adrift from England by swelling estuaries. Floods, then, deliver a literalization of the political devolution of the UK and its eventual break-up into autonomous countries, signaling the decline of the nation-state as a viable political and geographical entity in the deluged new world order.

In order to get a sense of the scale of the crisis, Baxter's novel uses an elevated narratorial perspective to survey these dramatic floodscapes. Not only is this elevation literal—there are numerous moments of aerial overviews in the text—but it also leads to a privileged and global perspective of the unfolding catastrophe. Viewing the Thames tidal surge from the safety of an Environment Agency helicopter, climatologists Gary and Thandie watch the spectacle of flooding on a mammoth scale, obliterating housing estates and factories and knocking ship-ping containers “into the water like matchsticks”⁴⁸:

All this Gary saw from above, from the warmth and comfort of his helicopter cabin. There was no human noise, no screams or cries; it was all drowned by the storm's roar and the thrum of the chopper's engine. . . . The flooded estate was reduced to an abstraction, a mélange of water and land.⁴⁹

The aerial perspective of Gary's spectatorship is both chilling and indicative of Baxter's structural design in *Flood*. The novel's characters are scientists, engineers, and ex-military project coordinators, flitting across the globe in increasingly precarious and apocalyptic circumstances. The effect of this elite cast of protagonists with their “planetary consciousness” establishes the scientific focus of the novel,⁵⁰ which charts unprecedented sea-level rises in climatological, geological, and oceanographic terms. This scientific perspective raises *Flood*'s novelistic terrain from the *global* (at the synchronic level) to the *cosmological* (at the diachronic level). Or, to put it another way, the novel moves from the early deluge phase of encroaching disaster as it occurs worldwide to the incontrovertibly planetary scale in which human existence itself is threatened and a deeper, tectonic movement replaces the time of human history. This properly diachronic timescale of planetary evolution offers Baxter's readers an unfolding perspective of post-anthropocentric futurity that approaches the unthinkable, unrepresentable scale of climatological crisis. *Flood* thus illustrates a new deluged experience of being-in-the-world that serves as

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Flood [. . .] illustrates a new deluged experience of being-in-the-world that serves as an allegory of globalized capitalism’s ceaseless self-expansion.
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an allegory of globalized capitalism’s ceaseless self-expansion. However, as we have already seen, the spread of Early Modern capitalism around the globe also gave rise to the utopian search for desolate tropical islands (both real and fictional). The ambiguous status of these islands, at once within the circuits of global capital (i.e., discoverable) as well as beyond modernity’s reach (i.e., exotic, pre-modern, and subject to Romantic visions of a return to nature), is illustrated in Baxter’s novel by the

Ark Three project funded by multimillionaire Nathan Lammockson (whose surname, “son of Lamoch,” recalls Noah’s father Lamech in Genesis, and names Nathan as a contemporary incarnation of Noah). Ark Three is not a metaphorical ark, as the climatologist Sanjay supposes (“a seed bank, maybe, a vault of frozen zygotes”), but a floating island-hotel: “an actual damn ship” (F 315) modeled on the RMS Cunard Queen Mary ocean liner, launched in 1932.⁵¹ With its minibars, Turkish baths, and squash courts, Lammockson’s nostalgic reincarnation of a 1930s luxury cruise liner epitomizes what Brian Aldiss termed the “cosy catastrophe” sub-genre of disaster fiction in which, as he writes, “the hero should have a pretty good time (a girl, free suites at the Savoy, automobiles for the taking) while everyone else is dying off.”⁵² As years of aimless sailing pass, this “inward-looking, static, high-tech Utopia,” is forced to cannibalize its opulent décor to patch up an aging, battered hull; and the “floating hotel at the end of the world” sinks into disrepair, becoming as shabby and decrepit as the raft communities it encounters among the oil slicks and “islands of indestructible plastic garbage.”⁵³ “Nobody expected the voyage to last for ever,” Lily reflects, “sooner or later this new Ark would come to rest on its own Ararat.”⁵⁴

