NOVAFCSH
FACULDADE DE CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS E HUMANAS
UNIVERSIDADE NOVA DE LISBOA

How to survive a dystopian world? Thinking about food in Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* and Winterson's *The Stone Gods*

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Dissertação de Mestrado em Literaturas e Culturas Modernas
Especialização em Estudos Ingleses e Norte-Americanos

Agosto 2022

Dissertação apresentada para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Literaturas e Culturas Modernas – Área de Especialização em Estudos Ingleses e Norte-Americanos, realizada sob a orientação científica da Professora Doutora Teresa Botelho.

Only the impossible is worth the effort.

— Jeanette Winterson

AGRADECIMENTOS

A realização desta dissertação contou com o apoio fundamental de várias pessoas, a quem gostaria de agradecer.

Em primeiro lugar, à minha família, particularmente à minha mãe e ao Hugo pela motivação e paciência, por terem sido o meu apoio ao longo de todo o meu percurso académico e, principalmente, por terem acreditado em mim.

A todos os docentes, colegas e amigos que me apoiaram e que fizeram parte desta jornada, principalmente à Inês Vaz, pois sem ela esta dissertação não teria visto a luz do dia.

Por fim e não menos importante, agradecer a disponibilidade, o apoio e o rigor da Professora Teresa Botelho.

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Resumo

Esta dissertação propõe examinar de que forma as representações de hábitos e práticas alimentares configuram as narrativas distópicas que contemplam a crise climática e projetam visões do futuro suscetíveis de se tornarem realidade, particularmente em *The Stone Gods* (2007) de Jeanette Winterson e *The Year of the Flood* (2009) de Margaret Atwood. Além disso, pretende analisar a forma como as referências à alimentação podem expressar um posicionamento de género, particularmente no que toca ao género feminino. Esta análise permite concluir que a comida nas distopias pode representar não apenas desespero, mas também esperança e que se pode estabelecer uma relação entre os hábitos e práticas alimentares e o impulso utópico nestas duas narrativas distópicas.

Palavras-chave: Distopia, Impulso utópico, Ficção Climática, Estudos sobre Alimentação, Estudos sobre Género.

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Abstract

This dissertation proposes to examine how representations of foodways shape dystopian narratives that cover climate crisis and project visions of the future that are likely to come true. Falling under this category and chosen as case studies are Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007) and Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* (2009). More than focusing on the way food shapes the narrative, the analysis will also consider how references to food can express gender positioning, particularly when it comes to the female gender. This analysis allows us to conclude that food in dystopias can represent not only despair but also hope, and that it is possible to establish a relationship between foodways and the utopian impulse in these two dystopian narratives.

Keywords: Dystopia, Utopian impulse, Climate Fiction, Food Studies, Gender Studies.

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Introduction

Freedom is dangerous but it's precious, too. You can't just throw it away or let it slip away. You can't sell it for bread and pottage.

— Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

As the world faces extreme environmental challenges, many contemporary dystopias have become involved with the destruction of the planet and the extinction of human life. Part of this is because the emergent debate on a global scale regarding environmental sustainability has had a direct impact on dystopian fiction. Ecology and dystopia are often connected in literature, as can been seen in Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993), Kim Stanley Robinson's *Science in the Capital* series (2004-2007)[1] and *New York 2140* (2017), Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* (2009), John Lanchester's *The Wall* (2019), Jeff VanderMeer's *Hummingbird Salamander* (2021), and many others[2]. In these dystopian narratives, many disturbing scenarios caused by climate change (namely floods, droughts, and species extinction) parallel what is already happening on the planet. With the rise of climate change narratives, emerged an umbrella term called climate fiction[3].

Within this broad category, which does not exclusively include dystopias, some narratives approach possible future scenarios that are likely to happen in the near future. That brings us to Margaret Atwood's definition of speculative fiction, which, according to her, should not be confused with science fiction, as she explains in *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination* (2011).

> In a public discussion with Ursula Le Guin in the fall of 2010, however, I found that what she means by "science fiction" is speculative fiction about things that really could happen, whereas things that really could not happen she classifies under "fantasy". (6)

[1]The titles that make up the series are: *Forty Signs of Rain* (2004), *Fifty Degrees Below* (2005), and *Sixty Days And Counting* (2007). In 2015, an omnibus edition named *Green Earth* came out.

[2]This literary tendency precedes the rise of the climate change discourse. There is also a long tradition of dystopian narratives that focus on climate that dates back to the 1950s, for example John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) and John Christopher's *The Death of Grass* (1956).

[3]As will be discussed next, climate fiction refers, in a broad sense, to fictional narratives that address climate change. However, this term does not include realistic fiction.

A definition of speculative fiction, as can be noted from the previous citation, is not concerted, since it is so complex. According to Marek Oziewicz,

> speculative fiction in its most recent understanding is a fuzzy set super category that houses all non-mimetic genres—genres that in one way or another depart from imitating consensus reality—from fantasy, science fiction, and horror to their derivatives, hybrids, and cognate genres, including the gothic, dystopia, zombie, vampire and post-apocalyptic fiction, ghost stories, weird fiction, superhero tales, alternate history, steampunk, slipstream, magic realism, retold or fractured fairy tales, and many more. (2)

For the same author, "speculative fiction represents a global reaction of human creative imagination struggling to envision a possible future at the time of a major transition from local to global humanity" (2).

When we think about speculative fiction, we can think of narratives in which climate change is a relevant matter, mirroring current day concerns about this global challenge. However, despite global political efforts to tackle climate change[4], the future of our planet remains uncertain and life as we know it will probably change drastically within the next years. In this sense, basic elements of our daily life will change, as we will face the need to adapt.

When it comes to climate change, there is an undeniable connection to food. On the one hand, climate change affects food production and accessibility; on the other hand, the food we have on the plate contributes to climate change. In the first case, we can have as an example the terrible floods and droughts that are happening across many countries, which affect crops. As for the second one, intensive farming, for example, is responsible for a percentage of the global greenhouse gas emissions. This situation is worsened with the rise of the world's population and the consequent need for more food. However, not all visions of our future are pessimistic, as some optimistic ones still exist, relying on innovation and the advances of technology to tackle future challenges.

[4]The Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement are two significant examples of instruments of international cooperation, which appear described in detail in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's "What Is the Kyoto Protocol?" and "The Paris Agreement". Climate action also takes part in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, with an established global partnership that intends to achieve a better world by 2030.

Within this context, international institutions like the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) are discussing the future of food and agriculture, including possible trends on what we may come to eat in the next 20, 30, or 50 years and what challenges we will have to face and how to cope with them. Regarding this debate, which is in constant evolution, some of the questions that can be addressed are: will some of the food that we are eating today end in a few years? Will our future be meatless? Will we completely switch to artificial food or other substitutes? Can we save the resources we still have, or have we reached the point of no return?

As essential to human life, food and water play a fundamental role in the construction of the dystopian imagined worlds depicted in climate fiction. In these worlds, food can symbolize oddness, by being different from what is conventional, or can be a symbol of the familiar, due to the association with everyday life and the natural order of things. According to Teresa Botelho, in "What Will We Eat? Food as Signifier in the Projection of Futurities in Climate Change Fiction", "foodways have been used as symbolic tools to represent loss of or threat to what is perceived to be the natural order and to pinpoint the challenges to human inventiveness and empathy created by the collapse of environmental sustainability" (33).

Regarding human challenges, usually apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic fictional worlds[5], a consequence of climate collapsing, imply a scarcity of food and water resources and an unequal distribution of these. That often means that vulnerable groups like women[6] will probably have less access to food and water as in real-life. In *Meals to Come: A History of the Future of Food* (2006), Warren Belasco argues that

> conversely, as improvisers, scroungers, and self-sacrificers, women have been managing scarcity for a very long time. Hunger expert Ellen Messer writes that women act as the "'shock absorbers' of the household, who absorb shortfalls in income or consumption, often at some nutritional cost to themselves." (17)

[5]The narrative is apocalyptic if the disaster(s) occur(s) within the story; it is post-apocalyptic if the story is set when the catastrophic event(s) has/have already happened.

[6]According to the World Conservation Union, climate catastrophes kill fourteen times more women and children than men ("IDDR 2012" par.3). Despite that vulnerability, women remain underrepresented in climate action, such as in global climate negotiations.

As both food and gender issues are social constructions, their association with one another is possible to be explored in literature, including in utopian narratives from the 19th century, such as Mary Bradley Lane's *Mizora* (1898). In this novel, "Mizorans", the members of this women-only utopian society, are independent as they reject agriculture, using science to manipulate their environment and eating synthesized food instead. According to Warren Belasco, "though hard to prove—and by no means universal—the gender variable is worth remembering when assessing the direst forecasts discussed here. In addition to being more committed to meat, men have traditionally been less involved in cooking" (17).

Following this line of thought, it is relevant to analyze references to food in literature, not only because they can be a crucial element for examining gender roles, but also for pinpointing different social classes while helping to locate the action in time and space. Food is not only about human survival, but can also symbolize memory and culture, among many other symbolic attributes. According to Charlotte Boyce, in "You Are What You Eat?: Food and the Politics of Identity (1899-2003)", "the semiotics of consumption – what, how and where characters eat – reveal much about individual subjectivities and collective identities" (248). Regarding the analysis of the characters' eating habits, in *Meals to Come: A History of the Future of Food*, Warren Belasco argues that "the "good" characters in these [dystopian] stories — the rebels, the survivors, the rebuilders—tend to prefer natural, healthy foods, with a strong dose of vegetarianism as well. As always, what you eat tells much about who you are" (100).

In this context, this dissertation will look at the how *The Stone Gods* (2007) by Jeanette Winterson and *The Year of the Flood* (2009) from the *MaddAddam* trilogy series (2003-13)[7] by Margaret Atwood are built around the issue of food sustainability. By looking at the various representations of food, there will be an attempt to determine if they express a gender positioning and to pinpoint how exactly they shape dystopian narratives, specifically ones that cover climate crisis and project visions of a future that is likely to come true in the real-world. These two dystopian narratives were chosen since they encourage a relevant debate about the impact of scientific and technological advances in world's sustainability while revealing the significance of imagining utopian

[7]The three novels are *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013).

communities as symbols of resistance and hope within dystopian narratives. Besides that, these narratives were selected as they are two critically acclaimed feminist dystopias[8] written by two different female authors[9], thus it is relevant to examine if a gender positioning[10] related to food representations can be identified in the narratives. The choice to study this theme emerges from an interest in researching contemporary dystopian narratives that have climate change as part of their storyline and to examine the strategies they use to project visions of hope and misery, as well as to explore portrayals of women through food representations narrated by women.

Both Atwood and Winterson are known to correlate power, food, and gender issues. In many of Margaret Atwood's books, of which *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) is probably the most well-known, eating represents power. As specified by Emma Parker, in "You Are What You Eat: The Politics of Eating in the Novels of Margaret Atwood", "eating represents the ineffable. By writing about women and food, Atwood exposes one of the most subtle and subconscious ways in which power operates" (367). This can also be seen in *The Edible Woman* (1969). In this novel, Marian, a young woman refuses to eat after her engagement, associating women's characteristics to food. Suppression of food, in this case, represents a powerless woman who does not want to get married or have children.

However, it is not the only approach taken by the Canadian writer to address power relations. According to Mervyn Nicholson, in "Food and Power: Homer, Carroll, Atwood and Others", "both ceasing to eat and overeating belong to the symbolism of power: in Atwood's *Lady Oracle* the protagonist, when young, overeats as a way of revolting against the power of the authority figure in her life" (40). As Emma Parker argues, "Atwood displays a sensitive awareness of how images of women eating have been suppressed and erased [in literature]" (349). For Parker, "as Atwood illustrates

[8]"Atwood's preoccupations in *Oryx & Crake* are certainly feminist, but at the same time go beyond feminism: "[In the *MaddAddam* novels] Margaret Atwood reflects […] not only on feminist but also on humanist and posthumanist concerns" (Martín 177); "*The Stone Gods* (2007) is a relevant example of feminist critical dystopia" (Jennings 133).

[9]Women's writing or stories that include female protagonists do not automatically convert a text into a feminist one, at the same time that many male writers have written texts that raise significant questions in the field of women and gender studies.

[10]According to Milada Franková, dystopian and utopian writings were frequently associated with the male domain, with the contribution of women authors for the development of the genre only being recognized from the middle of the 20th century (211).

how consumption embodies coded expressions of power which have served to subordinate women, she subtly urges women to reclaim the right to eat and to proudly re-inhabit their own bodies" (367).

Concerning Jeanette Winterson's works, the English writer has been raising critical questions about sexuality, gender, body, and identity, at the same time that references to food are present in her narratives, including in some of her book titles, for example, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) and *Sexing the Cherry* (1989). According to Suzanne Keen, in "'I Cannot Eat My Words but I Do': Food, Body, and Word in the Novels of Jeanette Winterson",

> among the works of contemporary British novelists, Jeanette Winterson's fiction is uniquely pervaded by food: real and symbolic food; food as metaphor and plot device; food as shorthand for characterization and social class; and food as magical link between more and less fantastical worlds. (167)

As stated by Shareena Z. Hamzah-Osbourne, in *Jeanette Winterson's Narratives of Desire*: *Rethinking Fetishism* (2021), "in *Sexing the Cherry*, the use of fruit iconography serves to complicate gender expectations of the social norm. In *The Passion*, the representation of meat demonstrates the power of the patriarchal society" (118). The same author points out that "food in Winterson's texts represent both traditional and unorthodox perspectives, as it endorses and subverts patriarchal ideology through polarized imagery that encodes conventional and contemporary features of femininity and masculinity" (118).

In the case of *The Stone Gods*, the book is divided into four sections: "Planet Blue", "Easter Island", "Post 3-War", and "Wreck City". From one section to another, the characters Billie and Spike change gender. According to Luna Dolezal, in "The Body, Gender, and Biotechnology in Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*", "Winterson continues to explore the fluidity of gender and express her disdain for binary gender norms in *The Stone Gods*" (96). In "Planet Blue", the protagonist Billie Crusoe[11], an employee of the corporation MORE-Futures, who lives in Tech City on an environmentally wrecked planet named Orbus, goes on a space expedition to conquer

[11]A clear reference to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

another planet – Planet Blue. In the space trip, Billie falls in love with a Robo *sapiens* named Spike, a sun-powered machine that is very similar to humans and that relates to the female gender. In "Easter Island", the story is set in the 18th century and the character named Billy, an English sailor from the captain Cook, tells the story of his friendship with a Dutchman called Spikkers, while both are isolated on Easter Island. The third part goes back to the childhood memories of Billie Crusoe and, finally, "Wreck City" tells the story of when Billie took Spike, this time a robot that is composed of only one head, to "Wreck City", which is home to several communities who adopted an alternative way of life. In this dissertation, only "Planet Blue" and "Wreck City" will be considered.

In turn, *The Year of the Flood* details the story of Toby and Ren, two survivors from the flood that annihilates almost everyone on the planet. [12] In this case, the "flood" is waterless, and it refers to the annihilation of the human species resultant from one global pandemic caused by a scientist named Crake, who sought to destroy humanity. The events, which are not in chronological order, are narrated from the perspective of the two female characters. Both characters are two former members of the God's Gardeners community, which will be in focus in the third chapter. For this dissertation, though *The Year of the Flood* is the second part of a trilogy, it will be studied individually as a stand-alone book, in order to provide a more comprehensive analysis. Furthermore, this option was taken due to the fact that this story, voiced by powerless female characters, is, according to Katarína Labudová, "neither a sequel nor a prequel to *Oryx and Crake* but the background story" (136).

Even though the two influential writers of English-language literature are known to use food representations as symbolic tools, and food studies have been gaining relevance in literature in recent years, including in utopian and dystopian studies, as far as it has been possible to determine, the two books have not yet been compared regarding this theme. Nevertheless, there has been some research concerning the *MaddAddam* trilogy series (2003-13) that suggests a link with food studies, which will also be considered as much as possible in this dissertation. For the comparison of the

[12] This reminds us of the biblical figure of Noah from the book of Genesis.

two literary works, concepts examined in utopian and dystopian studies, as well as in food studies will be applied.

This dissertation will be divided into four main chapters. The first chapter will be dedicated to the analysis of theoretical issues, providing a common ground for the study of both books based on the concepts of utopia/dystopia, climate fiction, and food studies. The other chapters will focus on the analysis of the two dystopian narratives, starting from a macro perspective, followed by the analysis of the communities and, finally, to an individual approach, focusing on some of the characters.

The second chapter intends to examine the relationship between humans, technology and the planet, through the analysis of the continuum machine–human–animal and the references to food depicted in both dystopian worlds. The third one will focus on the communities that follow alternative ways of living in both dystopian narratives, namely the God's Gardeners and the alternative communities from Wreck City, exploring the role of food in their construction. Lastly, the fourth chapter will explore some female characters individually (Billie, Pink, Toby, and Ren), as well as their relationship with food.

Chapter I: What is left for us to eat? Remarks on food, utopian studies, and climate fiction

1.1. Introduction

In order to discuss the two dystopian narratives, since there is an ambiguous contrast between what can be considered utopian or dystopian, and what literary works can integrate climate fiction, this first chapter will explore dystopias and climate fiction. The chapter will also address relevant concepts regarding literary representations of food, discussing examples of significant works, specifically in the literature field, but also mentioning film adaptations. This theoretical background, which will be divided into three sections, each accompanied by a summary, constitutes an essential starting point in the analysis of the two critical dystopias.

Firstly, some definitions of utopia and dystopia will be studied, highlighting the ambiguities between the two terms. Furthermore, this chapter will identify the evolution of terminology – from utopian to dystopian thinking and *vice versa* – exploring the concepts of critical utopias and critical dystopias, as well as the term "ustopia" more recently proposed by Margaret Atwood. For each mentioned concept, examples of literary works and relevant authors will be provided.

Secondly, the broad category of climate fiction will be examined, discussing possible definitions, and giving literary examples. As climate fiction integrates not only pessimistic, but also optimistic approaches, this chapter will look at literary works that focus on dystopian imagination and represent apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic worlds, as well as others that address utopian thinking, highlighting the Solarpunk movement. Since many of these literary works focus on the human relationship with "nature", this chapter will identify different views on "nature" – domain or codependence – and on resources – Cornucopian and Neomalthusian approaches.

Thirdly, this chapter will also provide some theoretical background about the significance of food representations in cultural studies and the frequent connection between food studies and gender studies. Then, and considering the previous outcome, the role of foodways – particularly the dichotomy of natural and artificial food within the utopian and dystopian imagination, regarding literary works that cover

environmental concerns and climate disasters – will be explored. Concerning that, dystopian narratives that provide hope internally in the plot and others that can impact readers, hopefully producing change, will be analyzed. Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993) and Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York 2140* (2017) will be used to illustrate the first scenario. Meanwhile, Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* (2009) and *The Water Knife* (2015), Harry Harrison's *Make Room! Make Room!* (1966) and the respective film adaptation – Richard Fleischer's *Soylent Green* (1973) will exemplify the latter.

Finally, the outcomes of this chapter will be briefly summarized as to establish the borders and patterns of concepts such as dystopian/utopian imagination, speculative and climate fiction, and food as a symbolic tool in literature, in what concerns their use for the purposes of this dissertation, with the aim of supporting the study and comparison of the two literary works that will follow.

1.2. Utopia and dystopia: meanings and functions

The term "utopia", which can be translated as a "non-place"[13], was introduced by Thomas More in *Utopia* (1516). In this book, More presents an alternative society on a fictional island called Utopia, revealing his ideas for better ways of organizing a society. Thomas More was influenced by Plato's *Republic* (c. 375 B.C.), in which the author provided his vision of an ideal society/city. According to Fátima Vieira, in "The Concept of Utopia", More's idea of utopia is related to the Renaissance period and "was also the result of a humanist logic, based on the discovery that the human being did not exist simply to accept his or her fate, but to use reason in order to build the future" (4).

Following the course set by More's *Utopia*, the literary strategy of most utopian writing usually implies a journey and a traveler (man or woman), who visits an unknown place, and is guided through it. The traveler is informed of how the other society is organized, in terms of social, economic, political, and religious practices, and then returns to his or her home to deliver the message that alternatives civilizations exist. Again in "The Concept of Utopia", Fátima Vieira stated that "the fact that the utopian

[13]"U" meaning "no" and *topos* meaning "place". Although "utopia" was originally a "non-place", the term quickly merged with the idea of "eutopia", meaning "good place".

traveller departs from a real place, visits an imagined place and goes back home, situates utopia at the boundary between reality and fiction" (8). Despite the fact that utopia does not imply perfection[14], the same author argues that

> utopists depart from the observation of the society they live in, note down the aspects that need to be changed and imagine a place where those problems have been solved. Quite often, the imagined society is the opposite of the real one, a kind of inverted image of it. (8)

By imagining alternative solutions for existing problems, utopia can be seen as an aspiration to attain a better world. As stated by Lyman Tower Sargent, in "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited", "utopianism is the result of the human propensity to dream while both asleep and awake" (4).