The novel’s ending reveals Lammockson’s “ship-city” to be an unsustainable utopia because it fails to work with the evolving landscape and attempts to construct a floating island that is synthetic, as well as retrogressive.⁵⁵ Having entered the full-scale Hydrocene, or “new watery age” in which there are finally no islands left on the planet’s surface,⁵⁶ an aging Lily ekes out an existence among a small raft community of illiterate water-born children who subsist between the garbage islands and the open seas. Even envisaging the

bleak prospect of an apocalyptic “ocean world,”⁵⁷ Baxter’s narrative resists dystopian despair, despite what Adam Roberts has called the novel’s “onward driving inevitability of the disaster.”⁵⁸ Among these floating raft communities are farms cultivating “[h]anging gardens and water fountains, wind turbines and solar cells, out in the middle of the ocean . . . vegetables growing in old truck tyres.”⁵⁹ The next generation has adapted to life at sea. As Lily notes, “[t]hey don’t care that the Smithsonian is drowned, or that we’re all offline for ever.”⁶⁰ Gary replies with the biblical quotation: “One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the Earth abideth for ever.” “It’s a happy ending of a kind,” he concludes⁶¹; and his reference to Ecclesiastes 1.4 ends Baxter’s novel with a resonant image of the geological deep time that persists beyond humanity.

AN ARCHIPELAGIC CONSCIOUSNESS: KIM STANLEY ROBINSON’S *NEW YORK: 2140*

In a 2003 article for the *New Left Review*, Fredric Jameson wrote that “[s]omeone once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism.”⁶² While Jameson’s point has passed into popular scholarly parlance, Kim Stanley Robinson’s novel *New York: 2140* (2017) marks a sincere attempt to overturn this truism of catastrophic thinking and imagine the continuation of capitalism within a dystopian setting that is eventually toppled not by the disaster itself (as some kind of messianic, hoped-for *Deus ex machina*) but, rather, by the lugubrious process of bottom-up democratic politics. Set more than 120 years in the future, Robinson’s novel brings to vivid life a time when climate change has transformed the world. Food shortages, a chronic lack of suitable and safe housing, widespread pollution of floodwaters, the return of cholera, cyclical economic crises and recessions, and the mass migration of entire populations that reverse manifest destiny as swaths of refugees move the global population East: these cataclysmic effects of global warming set the stage for a novel of grim dystopian projection. “Apocalyptic, Armageddonesque, pick your adjective of choice,”⁶³ as the narrator observes. However, the achievement of Robinson’s novel is to adapt what we might expect to be a narrative of catastrophic dystopianism into the most utopian example of flood fictions interrogated so far. Self’s *The Book of Dave* dramatized the shortcomings of static utopianism and those authoritarian political regimes to which the concept of utopia became wedded in the mid-twentieth century; while Hunter’s chimerical

prose transformed the flood event in *The End We Start From* into an incantatory meditation on bodies and embodiment that displaced the human via an ecological inhumanism. The (inter-)subjectivity of the new mother and infant child thus render powerfully visible our inescapable wateriness as one body among many at a time of water crises. Meanwhile, Baxter's action-adventure narrative *Flood* raised this ecological inhumanism to the level of narrative structure and point of view through the unflinching depiction of rising sea levels on a worldwide, totalizing scale: frustrating the reader's investment in individual characters by largely doing away with psychological interiority and replacing literary fiction's traditional preoccupation with the drama between individuals to a larger canvas of global cataclysm that refused to succumb to despair even as the last vestiges of land sunk beneath the waterline.

New York: 2140 builds on Baxter's unemotional presentation of the near-future likelihood of impending deluge to craft a novel that takes seriously Nixon's "representational challeng[e]" of apprehending colliding, incompatible timescales. Moreover, Robinson's novel also works through the opportunities that such a pluvial disaster presents to an emancipatory politics beyond finance capitalism. As Gary K. Wolfe notes, since the publication of Robinson's *Science in the Capital* trilogy (2004–2007), science fiction's "common approach to global warming seems to have shifted from cautionary tales to a general acceptance of drowned or disappeared coastal cities as a default consensus future."⁶⁴ This acceptance is the central premise of *New York: 2140*. Despite the catastrophic destruction of two devastating global warming events, New York's inhabitants endure and adapt: "We knew it would never be the same. . . . But here we are. Life goes on."⁶⁵ Given the precedence of flood literature, we might expect Robinson to have titled his novel *The Drowned City* or *The Sunken Metropolis*,⁶⁶ but the author's decision to circumvent readers' generic expectations of dystopian or apocalyptic SF in favor of a more picaresque narrative adventure is significant in both generic, as well as political, terms. As Robinson has made clear in interview, the perverse readerly pleasure inspired by near- and distant-future apocalyptic narratives privileges the catastrophic at the expense of imagining actual, pragmatic responses to climate change. "[A]t some point," he suggests, "science fiction has to imagine the people who came after, when the situation will be natural, whatever it is."⁶⁷