Parallel to this, emerged the concept of dystopia[15], meaning "bad place". Dystopias use the same tools as the literary devices of the utopian imagination, though they expect that things will turn out bad (Vieira 17). To Lyman Tower Sargent, in "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited", dystopia, in the sense of "negative utopia" can be define as "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived" (9). Many dystopias have the same meaning as "anti-utopias", by assuming a critique to utopian aspirations. As claimed by Gregory Claeys, in "The Origins of Dystopia: Wells, Huxley and Orwell",

> 'dystopia' is often used interchangeably with 'anti-utopia' or 'negative utopia', by contrast to utopia or 'eutopia' (good place), to describe a fictional portrayal of a society in which evil, or negative social and political developments, have the upper hand, or as a satire of utopian aspirations which attempts to show up their fallacies, or which demonstrate, in B. F. Skinner's words, 'ways of life we must be sure to avoid'. (107)

[14]According to Lyman Tower Sargent, in "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited", "there are in fact very few eutopias that present societies that the author believes to be perfect. Perfection is the exception not the norm" (9).

[15]John Stuart Mill was the first recorded person (1868) to use the term "dystopia", meaning the opposite of utopia and the same as "cacotopia", a term introduced by Jeremy Bentham.

According to Tom Moylan, in *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (2000), an "anti-utopia" text[16] "tends to favor a linear plot (developed in the discrete register) wherein revolts are decisively crushed, with no slippage or surplus of dissent or opposition left in the society" (156). According to Lyman Tower Sargent, authors who provide anti-utopians arguments claim that the only way to achieve and to maintain a utopian society, mostly in the sense of a perfect one, is by using force and violence (24).

Karl Popper was one of the main authors that supported that idea. Directly influenced by the Second World War, in "Utopia and Violence", Popper argued that utopianism leads to violence: "I consider what I call Utopianism an attractive and, indeed, an all too attractive theory, for I also consider it dangerous and pernicious. It is, I believe, self-defeating, and it leads to violence" (5). According to this author, utopianism does not bring happiness[17], and it is malicious, inevitably leading to a life under an oppressive government (7), because "the Utopian engineers must in this way become omniscient as well as omnipotent. They become gods. Thou shall have no other Gods before them" (7). Since all human beings are different and have different aims, this author believed that it was impossible to reach a utopia that shared and desired by all. To Popper, the only way to avoid "changes in our aims seems to be to use violence, which includes propaganda, the suppression of criticism, and the annihilation of all opposition" (7). In line with these ideas, utopia can be equated with totalitarianism.

In the 20th century, dystopian fiction gained relevance, mainly because utopianism was under scrutiny due to its possible applications in political settings. Not only that, but also there was an overall feeling of despair and loss of hope, consequence of the two World Wars, and many other atrocities, such as the Cold, Korean, and Vietnam Wars. Within this context, not only were some dystopias associated with totalitarianism, but also with the possible negative effects of technological and scientific progress[18], "which, instead of impelling humanity to prosper, has sometimes been

[16]In the same way, Fátima Vieira states that "if utopia is about hope, and satirical utopia is about distrust, anti-utopia is clearly about total disbelief" (16).

[17]To Karl Popper, the most important for a rational public policy is to solve human misery and all the concrete evils in society (7).

[18]The notion of progress can often be associated with dark aspects like colonialism and racism.

instrumental in the establishment of dictatorships" (Vieira 18). Some classic dystopian novels examples are Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). But prior to these is E. M. Forster's story "The Machine Stops" (1909), that, according to Tom Moylan, in *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*,

> in his portrayal of a totalizing administration that "mechanizes" every dimension of daily life (from the organization of nature and industry to the standardization of the person), he develops an abstract yet critical account of the new social spacetime of the twentieth century. (111)

These classic dystopian narratives and especially *Brave New World* (1932) are commonly considered anti-utopias, as stated by Chris Ferns in "Utopia, Anti-Utopia and Science Fiction": "*Brave New World* satirizes utopias such as Bellamy's"[19] (65). According to George Woodcock, in "Utopias in Negative", "Wells was the last important Utopian; his *Men Like Gods* appeared in 1922, and only two years later there was published in New York the first of the significant contemporary anti-Utopian novels. It was entitled *We*" (83). The same author argues that

> they [Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell] all suggested that, if this Utopian future came about, it would involve the total elimination of even the idea of freedom, the falsification or destruction of history and the sense of the past, and the reduction of culture to a rudimentary and mechanical function. (90)

In this sense, dystopian imagination was related to political and social critiques of modern society, as stated by Tom Moylan, in *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*,

> the particular targets include the hegemonic system of capital, the oppositional project of the Left (including both the Stalinist state and Left movements in the West), and (in a more philosophical or literary vein) the premises and processes of Utopia itself. (123)

After the Second World War, a dystopian tendency emerged with examples such as Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*

[19]The author refers to Edward Bellamy and the utopian narrative is *Looking Backward* (1888).

(1962), Thomas M. Disch's *The Genocides* (1965), and Frederik Pohl and Cyril Kornbluth's *Rogue Star* (1969). According to Tom Moylan, in *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*, this tendency gave rise to "the 'new maps of hell,' as Kingsley Amis called them" (122), producing some "tales of social nightmares" (168) that "tend to be less driven by extremes of celebration or despair, more open to complexities and ambiguities, and more encouraging of new riffs of personal and political maneuvers" (182). As stated by Moylan, in dystopian narratives,

> as in a great deal, of sf [science fiction], the protagonist (and the reader) is always already in the world in question, unreflectively immersed in the society. But the counter-narrative develops as the "dystopian citizen" moves from apparent contentment into an experience of alienation that is followed by growing awareness and then action that leads to a *climatic* event that does or does not challenge or change the society. Despite the absence of the eutopian plot of the dislocation, education, and return of a visitor, the dystopia generates its own didactic account in the critical encounter that ensues as the citizen confronts, or is confronted by, the contradictions of the society that is present on the very first page. (148)

In the late 1960s and 1970s there was a revival of utopian writing, "clearly linked to the students' movement of May 1968" (Vieira 17) and "put forward by ecologist, feminist and New Left thinkers" (18). This revival incorporates more self-reflexivity and urges readers to continue to seek alternatives, which gave origin to the term "critical utopia", proposed by Tom Moylan. In *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (1986), Tom Moylan explained that the "critical" is used in "the Enlightenment sense of *critique* – that is expressions of oppositional thought, unveiling, debunking, of both the genre itself and the historical situation. As well as "critical" in the nuclear sense of the *critical mass* required to make the necessary explosive reaction" (10).

In "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited", Lyman Tower Sargent defines critical utopia as

> a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as

> better than contemporary society but with difficult problems that the described society may or may not be able to solve and which takes a critical view of the utopian genre. (9)

Some authors that were fundamental to the revival of utopia were Ursula Le Guin, Joanna Russ, Samuel R. Delany, and Marge Piercy. Some of their critical utopia's works are *The Dispossessed* (1974), *The Female Man* (1975), *Triton* (1976), and *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), respectively. In "Exploring the realms of utopia: Science fiction and adventure in *A red sun also rises* and *The giver*", Iolanda Ramos explains that, regarding critical utopias,

> not only do the texts alert one to the possibility that what appears to be a utopia may in fact be a dystopia, but they require an active participation of the reader in his/her awareness of what needed to be changed so as to be made better in his/her own society. (388)

The self-reflexivity that accompanies these critical utopias can be observed in the short story "The ones who walk away from Omelas" (1973) written by Ursula Le Guin. In utopian Omelas, people live happily and joyfully, but with one condition: a small child has to be locked in a cellar, where it sits in his or her own dirt in suffering. Some of the questions we can ask are: how can this society be a utopia and who are the utopians in the story? Are they the ones who understand the good on this necessary circumstance, which promotes the happiness of the greatest number of people, even if they do not agree with it? Or are they the ones who walk away from Omelas, as the title implies, the ones who do not accept the established structure?

Although Le Guin leaves the story open for reflection, it can be stated that the story shows the inevitability of the suffering of some in favor of the happiness of others, revealing existent problems in actual societies, such as inequality, while at the same time also revealing the ambiguity that is associated with utopia. Regarding this last point, Ursula Le Guin shows that it is impossible to imagine a society where everyone is happy since everyone is different and therefore it is not possible for every person to adapt to a single model of happiness.

Regarding utopia's ambiguity, more recently, N. K. Jemisin suggested another answer to Le Guin's short story. In "The Ones Who Stay and Fight" (2018), the utopians of a place called Um-Helat are the ones who do not abandon and actually fight, as the title implies, "so don't walk away. The child needs you, too, don't you see? You also have to fight for her, now that you know she exists, or walking away is meaningless" (par. 38). The American writer even clarifies that Omelas and Um-Helat are not the same place: "this is not Omelas, a tick of a city, fat and happy with its head buried in a tortured child".

This story also brings another possibility that reimagines the utopian society as one where its members are aware of the needs of others and fight against the injustices that are installed because they are responsible for the errors of the system they live in. Nevertheless, both texts reveal the impossibility of creating a perfect society by imagining and directly addressing a skeptic reader: "do you believe? Do you accept the festival, the city, the joy? No? Then let me describe one more thing" (Le Guin, *TWTQ* 229); "What have I forgotten to mention? Oh, it is the thing that will seem most fantastic to you, friend: the variety!" (Jemisin par. 11).

"In the face of economic restructuring, right-wing politics, and a cultural milieu informed by an intensifying fundamentalism and commodification" (Baccolini & Moylan 2), the critical utopian tendency faded and there was again a shift towards dystopian imagination in the 1980s. This included the cyberpunk movement with authors, such as William Gibson and Pat Cadigan: "with Gibson, we move from the modern utopia of the machine to the postmodern dystopia of the electronic matrix" (Cavallaro 144) and movies like Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982).

As reported by Dani Cavallaro, in *Cyberpunk and Cyberculture: Science Fiction and the Work of William Gibson* (2000) "cyberpunk presents visions of the future based on the extensive application of the idea of cyberspace, a term that first appeared in William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer* (1984)" (14). The same author examines cyberpunk, arguing that "in terms of its combination of technoscientific themes and urban subcultures inspired by a punk sensibility, its focus on invasive technologies and its dystopian depiction of a junk-infested world of losers and loonies" (xvii). Despite the revival, this contemporary dystopian fiction incorporated other elements, leaving the door open to hope and belief in humanity, leading to the concept of "critical dystopia",

a commonly discussed term, which is related to the possibility that utopia exists within some dystopias.

The contribution of Lyman Tower Sargent with the essay "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited" was crucial to the development of the concept, suggesting that the dystopias of the 1980s and 1990s have both utopian and dystopian elements. As Fátima Vieira stated, "the writers of dystopias that have been published in the last three decades, in particular, have tried to make it very clear to their readers that there is still a chance for humanity to escape, normally offering a glimmer of hope at the very end of the narrative" (17). Even though hope can be found within the narratives, dystopias warn the readers about future grim possibilities.