Robinson's decision to set this story of persistence, and even flourishing, amid the floods in the city of New York thus has a twofold importance. Firstly, New

York is a major coastal metropolis that can stand in as a metonym for other such cities around the world (among them, Honolulu, Washington, D.C., Hong Kong, London, São Paulo, Tokyo, Manila, and Jakarta). Secondly, New York has an ecological significance usually overlooked, which makes it the ideal site for a post-catastrophe revival of the area's former biodiversity. Robinson's research drew extensively on landscape ecologist Eric Sanderson's *Mannahatta: A Natural History of New York City* (2009), in which Sanderson notes how the island of Manhattan once had "more ecological communities per acre than Yellowstone, more native plant species per acre than Yosemite, and more birds than the Great Smoky Mountains National Park."⁶⁸ After the apocalyptic floods, twenty-second-century Manhattan has thus been returned to its pre-modern state as "an archipelago of islands in an estuary,"⁶⁹ recalling its former local name Mannahatta, meaning "Island of Many Hills." As it slides into a new ecological balance between the high-tech retrofitting of buildings to safeguard human habitation and a laissez-faire abandonment of parts of the city into dereliction, the return of Manhattan to its pre-modern island status defamiliarizes the present time of Robinson's readership in the twenty-first century. In obliterating New York's industrial development and returning the Manhattan peninsula to its pre-modern and pre-colonial island landscape (a landscape that would be recognizable to the Indigenous Algonquin), *New York: 2140* reminds its contemporary readers of the contingency of history when viewed from the macro scale of New York's *longue durée* as a site of ecological habitation.

The post-diluvian narrative world of Robinson's near-future metropolis thus comes into focus through the watery patina of an interwoven series of images and motifs. The fluid palimpsest of different historical times at work in *New York: 2140* reveals what Bill Ashcroft has similarly called an "archipelagic consciousness," which he argues is embedded within Caribbean literary and cultural production. Recalling Brathwaite's eddying model of historical time as tidalectics, Ashcroft suggests that the importance of islands within Caribbean studies introduces a "new ontology prompted by the archipelago, one based on movement—on becoming rather than being."⁷⁰ The city's return to its former island status thus not only invokes a revived ecological *longue durée* but also recalls other moments of historical crisis and transformation: such as the 1919 May Day protests, the city under blackout during World War II, and the 1932 Arctic storm that brought polar birds to Manhattan.⁷¹ Despite Wall Street's early exploitation of rapid sea-level rises and the flooding of the world's major coastal

cities (through developing new financial instruments and markets), the novel's action builds to a climax in which the city's cooperatives and ordinary citizens enact the political overthrow of bloated finance capital. The action culminates in riots breaking out on the site of the battle for New York during the revolutionary war in 1776, as the empty high-rise apartments of the city's ultra-rich one percent are surrounded by protesters, and we arrive at Robinson's didactic imperative in a novel saturated in the post-Occupy language of assemblies, the commons, and the ninety-nine percent. In the final instance, then, Robinson's metropolis in *New York: 2140* becomes a site of utopian and democratic political possibility not in spite of, but as a direct consequence of, its transformed post-deluge waterscape.

ISLANDS: BEFORE OR FOR AFTER HUMANKIND

In his essay on "Desert Islands" (1953), Gilles Deleuze offers a mythopoeic approach to the rich metaphorical appeal of islands that recovers their inescapably apocalyptic temporalities. Deleuze differentiates between two types of islands: *continental* and *oceanic*. Continental islands, he suggests, evolved through separation from continents, whereas oceanic islands are "originary, essential islands" that emerged from underwater eruptions.⁷² These latter islands remind us of the ongoing evolutionary force of the sea: the way it forms an oceanic mantle that sits atop the Earth, which reinforces the supreme power of water and its ongoing struggle with land. Humans cannot live on islands, Deleuze continues, "unless they assume that the active struggle between earth and water is over, or at least contained"; that is to say, "[they] can live on an island only by forgetting what an island represents. Islands are either *from before* or *for after* humankind."⁷³ In the new islands depicted in contemporary flood fictions, then, we encounter a stark reminder not only of the increasing likeliness of emerging islands as rising sea levels reclaim low-lying lands but, moreover, of a vision of the geological, meteorological, and evolutionary timescales that dwarf mankind's brief—and illusory—hegemony over nature. As Deleuze suggests, the ancient myth of the flood insists on the island's special significance as the site of re-beginning and of social reproduction: "The ark sets down on the one place on earth that remains uncovered by water, a circular and sacred place, from which the world begins anew."⁷⁴ Dreaming of islands not only provides the possible site for an ideal commonwealth but, moreover, suggests a different temporal and historical

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Focusing our analysis on the function of the island within contemporary flood fictions [. . .] brings into sharp relief the relationship between islands as sites of utopian experimentation and the pre- and post-capitalist timescales that such islands embody.

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order in which the alternative society participates, as an act of apocalyptic rupture and renewal.

Focusing our analysis on the function of the island within contemporary flood fictions thus brings into sharp relief the relationship between islands as sites of utopian experimentation and the pre- and post-capitalist timescales that such islands embody. As I have shown, these flood narratives privilege the different orders of temporality that islands make possible, reminding us of utopia’s heuristic suggestiveness. Twenty-first-century flood fictions not only deal with the immediate question of climate change and its impact upon social and political life but also dramatize a utopian discourse concerning the appropriate scale for political bodies, as well as the temporalities within which their emancipatory politics can unfold, that stretches back to the early island-utopias of Thomas More and Francis Bacon. In this sense, these novels bring Renaissance ideas about the sovereign body into contact with recent phenomenological readings of less-bounded modes of embodiment in which the inescapable wateriness and porousness of the human body offer a revised paradigm for thinking about the island-as-body.

Twenty-first-century flood fictions thus exert a utopian power to draw readers into tackling the difficult topics of climate change and global warming, helping develop an affective affinity with these pressing and increasingly apocalyptic issues in a way that nonfiction discourse cannot. Narratives of cataclysmic flooding are inherently bound up with the dual meaning of apocalypse as destruction and renewal. As H. G. Wells’s Mr Noah Lammock asks God in *All Aboard for Ararat* (1940): “Is it the old world that we want to save and restore, after it has been very properly overwhelmed for its sins and corruption, or are we proposing to make an entirely new world . . . ?”⁷⁵ As the title of Wells’s novel reminds us,

Noah's biblical journey continues to inspire utopian hopes in the face of eco-catastrophic despair. With their generic blend of the realist and the speculative, flood fictions offer a compelling literary form in which to explore such environmental as well as eschatological questions in the twenty-first century.

/ Notes /

¹ Bill McKibben, introduction to *I'm With the Bears: Short Stories from a Damaged Planet*, ed. Mark Martin (London: Verso, 2011), 3–4; original emphasis.

² *Ibid.*, 3.

³ Rob Latham, "American Slipstream," in *The Cambridge Companion to American Science Fiction*, ed. Gerry Canavan and Eric Carl Link (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 101.

⁴ Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Ropley, UK: 0, 2009).

⁵ See Gerry Canavan and Andrew Hageman, introduction to "Global Weirdering," ed. Gerry Canavan and Andrew Hageman, special issue, *Paradoxa* 28 (2016): 7–14.

⁶ See Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 6, 5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸ Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 226.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰ As Marc Shell notes in *Islandology: Geography, Rhetoric, Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 101.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹² Quoted in Nathaniel Mackey, "An Interview with Edward Kamau Brathwaite," *Hambone* 9 (Winter 1991): 44.

¹³ Kamau Brathwaite, "Caribbean Culture: Two Paradigms," in *Missile and Capsule*, ed. Jürgen Martini (Bremen, Germany: Universität Bremen, 1983), 42.

¹⁴ Kamau Brathwaite quoted in Bill Ashcroft, *Utopianism in Postcolonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 2017), 146.

¹⁵ See Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968), 261–64.

¹⁶ Will Self, *The Book of Dave: A Revelation of the Recent Past and the Distant Future* (London: Penguin, 2007), 327.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 302.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 302.