As claimed by Raffaella Baccolini, in "The Persistence of Hope in Dystopian Science Fiction", "critical dystopias show that a culture of memory – one that moves from the individual to the collective – is part of a social project of hope" (521). In this sense, utopia as a discourse of hope within dystopias can be found "*outside* the story: only by considering dystopia as a warning can we as readers hope to escape such a dark future" (Baccolini 520) or *inside* de story "by resisting closure, allow readers and protagonists to hope: the ambiguous, open endings maintain the Utopian impulse *within* the work" (520).

The same author argues that

> in fact, by rejecting the traditional subjugation of the individual at the end of the novel, the critical dystopia opens a space of contestation and opposition for those groups — women and other ex-centric subjects whose subject position is not contemplated by hegemonic discourse — for whom subject status has yet to be attained. (520)

That is what happens in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaids' Tale* (1985), where hope and resistance can be found outside the story due to an open and vague end of the novel. A different approach is conducted in Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993) since, in this critical dystopia, in the face of a collapse, some characters gather to form a new and improved society, leaving the door open to find some hope within the story.

More recently, in 2011, Margaret Atwood, in an article for *The Guardian* classified some of her books like *The Handmaids' Tale* (1985), *Oryx and Crake* (2003), and *The Year of the Flood* (2009) as "ustopias". In the article "Margaret Atwood: the road to Ustopia", Atwood explains the meaning of the concept, which she created by combining utopia and dystopia: "the imagined perfect society and its opposite – because, in my view, each contains a latent version of the other" (par. 10), so ustopias are "these not-exactly places, which are anywhere but nowhere, and which are both mappable locations and states of mind" (par. 11).

Within this context, it is important to stress that it is questionable to coin all the 1980s and following dystopian narratives as critical dystopias. However, more important than the classification is to look at the role of these dystopias. According to Gregory Claeys, in *Dystopia: A Natural History* (2017),

> the task of the literary dystopia, then, is to warn us against and educate us about real-life dystopias. It need not furnish a happy ending to do so: pessimism has its place. But it may envision rational and collective solutions where irrationality and panic loom. Entertainment plays a role in this process. But the task at hand is serious. It gains daily in importance. Here, then, is a genre, and a concept, whose hour has come. May it flourish. (501)

1.3. Is this the end of the world? Climate fiction: between hope and misery

In the matter of climate fiction, the borders are thoroughly challenging to trace, as this general category includes a diversity of genres and subcategories, referring, in a broad sense, to fictional narratives that address climate change. As observed previously, these narratives can often be seen as a warning of the possible dangers of climate change. In *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis: A New Perspective on Life in the Anthropocene* (2020), Gregers Andersen argues that "a fiction is not automatically climate fiction if it presents a future in which human beings must persevere under difficult climatic conditions" (5).

According to the same author,

> the critical function of many of the included climate fictions did not just consist in their ability to alarm their readers and viewers of the more and more catastrophic consequences of human conduct; it also consisted in their ability to convert this sensation of alarm into first self-criticism and then a transformation of the self. (141)

Following this idea, climate fiction can lead to social change towards environmental problems, as this broad category often plays a didactic role in society. To Srinivas Aravamudan, in "'The Catachronism of Climate Change",

> climate change is all about politics, and yet the "wicked" problem that it represents puts it beyond politics altogether, in the manner of the prince's nephew Tancredi in Giuseppe di Lampedusa's *The Leopard*, who famously says that in a revolutionary situation "everything needs to change so everything can stay the same". (23)

Climate fiction does not seem so distant from what is happening in the real world as humanity is facing terrible floods, blazing fires, ice caps melting, and other climate disasters that are taking place all over the planet. Perhaps that explains the impulse in recent years to write climate fiction as happens with authors such as Barbara Kingsolver, Margaret Atwood, Paolo Bacigalupi, Lydia Millet, or Kim Stanley Robinson[20]. As claimed by Jim Clarke, in "'Reading Climate Change in J.G. Ballard",

> an earlier phase, running until the end of the twentieth century, saw most cli-fi [climate fiction] emerge from the SF genre, while since the millennium climate change as a literary theme has exploded in popularity, attracting the attention of novelists like Margaret Atwood, Jeanette Winterson, Ian McEwan and Barbara Kingsolver. (8)

In "Climate Fiction in English", Caren Irr argues that "the substance of the revelation in cli-fi is not that our own (liberal, progressive) civilization is doomed by a transition we

[20]Some climate fiction works of the mentioned authors are *Flight Behaviour* (2012), *Maddaddam* trilogy (2003-13*), The Water Knife* (2016), *A Children's Bible* (2020), and *The Ministry for the Future* (2020), respectively.

have yet to experience but ought to anticipate; it is, rather, that we may already inhabit a post-apocalyptic future without even realizing it" (7).

According to Gregers Andersen, in *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis: A New Perspective on Life in the Anthropocene*, the term "cli-fi", coined by American blogger Danny Bloom in 2007, commonly referring to what is called climate fiction or climate change fiction, is complex and it is not well-accepted by all:

> the term [cli-fi] is used today with convincing familiarity by libraries, bookshops, journalists, and teachers at all levels of education as well as inspiring a quickly growing stream of academic articles, monographs, and anthologies (Glass 2013). This story of success is, however, not as coherent as it initially seems. Libraries, bookshops, journalists, and teachers apply the term to fictions varying wildly in form, genre, style, plot, and theme. And research on cli-fi is so young that confusion still rules when it comes to the simple question of what cli-fi stands for, i.e. whether it refers to a phenomenon called "climate fiction" (Trexler 2015, 23; Ghosh 2016, 72; Bracke 2018, 5) or "climate change fiction" (Mehnert 2016, 4; Johns-Putra 2019, 7). (1)

In an interview with David Thorpe, the creator of the cli-fi term described it as "a new genre term for novels, short stories and movies that stands for works of art and storytelling that deal with climate change and global warming concerns" (par. 1). In another interview with Claude Forthomme, Danny (Dan) Bloom clarified the difference between climate fiction and science fiction (sci-fi): "while cli fi is usually filled with the moral implications of climate change issues, sci-fi is usually filled with the intention of exploring the possibilities of science and its relationship to humankind" (par. 45).

Nevertheless, climate fiction's definition presents challenges, as it stands close to science fiction and, even though it may have an impact on raising awareness about environmental concerns, is distant from realistic fiction. Amitav Ghosh, in *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016), argues that

> Science Fiction, Speculative Fiction, Sword and Sorcery Fantasy, and Slipstream Fiction: all of them might be placed under the same large "wonder tale" umbrella.

> This lays out with marvelous clarity some of the ways in which the era of global warming resists science fiction: it is precisely not an imagined 'other' world apart from ours; nor is it located in another 'time' or another 'dimension'. By no means are the events of the era of global warming akin to the stuff of wonder tales; yet it is also true that in relation to what we think of as normal now, they are in many ways uncanny; and they have indeed opened a doorway into what we might call a 'spirit world'—a universe animated by non-human voices. (83)

Following this line of thought, paralleling climate fiction with science fiction may bring the stories closer to fantasy and further away from realism, which may convey the notion that climate change is not an essential or urgent issue to tackle since it is the stuff of fiction. Regarding these ideas, authors like Margaret Atwood prefer to classify their work as "speculative fiction" instead of science fiction. If science fiction is about time travel, teleportation, parallel universes, and other components that are closer to fantasy, speculative fiction is about genetic engineering and, according to Atwood, other elements that already exist in the world and are possible to happen, as the Canadian author described in *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*.

Concerning literary works, even though climate fiction is commonly associated with dystopian narratives, the broad category also engages with utopian narratives. According to Brian Stableford, in "Ecology and Dystopia", ecology, not from a restrictively scientific perspective, was crucial to redefining notions of utopia and dystopia (259). Even though climate fiction stands as a recent category, other precedent narratives have connected ecology and utopian studies.

An early text that represents the bond between ecology with utopian imagination is the utopian rural novel *News from Nowhere* (1890)[21] by William Morris, which describes a society that lives in a pastoral paradise, finding pleasure in nature:

> was not their mistake once more bred of the life of slavery that they had been living? — a life which was always looking upon everything, except mankind,

[21]Though commonly referred to simply as *News from Nowhere*, the novel's full title is *News from Nowhere or An Epoch of Rest, being some chapters from A Utopian Romance* (1890).

> animate and inanimate — 'nature,' as people used to call it—as one thing, and mankind as another. It was natural to people thinking in this way, that they should try to make 'nature' their slave, since they thought 'nature' was something outside them. (201)

As stated by Krishan Kumar, in "News From Nowhere: The Renewal Of Utopia", for William Morris, "nature is to be beautified, cities and dwellings are to be beautified, dress is to be beautified, human bodies are to be beautified" (141). According to the same author,

> *News from Nowhere* renews Utopia form of the literary imagination. Its preaching is qualified by the need to appeal not just to the historical and social sciences but to the senses. For Morris, utopia is as much an aesthetic as a social or political matter. Utopia must be beautiful or it is not utopia. (141)

The connection between utopia and environmental thought can also be observed in Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974), an ambiguously utopian novel, which portrays two different places: Anarres and Urras. The first one is poor and is affected by climate change, but has an egalitarian society, contrasting with Urras, which is an abundant planet, but with an unequal society. In *The Dispossessed* (1974), Le Guin discusses several ideas such as the universal access to food and the notion of community, while raising questions about gender and racial equality, among many others. As stated by Judah Bierman, in "Ambiguity in Utopia: 'The Dispossessed'",

> Le Guin's allegory says that the more ideal place, contrary to the whole utopian record and all man's paradises, need not and should not be built on plenty. Perhaps she would not argue that scarcity is a sufficient or even a necessary condition. But to call a land without green leaf a utopia is surely to cast ambiguity over the term, over the whole idea. (250)

When it comes to ecology and utopian imagination, *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston* (1975) by Ernest Callenbach is a crucial reference, as the book approached utopian thinking by imagining a sustainable society that is aware of the lack of resources, creating the term "ecotopia"[22]. In this novel, recycling and solar energy are

[22]"Eco" refers to the word "ecological".

conventional, organic food is locally grown, marijuana is legal, gas-powered cars are switched to electric ones and people can borrow bicycles that are in public spaces, but most just walk or commute on high-speed magnetic-levitation trains. According to Werner Christie Mathisen, in "The Underestimation of Politics in Green Utopias: The Description of Politics in *Huxley's Island*, Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, and Callenbach's *Ecotopia*", "Ecotopia is an egalitarian society where the enterprises are owned and controlled by the workers. It represents a sharp break with the consumerism, productivism and individualism of present-day U.S. society" (59). To Mathisen, "the governmental structures have been reorganised to relate better to regional ecological systems, in accordance with the bioregionalist understanding of how human beings belong to the part of the earth they inhabit" (59).