²⁰ Ibid., 304.

²¹ Self, *Book of Dave*, 442. I'm using the term "critical utopia" here as defined by Tom Moylan in *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 10–11.

²² Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 235.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Self, *Book of Dave*, 235.

²⁵ Ibid., 404.

²⁶ Ibid., 404–05.

²⁷ Quoted in Jeevan Vasagar, "Will Self to Become a Professor of Contemporary Thought," *The Guardian*, February 22, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/feb/23/will-self-professor-contemporary-thought>.

²⁸ Self, *Book of Dave*, 406.

²⁹ Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (1980; Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 142.

³⁰ Megan Hunter, *The End We Start From* (London: Picador, 2017), 17; original emphasis.

³¹ Maggie Gee, "Drowned Worlds," *The Guardian*, December 20, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2007/dec/20/flooding.naturaldisasters>.

³² Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (1955; Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 146–47.

³³ Hunter, *The End*, 8.

³⁴ Ibid., 43.

³⁵ Ibid., 49.

³⁶ Ibid., 31.

³⁷ Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 32.

³⁸ Hunter, *The End*, 61; 83.

³⁹ Madeleine Bunting, *Love of Country: A Journey through the Hebrides* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 4.

⁴⁰ Hunter, *The End*, 62.

⁴¹ Ibid., 71; original emphasis.

⁴² Rev. 21.6.

⁴³ Hunter, *The End*, 73; original emphasis.

⁴⁴ Jonathan Huddleston, *Eschatology in Genesis* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 194.

⁴⁵ Hunter, *The End*, 98.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 70.

⁴⁷ Neimanis, *Bodies of Water*, 1.

⁴⁸ Stephen Baxter, *Flood* (London: Gollancz, 2009), 66.

- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 65.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 230.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 315.
- ⁵² Brian W. Aldiss, *Billion Year Spree: The True History of Science Fiction* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973), 293–94.
- ⁵³ Baxter, *Flood*, 303; 405, 434.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., 422.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 423.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 523.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 528.
- ⁵⁸ Adam Roberts, review of *Flood*, by Stephen Baxter, *Strange Horizons*, July 14 2008, <http://strangehorizons.com/non-fiction/reviews/flood-by-stephen-baxter/>.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., 526.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., 531; original emphasis.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., 531.
- ⁶² Fredric Jameson, “Future City,” *New Left Review* 21 (May–June 2003): 76.
- ⁶³ Kim Stanley Robinson, *New York: 2140* (London: Orbit, 2017), 144.
- ⁶⁴ Gary K. Wolfe, “Gary K. Wolfe Reviews Kim Stanley Robinson,” review of *New York: 2140*, by Kim Stanley Robinson, *Locus Magazine*, April 28, 2017, <http://www.locusmag.com/Reviews/2017/04/gary-k-wolfe-reviews-kim-stanley-robinson-3/>.
- ⁶⁵ Robinson, *New York*, 162, 164.
- ⁶⁶ Jake Swearingen makes this point in “Kim Stanley Robinson’s *New York 2140*: To Save the City, We Had to Drown It,” *New York Magazine*, March 27, 2017, <http://nymag.com/selectall/2017/03/kim-stanley-robinsons-new-york-2140-review-a-drowned-nyc.html>.
- ⁶⁷ Quoted in Jake Swearingen, “Kim Stanley Robinson’s *New York 2140*: To Save the City, We Had to Drown It,” *New York Magazine*, March 27, 2017, <http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2017/03/kim-stanley-robinsons-new-york-2140-review-a-drowned-nyc.html>.
- ⁶⁸ Eric W. Sanderson, *Mannahatta: A Natural History of New York City* (New York: Abrams, 2009), 10.
- ⁶⁹ Robinson, *New York*, 440.
- ⁷⁰ Bill Ashcroft, “Archipelago of Dreams: Utopianism in Caribbean Literature,” *Textual Practice* 30, no. 1 (2016): 95.
- ⁷¹ See Robinson, *New York*, 78, 80, 438.
- ⁷² Gilles Deleuze, “Desert Islands,” in *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Michael Taormina (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004), 9.
- ⁷³ Ibid., 9; added emphasis.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 13.
- ⁷⁵ H. G. Wells, *All Aboard for Ararat* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1940), pp. 59–60.