Moving on to climate fiction, Kim Stanley Robinson's "Three Californias" trilogy (1984-90)[23] strains the relation between utopian imagination and ecology. Each book of the series explores a different future of Orange County, California, and the last one named *Pacific Edge* (1990) can be seen as a utopian narrative, as it inspires the creation of a sustainable environmental society.

More recently, in order to approach an optimistic drive, Adam Flynn published a manifesto[24] in 2014 as part of Arizona State University's Hieroglyph Project about a movement similar to cyberpunk[25] and steampunk[26], this one called solarpunk[27], which is focused on renewable energies and in seeking a sustainable future. Suzanne Jacobs in an article about Adam Flynn and solarpunk argues that "in short, solarpunk is a reaction to climate change, inequality, and our cultural obsession with dystopian futures. Its followers, mostly on Tumblr and numbering in the thousands, Flynn estimates, want a

[23]The three novels are *The Wild Shore* (1984), *The Gold Coast* (1988), and *Pacific Edge* (1990).
[24]The work was entitled "Solarpunk: Notes toward a manifesto".
[25]In *Cyberpunk and Cyberculture: Science Fiction and the Work of William Gibson* (2000), Dani Cavallaro argues that "cyberpunk couches the ambiguity of cybernetics in explicitly popular terms by associating it with punk" (20).
[26]According to Edward King and Joanna Page, steampunk is "a related subgenre of science fiction inspired by the steampowered machinery of the industrial era" (109).
[27]In "Solarpunk: Notes toward a manifesto", Adam Flynn explained the differences between the other movements: "our futurism is not nihilistic like cyberpunk and it avoids steampunk's potentially quasi-reactionary tendencies" (par. 5).

world where people thrive through energy independence, local resilience, and sound infrastructure" (par. 6).

Although solarpunks want to return balance to the environment, the movement believes in a gritty and high-tech future, as they embrace new technologies. The aesthetic of solarpunks is supposed to be reminiscent of a Hayao Miyazaki' movie with worlds filled with technology. To Sarah Lazarovic, the movie *Black Panther* (2018) can be considered as solarpunk (par. 8). Some literary examples are *Solarpunk: Histórias ecológicas e fantásticas em um mundo sustentável* (2013) edited by Gerson Lodi-Ribeiro, *Sunvault: Stories of Solarpunk and Eco-Speculation* (2017) edited by Phoebe Wagner and Brontë Christopher Wieland and Sarena Ulibarri's *Glass and Gardens: Solarpunk Summers* (2018). In 2019, "A Solarpunk Manifesto" was published, shedding some light on this optimistic project, which can never be dystopian as "Solarpunk is a vision of a future that embodies the best of what humanity can achieve: a post-scarcity, post-hierarchy, post-capitalistic world where humanity sees itself as part of nature and clean energy replaces fossil fuels" (par. 11).

Much like utopian narratives and movements like Solarpunk have ecology as a central theme, dystopian narratives also envision futures that raise alarm about the environment, depicting worst-case scenarios. In the 19th century, the literary imagery frequently represented social division from the idea that bad places were designated to the poor, such as the slums, in contrast with the great spaces entitled to the rich and privileged, showing "the eutopia of the few being built at the expense of the dystopia of the many" (Stableford 263). The technological cities, which flooded the dystopian imagination, were associated with alienation and oppression, contrasting with places that allowed to be in touch with nature and related to the ideas of balance and harmony. Time regulation was considered a form of oppression and was linked with the technological and mechanized societies, while temporal cycles were directly associated with nature. The same occurs with the dichotomy: cleanliness and dirtiness. Even though pollution was associated with life in the cities, according to Brian Stableford, in "Ecology and Dystopia", there was also the idea that "excessive cleanliness was frequently seen as a manifestation of the excessive orderliness of Mechanism, construed in opposition to the beautiful untidiness of Nature" (266).

The post-apocalyptic novel of J. G. Ballard's *The Drowned World* (1962) is known to have had a remarkable influence on climate fiction, despite not being considered as such[28]. According to Jim Clarke, in "'Reading Climate Change in J.G. Ballard", "his nightmare vision of abandoned buildings rising from steamy floodplains transcends literature and is now an iconic signifier of global warming itself" (20). *The Drowned World* (1962) is set in the year 2145 in a chaotic post-apocalyptic London, characterized by tropical temperatures and floods. Jim Clarke argues that this novel "can be read through the prism of historicized anthropogenic climate change as a postcolonial comment on the guilt of industrialized regions like Europe, depicting their experience of the possible climatic fate of low-lying Pacific micro-nations" (14).

Since some of the actual concerns of humankind have to do with climate change, pollution, depletion of natural resources heightened by overpopulation, and extinction of species, it is not surprising that scientific and ecological disasters flourish within the dystopian imagination in the forms of apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic stories. Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), a story about the journey of a father and a son through a burned America, is an example of a post-apocalyptic dystopian novel. Another dystopian narrative is Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Drown Cities* (2012), a sequel to *Ship Breaker* (2010), set in a post-apocalyptic universe, where the melting of ice caps flooded cities in a collapsed America. In contrast with this catastrophic scenario, resistance and hope can be found within other dystopian narratives concerning climate fiction, such as Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York 2140* (2017), which will be discussed further on.

Many of the fictional narratives that integrate climate fiction compelled the reader to think about "nature". As there are many nature's representations and each one carries a succession of cultural values, some questions that can be addressed are: is nature an integral part of the human or external to it? Does nature have a purpose? Should nature serve human interests and ambitions? What can affect human-nature relationship? Even though there is no conclusive answer to any of these, climate fiction evokes some of them, generally accepting the idea that human beings are codependent on nature – nature is affected by human beings and human beings are affected by

[28]There is no mention that the climate catastrophe within the story is caused by human action, so it cannot be defined as climate fiction as it currently stands.

nature. This view may contrast with Francis Bacon's idea that man should conquer and tame nature, in order to gain knowledge. Regarding this idea, Brian Vickers in "Francis Bacon, Feminist Historiography, and the Dominion of Nature" clarifies that

> in the context of Bacon's natural philosophy mankind's dominion over nature had none of the destructive connotations ascribed to it by the ressentiment of a "feminist historiography of science." It carried the promise of restoring God's original blessing on Adam and Eve, undoing their original sin, and offering a significant amelioration of humanity's life on earth. Science has certainly achieved some of his goals, if at times with unexpectedly negative consequences which neither he nor anyone else predicted, and for which he cannot be blamed. (141)

Thus, narratives pointing towards the importance of sustainability and balance with nature continue to flourish. This happens mainly due to the blooming of a "green conscience"[29], in which people question animal testing and eating, the use of fossil fuels, and are aware of the importance of public policies on this topic, as well as the shortage of resources that humanity as a whole is recurrently faces. Regarding the idea that the world is entirely connected, Ursula K. Heise concludes in *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (2008), a book that examines the environmental thought of the global and local commitment, that all the works she discussed

> implicitly or explicitly, highlight the imbrication of local places, ecologies, and cultural practices in global networks that reconfigure them according to a logic that recent theories of globalization label "deterritorialization." But unlike many more explicitly "environmentalist" texts written in the United States, these works take an ambivalent stance toward this process, suggesting that it might sometimes need to be resisted by some form of "reterritorialization," but that it

[29]This "green conscience" resulted in the blooming of the interdisciplinary field known as Ecocriticism, which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. As explained by Hannes Bergthaller in "Introduction: Ecocriticism and Environmental History", "ecocritics seek to understand not only how particular texts represent the interactions between humans and their ecological environment, but also how such representations reflect and shape real-world environmental practices" (6). For more information on this subject see Lawrence Buell's "Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends" (2011).

> might in other cases become the basis for cosmopolitan forms of awareness and community, both ecologically and culturally. (210)

Moreover, in what concerns resources, two distinct views regarding their scarcity can be highlighted, a pessimistic one – Neomalthusian and an optimistic one – Cornucopian. According to Nils Petter Gleditsch, in "Environmental Conflict: Neomalthusians vs. Cornucopians", "the Neomalthusian (or resource-pessimistic) approach focuses on adverse environmental trends with pessimistic forecasts for the future of conflict. The essence of this school of thought is that many armed conflicts occur over scarce resources" (478). In this sense, it foresees that water conflicts, for example, will occur regularly. To the same author, concerning food production and population growth,

> the simple Malthusian model of population growth (a geometric progression) overtaking food production (an arithmetic progression) is no longer widely believed. But there is still widespread concern that the growth of world population will bring mankind to a total level of consumption of food that cannot be sustained by global production. (479)

In turn, as Gleditsch explained, the Cornucopian (or resource-optimistic) approach considers that resource scarcity is not necessarily negative, as Neomalthusians think, because it leads to the development of technology and innovation (482), as so it is set on the belief that humanity will find a way to overcome problems related to resources shortage. According to this approach, which includes capitalist ideals, as it supports progress, humans are in control of the planet and the world will provide everything they need.

However, as seen previously, the shortage of resources will continue to affect the entire earth and life itself may become unsustainable due to the climate change impact. Thus, the questions arise of "what will humans do to reverse the situation?" and "what place does climate fiction have in (re)imagining the future?".

1.4. Bringing food to the center of the dystopian worlds in climate fiction

Before discussing the role of foodways in climate fiction, it is essential to recognize that this is not a simple concept. Not only is food a vital need for human survival, but it is also a cultural construct. Ingesting bugs in the occidental culture is not the same as eating fruits since the first one seems odder than the second. Foodways establish cultural and social protocols. Take the example of "kosher" food, which aims to establish rules about food production and preparation that define what is suitable for Jewish consumption. According to these rules, Jews should not, for example, eat pork or shellfish. In “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption”, Roland Barthes defines food as “a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior” that “serves as a sign among the members of a given society” (24). Nevertheless, Anne Murcott argues, in “‘Scarcity in Abundance: Food and Non-Food”, that food is “both socially constructed and subject to change” (312), which means that food can gain different meanings.

In the case of the correlation between food and cultural studies, there has been a rise of authors who write about food and different fields of study exploring it in the last decades. In “Why Food? Why Culture? Why Now? Introduction to the Third Edition” of *Food and Culture: A Reader* (2013) Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik suggested three possible reasons for the increased interest in food.

> Without a doubt, feminism and women’s studies have contributed to the growth of food studies by legitimizing a domain of human behavior so heavily associated with women over time and across cultures. A second reason is the politicization of food and the expansion of social movements linked to food. A third reason is that once food became a legitimate topic of scholarly research, its novelty, richness, and scope provided limitless grist for the scholarly mill, as food links body and soul, self and other, the personal and the political, the material and the symbolic. (2)

As one relevant topic when studying food representations is equating food and gender studies, Pierre Bourdieu, in “Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste”, stated that

> the practical philosophy of the male body as a sort of power, big and strong, with enormous, imperative, brutal needs, which is asserted in every male posture, especially when eating, is also the principle of the division of foods between the sexes, a division which both sexes recognize in their practices and their language. It behooves a man to drink and eat more, and to eat and drink stronger things. (35)

Bourdieu associates the small portions and raw vegetables with women, contrasting with men who are the "natural meateaters", as meat is the nourishing food *par excellence* (35). Not only can women be associated with particular food imaginary, but their bodies can also be related to food, as they are not only consumers but also producers. Caroline Walker Bynum argues that in Medieval culture, "a favorite motif in art was the lactating Virgin" (257), so "woman was food because breast milk was the human being's first nourishment—the one food essential for survival" (257).

Regarding literature, foodways can carry several meanings, such as social inequality, underlining power relations from uneven access to food, or nationality and cultural memory, usually associated with nostalgia, like in the case of migration stories. Both cases are full of literary examples. In the first case, one can consider Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838), in which Oliver, a poor and hungry boy, who is resident in a workhouse, is punished by asking for more food (with the well-known "please, sir, I want some more"), while his master is a fat healthy man. In the second case, and considering more contemporary examples, one can look at the American author Diana Abu-Jaber, who writes about Arab-American identity, using food as a cultural symbol, like in *Crescent* (2003). In this novel full of references on Middle Eastern food, Sirine, a chef in a Lebanese restaurant in America, who lives with her Iraqi-immigrant uncle, falls in love with an Arabic literature professor.

In *Meals to Come: A history of the future of food*, Warren Belasco identifies and studies references to food in several utopian and dystopian narratives such as *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899), *Make Room! Make Room!* (1966), *Ecotopia* (1975), *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) and others. Belasco states that "in the twentieth century depictions of futurist foods turned negative, fostering suspicion of the modern and nostalgia for the premodern" (100). As reported by him,

> in the softer, cornucopian dystopias, where abundance is produced at the cost of freedom, the diet is often synthetic, foul-tasting, and almost compulsory—a culinary symbol of the worst that humans can do to each other and also perhaps a recapitulation of children's distaste for meals imposed by dictatorial adults. (100)

Even though is common to think about natural food in utopian imagination, not all futuristic food representations are portrayed as negative. In techno-utopias[30], artificial food can be seen as a synonym for independence as technology creates abundance and eradicates chaos and scarcity. That is the case with Mary Bradley Lane's *Mizora* (1898). In this 19th utopian novel, the ideal society is formed by only women who do not have to go through scarcity as they produce food via chemical production. Thus, cooking is the responsibility of skillful chemists. In this case, this society uses science to manipulate the environment, whereas they abandon agriculture. Nevertheless, despite the 19th century's optimism around technology, the tendency sifted, and the eulogy of fast-paced technological advances gave place to "back to nature" tributes.

Following this line of thought, utopian fiction discarded technology and privileged the idea of having a balance with nature, which includes eating natural food. In Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975), food waste is converted into organic fertilizer, and the ideal society cultivates food with no pesticides or herbicides. More recently, solarpunk fiction gives other contributions, such as in D.K. Mok's "The Spider and the Stars", which revealed the importance of invertebrate organisms like spiders for sustaining human life. In this short story, meat is a luxury, so people eat other substitutes like insect protein, such as corn chips made of cricket flour, or are vegetarian, as Del Koumi, the main character, turns out to be due to her friendship with the insects.

In respect to critical dystopias, there are different approaches and strategies to solve similar problems — some locate hope inside the story, through characters that find alternatives and manage to resist, and, in other cases, with human failure, faith can

[30]Techno-utopias or technological utopianism correlates technology and utopian thinking. According to Daniel Walden, in "The Two Faces of Technological Utopianism: Edward Bellamy And Horatio Alger, Jr", "for the most part, the technological utopians were people with social consciences who were driven by their zeal to reform their world, to devise what they saw as a heaven on earth, a utopia, through technology" (24).

be situated outside the narratives, as these dystopias will hopefully encourage readers to change their world. That applies to dystopian narratives that cover climate crises. In many of these dystopias, food and water are insufficient due to climate change, and as a result, dietarian restrictions have to be taken. Some narratives include characters that find ways to get "back to nature" or discover hope externally, since the unfamiliar and bizarre food references make the readers fearful about their own future.

When hope exists within the narrative, food can be scarce, but usually, there are still some people who are able to cultivate their food and sometimes even form communities and live cooperatively, sharing resources as a way of survival. That idea is present in Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993). In this dystopia, after her community is attacked, the main character Lauren gathers people to create a new community/society[31] and to share what she calls the Earthseed religion, following the idea that the "seed" of life can be relocated and they can build together a better world. Because water is very rare and people have to buy it in water stations, they have to refill in a group or could be robbed or even killed in the process of having water. Being in a group seems to be a necessary condition to survive in this fictional world.

Similarly, in Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York 2140* (2017), residents of the same skyscraper — the MetLife Tower — have formed a community in order to survive in a flooded New York, where food is an issue. In this climate fiction novel, one can say that hope is founded within the story, as the characters have managed to find inventive ways to tackle their problems, such as creating a farm on the top floors and cultivating tomatoes, beans, and many other vegetables. According to Teresa Botelho, in "'What Will We Eat?: Food as Signifier in the Projection of Futurities in Climate Change Fiction",

> Kim Stanley Robinson's text harbours a kind of paradoxical ambiguity, somewhere between a chilling assessment of risk, in the perception that, as Gerry Canavan points out "climate change is in an intensifying feedback loop that we cannot really interrupt and cannot reverse, but can only contain, delay or

[31]Even though these communities serve as symbols of resistance within the dystopias, they can lead to a certain lack of individuality in favor of the collective, since sometimes to survive means you have to be group dependent.

> prepare for" (2017), and the proposition that humanity will "get a grip" and will not let itself be reduced to the abject condition of total inhumanity. (44-5)

When it comes to dystopian narratives that portray loss and despair and in which hope can only be encountered outside the story, as these narratives can allow the readers to reflect on a near catastrophic possibility, in many cases, besides abandoning cornucopian ideals, frequent themes include social division and inequalities, as biotechnology stay in the hands of the powerful, as in Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* (2009). In this novel, which portrays a post-oil world, big corporations control food production and force farmers to buy genetically modified seeds, as well as bioterrorism arises to produce markets for the products of these profit-driven companies. Therefore, there are many disasters, such as plagues and deadly illnesses.

In response to overpopulation problems, in *Meals to Come: A history of the future of food* Warren Belasco recognizes that there are dystopias "that manage to feed most people, maintain order, and even provide some comfort, at least for the elites, but at a terrible cost to human freedom" (128). That is the case with Harry Harrison's *Make Room! Make Room!* (1966). In this dystopian novel, people live in misery with very few natural resources in an extremely overpopulated world. The poor eat almost exclusively oatmeal crackers and very occasionally "soylent", which is a combination of soybeans and lentils. Despite these precarious constraints, the wealthy and corrupt people can have other perks, such as access to meat in the "black market".

In the movie adaptation – *Soylent Green* (1973), the product "soylent green" advertised as being made from ocean plankton, is produced with the remains of the deceased, as few resources remain available in this fictional world. Besides cannibalism, *Soylent Green* displays social division, which is depicted through food, such as the "real" steak, an exceptional and rare protein sold to the rich man's concubine. This reality contrasts with the poor, who must wait in an endless line to get some "soylent" that can be sold out. According to Warren Belasco, "the 1973 film adaptation of Harrison's book suggests that Soylent Green consists of recycled humans – a conflation of the utopian dreams of efficiency and the dystopian dread of cannibalism" (134). Concerning this dystopia, by scaring the reader, placed in the face of a catastrophic Malthusian scenario, one can say that hope is outside the narrative if the story gives place to change.

Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife* (2015) also reveals social inequality by exposing uneven access to water. In this dystopian novel set in the near future, rising heat and extreme water shortages caused by climate change have affected the American Southwest, where water companies are fiercely competitive, and water is sometimes "cut off" from communities. However, privileged people called the "fivers"[32] have exclusive access to recycled water from the Colorado River, as they live in Taiyang Archology, which is a high-tech self-sufficient building: "as the doors closed, she caught a last glimpse of all the wealthy fivers, the privileged of Taiyang[33], all of them watching the news, all of them made small in the face of California's power" (Bacigalupi 188). Therefore, privileged people stay comfortable in the Archology, a refuge from the heat, whereas the poor live in miserable conditions and suffer from the lack of water.

1.5. Conclusion

The concepts of utopia and dystopia have assumed several meanings and functions over time. According to Tom Moylan, in *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia,* "every dystopian narrative engages in an aesthetic/epistemological encounter with its historical conjuncture" (181). Due to violence and a general pessimism towards the 20th century, most dystopias originally worked as "anti-utopias", serving as a critique or a satire to the utopian aspirations, as it can be said that they can turn into tyranny by providing a single model. In the 1960s and 1970s, utopian imagination was restored with critical elements, such as self-reflexivity, giving place to "critical utopias".

From the 1980s onward, the borders between utopias and dystopias faded, and "critical dystopias" rediscovered hope within or outside the stories (inside the text and in the relationship between the text and the reader, respectively). However, when reflecting on the political and social events of the 21st century, Warren Belasco, in *Meals to Come: A History of the Future of Food* posited: "Would H. G. Wells be surprised? Probably not, for he had predicted such things. Wells would also be more than a bit

[32]They are named "fivers" as they have an address with five digits.
[33]Taiyang is an Archology located in Phoenix.

disappointed, for dystopian fiction apparently had failed in its primary purpose—to invent a better future by imagining a worse one" (146).

In a time when climate change is brutally affecting the planet, and governments, organizations, and citizens are looking for better and alternative ways to live in harmony with the Earth, narratives that cover climate crisis can empower readers to envision a better society, while also warning about climate change effects. Despite the dystopian impulse and the worst-case scenarios depicted in many works of climate fiction, there is also a tight connection with utopian thinking, including the Solarpunk movement, which is focused on renewable energies and in pursuing a sustainable future. As stated by Gregers Andersen, in *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis: A New Perspective on Life in the Anthropocene*, "the fictions presented their readers and viewers to various utopian templates that they could integrate in the process of self- and social transformation" (142).

In general, and as an umbrella term, as climate fiction comprises blending genres and varying themes, this category can have a didactic function, which may lead to social change regarding environmental sustainability, suggesting alternative ways of organizing life and promoting awareness for the importance of fighting climate change and protecting the planet. Regarding the close connection with real-world events, there is no unanimity in considering climate fiction in parallel with science fiction, as this last one is usually associated with fantasy elements, such as time travel. In this sense, one can say that, regarding didactic purposes, it is more beneficial to equate climate fiction with the broad category of speculative fiction, which exposes fictional, but probable future scenarios, according to the definition proposed by Margaret Atwood.

Following this line of thought, as food shortage is a real-world problem, it is one key element when considering dystopian worlds that depict climate crises, as usually, the narratives envision scenarios of scarcity due to the end of resources, such as energy or water, or to overpopulation. Within this context, foodways can represent both hope and despair. In some cases, the lack of food and water can be one of the main reasons for the characters to find inventive alternatives and even form communities, which is a form of resistance, giving place to a kind of utopian impulse within the dystopia, like in *New York 2140*.

In other cases, even projecting futures where food and water are almost inexistent, their access is uneven, or the food substitutes are uncharacteristic and unethical, hope can be encountered outside the story since some dystopian narratives alarm the readers and encourage them to change, such as happens in *Make Room! Make Room!*. Regarding food representations, hope can be on the side of preserving nature or on the side of having faith in technology, as this last one is not necessarily bad if evenly distributed. However, dystopias usually portray a dark side of technology, such as in *The Water Knife*. Within this context, the following chapters will analyze the future projections on food and their symbolism in the dystopian fictional worlds of Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* and Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*. The next chapter will examine the relationship between technology and food in these two literary works.

Chapter II: Food and technology in an upcoming posthuman world

2.1. Introduction

Both *The Stone Gods* and *The Year of the Flood* depict humanity as responsible for the world collapse, namely ecological degradation, which involves resource scarcity, implying myths of apocalypse or end-of-the-world. When it comes to these myths, biblical references are common[34], and usually imply a confrontation with the divine; for instance, the allusion to the "flood"[35] in *The Year of The Flood* can point toward the biblical passage of when God wanted to destroy the world and punish the sinful humanity with a devastating flood in the "Book of Genesis", alerting, however, Noah to build an ark.

In "'A Repeating World': Redeeming the Past and Future in the Utopian Dystopia of Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*", Hope Jennings argues that "the myth of apocalypse is a fantasy of horror projected onto the world, imagining a violent ending in the belief that this might clear the way for a new beginning" (133). Within this context, restarting can be seen as promising. However, as *The Stone Gods* is built like a puzzle with multiple stories/sections in different spaces and periods that have in common the repetition of the same failings, Winterson's narrative reveals that humanity is constantly making the same mistakes. Hatice Yurttas in "Myths of the End and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*" argues that "although Winterson is not hopeful about the potential for endings to produce new beginnings, as the novel argues that the end is only the beginning of repetition of the previous destructive cycle, I do not think that she deconstructs the myth of apocalypse as Hope Jennings suggests"[36] (90).

Yurttas refers to the misconception of placing nature and culture as antagonistic, which she claims happens in *The Year of the Flood* since the novel is based on the conviction that humanity has much power over nature, which she thinks is not

[34]In the *New Testament*, the final book of the Christian Bible is called the "Book of Revelation" or "Apocalypse of John".

[35]"Waterless flood" is how the God's Gardeners community refers to the plague that they believed would annihilate human life. It coincides with the plague created by a scientist named Glenn (Crake).

[36]Hope Jennings suggests that "in its deconstruction of apocalyptic myths, *The Stone Gods* demands a closer examination of the ways in which our beliefs about the End are inextricably tied to how we fantasize our beginnings, or vice versa, since the discovery of a new world, "Planet Blue," is an event located in our distant past rather than our future; the new planet is our planet, Earth" (134).

necessarily true. The author argues that "the naïve belief that if human beings do not interfere with the ecological balance of the earth, this perfect blissful state will continue forever ignores the fact that the Earth and the universe has always been changing" (89). Despite this valid argument, one can counterargue that humans broadly have contributed to the planet's environmental degradation.

Thus, where can one find food in a devastated world? Can technology and innovation be the solution? And, if there is a way to survive through technology, would anything be lost in the process? Concerning the two fictional worlds, technology enables the creation of conveniences and artificial food, such as meat produced in labs. In *The Stone Gods*, humans use robots to support their needs, freeing themselves from daily tasks like cooking. In regard to *The Year of the Flood*, the dystopian narrative includes references[37] to hybrid animals, genetically modified organisms, and unethical franchises.

Given this context, the following sections will deal with food as a problematic bridge between the human relationship with technology and nature. In order to do so, artificial and natural food[38] references will be analyzed to examine their function within the narratives, considering the context of dystopian stories that propose posthuman[39] scenarios. This methodology will be applied first in *The Stone Gods* by looking at the connection of humans with nature and technology through foodways, and will highlight the Robo *sapiens*, an advanced android that knows about cooking and natural food, and, in the subsequent section, by examining the use of biotechnology to fight hunger and diseases, exploring the creation of synthetic food, hybrid animals, and food franchises in *The Year of the Flood*.

[37]Many references to foodways are memories told by the survivors.

[38]In this sense, artificial food will have the same meaning as synthetic. Natural food will include agriculture and natural processes that exclude biotechnology.

[39]According to Jay David Bolter, "posthumanist theory claims to offer a new epistemology that is not anthropocentric and therefore not centered in Cartesian dualism. It seeks to undermine the traditional boundaries between the human, the animal, and the technological" (1).

2.2. Robo sapiens: food, ethics and (de)humanization in The Stone Gods

The Stone Gods is a postmodern work, as it is constituted of four sections, and uses self-reflexivity with the intent of revealing that history repeats itself and humans make the same mistakes, setting the story in different time periods and locations and having the characters repeat their wrongs. In this sense, in the narrative, technology is directly associated with oppression:

> another war to end all wars. Freedom.
>
> And then…
>
> Identity cards. Tracking devices in vehicles. Compulsory fingerprint database […]. Curfew Zones. Routine military patrols in 'areas of tension' […]. Chip implants for prisoners on probation and for young offenders. (156)

The book exposes an excessively controlled society, "checked and recorded by the satellite system that watches us more closely that God ever did" (31).

Regarding the sections, "Planet Blue" takes place in a past when humanity has environmentally destroyed their own Planet – Orbus – and is trying to set life in another – Planet Blue – but ends up leading it into an ice era. "Easter Island" is set in the 18th century, and it recounts the destruction of many Mo'ai statues, the Easter Island's monolitic human figures. "Post-3 War" is situated after World War III in Tech City, and finally, "Wreck City" is also set in the future, after the war, but takes place in a city of the same name. For the purposes of this dissertation, only two sections: the first – "Planet Blue" – and the last – "Wreck City" – will be analyzed, as they both contain more food references than the other two[40].

Although the narrative differs in each section, some characters face similar events and even share the same names. Regarding that, in "Objective Violence, Spaceman Economies, and the Transnational Corporation: Jeanette Winterson's *The* Stone Gods", Marc Diefenderfer argues that "the circular, repetitive quality of human destructiveness in *The Stone Gods* is underscored by the fact that all three stories[41]

[40]However, whenever necessary, references from "Post-3 War" will be used to provide some contextualization.

[41]The author considers the sections "Post-3 War" and "Wreck City" as part of the same story.

feature, in some form, the main characters Billie Crusoe and her robot companion Spike" (531). Given that, and as a way to provide some context, the sections will be clearly referenced throughout the study.

Concerning the initial section, entitled "Planet Blue", it is set in a high-tech world where people can be genetically "Fixed", which means they can be modified to look a certain age. That is one of the reasons why this era is known as "The DNA Dynasty". However, despite such technological advances, Planet Orbus is environmentally degraded, and people have to wear masks because of air pollution and water is an expensive resource, as it is limited. Few resources remain available for the ever-growing population: "we have limited natural resources at our disposal, and a rising population that is by no means in agreement as to how our world as a whole should share out these remaining resources" (5). Therefore, life on Planet Orbus is challenging as it "has collapsing ice-caps, encroaching desert, no virgin forest and no eco-species left" (68).

The idea to solve the problem of Orbus' deterioration is thus to occupy another planet – Planet Blue, since it is woody and has oxygen, water, and food, as well as mammals, insects, fishes, and many other specimens, bringing it close to what Planet Orbus would have been like in the beginning, before human activity.

> There are leaves that have grown as big as cities, and there are birds that nest in cockleshells. On the white sand there are long-toed clawprints deep as nightmares, and there are rock pools in hand-hollows finned by invisible fish.
>
> Trees like skyscrapers, and housing as many. Grass the height of hedges, nuts the swell of pumpkins. Sardines that would take two men to land them. Eggs, pale-blue-shelled, each the weight of a breaking universe.
>
> And, underneath, mushrooms soft and small as a mouse ear. (3)

Planet Blue also has dinosaurs that are a threat to human life, resembling the beginning of life on Planet Earth. For the new planet occupation, a crew, whose member include Billie, Spike, Pink, captain Handsome, and other, is sent on a space trip aboard the spaceship *Revolution.* During the course of the trip, the crew members engage in storytelling, while sharing a meal, as Billie as a narrator points out:

> it was suppertime. The crew sat round a long table facing plates the size of satellite dishes, spooning meat and vegetables from enormous steaming pans and helping each other to wine from a barrel. They were telling stories, the way all shipcrew tell stories. (61)

Here, it is important to note that such an unfamiliar scene set aboard a spaceship ends up becoming very familiar through the imagery of sharing a meal. There is an attempt at keeping up that which is natural/familiar, as the crew reproduces what are the common practices of eating in society. The rituals of eating are familiar for the readers, even though everything else – space travels and ship crews with android members – is unfamiliar. The familiarity of food notions is furthered by references to wine that comes "from the barrel" and food that is in "steaming pans".

Further considering this notion of what is familiar, it is relevant to point out that it is the alien planet, Planet Blue, that will more easily resonate with readers, due to its abundant resources, which greatly contrasts the living situation in Orbus. In this dystopian imagined world, there is a lack of natural resources, and synthetic food is broadly accepted and sometimes even more desired than natural food, which is considered an old practice, as the main character, Billie, claims: "a world that clones its meat in the lab and engineers its crops underground thinks natural food is dirty and diseased" (9). This distance in Planet Orbus between humanity and pastoral life can also be observed in the episode in which a man in Peccadillo[42] does not know what a goat is (25), however, Billie is familiar with the animal.

Thus, in this fictional world, despite the big picture scenario that privileges synthetic food, natural food still exists. Billie, who will be analyzed more thoroughly in the fourth chapter, has a farm with non-genetic animals and non-engineered crops, that is, nevertheless, rare and considered to be old-fashioned, as Billie herself says that: "in the middle of this hi-tech, hi-stress, hi-mess life, F is for Farm. My farm. Twenty hectares of pastureland and arable, with a stream running through the middle like a memory" (13).

[42]Billie describes "Peccadillo" as "a perverts' bar" (22). She goes there to find and talk to Pink's husband, and, while she is trying to find him, a man there asks her what she wants and who she is.

In this way, contrasting the references to familiar foodways in the spaceship, and the traditional Billie's farm, the general society frequently favors synthesized food, as happens with the character Manfred, Billie's boss in "Planet Blue", since he believes that it ended "centuries of harmful farming practices" (37), just like the character Pink, who believes that "lab-meat is cruelty-free" (86). As natural food is not very common in Orbus, many humans like Pink no longer know how to do mundane things such as fishing, planting potatoes, building a fire, and cooking (78-9), relying on pre-cooked meals and robots to do these chores. This can be observed through a dialogue between Pink and Spike in the spaceship, in "Planet Blue":

> You rely on technicians and robots. It is not thought that anyone in the Central Power could survive unassisted on Planet Blue. Pink, do you know how to plant potatoes?'
>
> 'You mean like chips?'
>
> 'Or how to cook them?'
>
> 'Sure I do - the bag goes in the microwave.'
>
> 'Can you sew? Can you plane a length of timber? Can you build a fire? Can you fish? Can you row a boat? Could you design and build a simple pulley?'
>
> 'They'll have figured all that out for us,' said Pink.
>
> 'They ... ' I said. (78-9)

According to this conversation, and assuming that the majority of people in this fictional world think like Pink, this probably implies that machines can also be responsible not only for food preparation but also for food production. Since food is handled by Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) beings, as humans have released themselves of tasks involving food[43](production, cooking and cleaning the dishes) it is important to understand how this narrative depicts A.I. when exploring foodways, since the natural, in this case, is in the

[43]That happens at least for the people who live in the state of Central Power. There are other two: Eastern Caliphate and the SinoMosco Pact, but there is not much information about them. Regarding the Caliphate, people from there know how to breed animals for food, as Pink claims (86). The corporation MORE from Central Power intended to recruit farmers from the Caliphate to practice sustainable mixed farming to feed a low-impact village in the spice-liner called Mayflower in the new planet (73-4). All the previous references are from "Planet Blue".

hand of the unnatural/artificial. Therefore, this section will take a closer look at A.I. in the dystopia.

Besides lab meat and genetic engineering, Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* presents other technological advances like robots that are designed to help humans in their daily lives, such as TourBots and Kitchenhands. From all the existing robots, the most advanced one is the Robo *sapiens,* Spike, which is actually an android, closer to humans in the sense of appearance and function. Nevertheless, it is still a machine: "the great thing about robots, even these Robo *sapiens*, is that nobody feels sorry for them. They are only machines" (6) and its purpose is to collect data and provide support for all human needs.

To help with the mission of inhabiting a new planet, Spike is sent to space to collect data. After the mission, Spike should have been dismantled, however, that does not happen, as Spike embarks in captain Handsome's crew for the second time, with the purpose of occupying Planet Blue. Spike is sent along with the rest of the crew to ensure the thriving of human life by facilitating the extinction of the dinosaurs. However, due to miscalculated data, Spike and the responsible people who worked for MORE-Futures, a big corporation that functions as the government, end up accidentally destroying all life on the new planet, creating a new ice age.

In this dystopian narrative, Spike is often attributed human features, not only physically, but also emotionally, as in "Planet Blue" she claims to have feelings and to have experienced them for the first time through poetry (81). Besides that, Spike develops feelings for Billie. This android is associated with the female gender – Billie's boss refers to her as a "lady" (35) in "Planet Blue". Billie, as a narrator in "Planet Blue", describes Spike as "incredibly sexy" (6). In the same section, Spike has dark hair, "olive skin" (61), "green liquid-crystal eyes" (36) and her physical appearance is stunning, because the ones who were responsible for her creation thought she "would be good for the boys on the mission" (33). Even though inter-species sex is condemned and punishable by death (18), she has sex with spacemen, using "silicon-lined vaginas" (34). In the section "Wreck City", Spike is only a head: "a semi-programmed talking head made of silicon chips" (208) and costs "five-million-dollar – not counting research costs" (181). However, despite not having a full human body, she keeps her charisma in this

final section, as the character Nebraska, member of the group named Chic X, feels attracted to and shares sexual experiences with Spike.

In this book by Jeanette Winterson, the barriers between humans and "non-humans" are complex and thus hard to establish, and Spike is a key element in that. One could assume that robots fit undeniably in the category of "non-human", however, Spike does not think of herself as a machine since she is programmed to evolve (35). In the section "Wreck City", Spike claims that she has chosen to live as an outlaw (209), as in "Planet Blue", she says that Robo *sapiens* have definitely broken the limits for their own evolution (35). In this book, Robo *sapiens* are placed so close to humans that the narrative suggested that they could also be spiritual beings. Within this context, in the section "Wreck City", the character named Sister Mary concludes that Spike does not have a soul, as she is a machine, so, according to Christianity beliefs, she will not be granted salvation. However, because Robo *sapiens* do not have sins, Billie observes that they do not need salvation (229-30), which furthers the gap between Spike and humanity.

Considering her condition of "non-human", Spike has some convenient abilities that humans do not, as Billie notes: "Spike has gone to collect edible plants. Unlike me, she can assess their likely composition without actually eating them and falling down dead" (103). Spike has no blood, cannot give birth and her hair and nails do not grow (83). Spike also does not need to feed herself since she attains her energy through the sun. Concerning this matter of sustenance, Handsome describes Spike as a sun-run woman: "'I love that sun-run woman,' […] 'She'll never get fat, she'll never get drunk, she'll never give up, just as long as the sun is shining" (85).

Even though she cannot drink or eat (83) since "she is solar-powered" (83), Spike is asked by Billie if she ever desires to have the ability to eat, to which she answers that she does not:

> 'don't you ever wish you could eat?' I said.
>
> 'Do you ever wish you could bark?'
>
> 'No, of course not.'
>
> 'Well, then, I don't want to eat because it is not in my nature to eat.'

'But it wasn't in your nature to love.'

'No.'

'Then ... '. (104)

Still, although Spike does not eat, the Robo *sapiens* knows how to catch fish and cook, unlike Pink, who is food-dependent and yet does not have the same skills. Therefore, the scenes in “Planet Blue” in which Spike tries to teach Pink how to catch a fish (85) are satirical since she is an android who teaches human survival techniques to a human being: “Pink screamed as Spike landed a fish with blue fins and a red mouth and what looked like tiny legs. Spike hit it on the head with a rubber mallet and stuffed it into an aluminium cool-bag” (86). This Robo s*apiens* thinks that people can learn from robots and not the other way around, intensifying the idea that machines are independent and humans are not, as Spike tells Pink (78).

Regarding Spike's human/“non-human” duality, an event that portrays an unexpected idea about machines occurs in the “Wreck City” section, when a barman, “an unshaven man built like a mobile burger trailer” offers Spike a drink (181). This happens when he discovers that Spike is designed to think about “war, money, the future.”(181). Considering the fact that “robots don’t drink” (182) and that the man observes that Spike has no body (181), the barman’s action is relevant to analyze since he humanizes the Robo *sapiens* through the act of offering a drink, as if Spike were a regular person. This attitude contrasts with the main character’s, Billie, who frequently highlights the aspects that bring Spike closer to a machine. In the section “Wreck City”, Billie refers to Spike as a non-moral being that cannot even think for herself (208). She states that “’Spike is not a person! She’s a robot! She’s not even a robot yet, she’s training.’” (210).

Nevertheless, Billie also compares this Robo *sapiens* to humans in “Planet Blue”: “my lover is made of a meta-material, a polymer tough as metal, but pliable and flexible and capable of heating and cooling, just like human skin” (83). For Billie in the same section, Spike looks like a movie star (33) and she is perfect, “because she had been designed perfect” (61). In this world, robots have no limbic system and show no emotion, because machines are not programmed for that, but according to Billie, Spike

has “that look of regret they all have before they are dismantled” (6) in “Planet Blue”. This constant state of humanizing and dehumanizing Spike is embedded within the story, which allows for the questioning of the definition of humanity and the role of technology in our life.

Around the end of “Planet Blue”, when Billie is close to dying because of the food shortage on the new freezing planet and Spike is nearly shutting down due to the sun’s absence, Spike regrets that she could not serve as food for Billie to keep her alive longer. On the one hand, this dialogue reveals that Spike is still a machine because if Spike had human flesh, Billie could eat her[44]. On the other hand, this gives the impression that Spike loves Billie, which places her on the side of humanity:

> 'I'm sorry you can't eat me,' she said. 'I would like to be able to keep you alive.'
>
> 'Stop it! I don't want to be alive like this.'
>
> 'But you'll hold on to life till the very last second, because life never believes it will end.'
>
> 'Self-delusion, I suppose.'
>
> 'Or perhaps the truth. This is one state — there will be another.' (108)

In the final section of the book, when comparing Spike, a technological “non-human” figure attributed with human qualities, to the dehumanized victims of the nuclear war, which happened a long time ago, there are several differences in attitude towards them. These victims have degenerated bodies and are very ill, due to the effects of the nuclear war. These “mutants” can be compared to “non-human” figures, since they are segregated from society, completely abandoned, living in the Dead Forest (232), and nobody knows what to do about them, as “they were the bomb-damage, the enemy collateral, the ground-kill, blood-poisoned (…) scared, alive, human. (…) They were vessels of a kind, carriers of disease and degeneration, a new generation of humans made out of the hatred of others” (232-3).

[44]That happens in the dystopian universe of the movie *Snowpiercer* (2013), directed by Bong Joon-ho, in which lower-class passengers in the back section of a train that carries the last humans resorted to cannibalism to not starve.

Regarding nutrition, the only resources they have are food supplies that are thrown at them every day by helicopters: “they had food dropped in every day – cardboard parcels of soft stuff because they had no teeth. Helicopters lowered the bags and flew away. No one looked down and no one looked up” (234). These nuclear war victims “sat by their fires and ate, creatures on another planet – from another planet, lost on this one, as though a line of creatures long extinct had resurfaced through shale layers of time, and come here, accusing, a witness to what should not be” (234).

The attitude towards the nuclear war refugees contrasts with the importance given to the Robo *sapiens* Spike since she is integrated in the general society. Although she is not human, this Robo *sapiens* is treated, to some extent, with much more respect and dignity than those underprivileged people are. In the section “Wreck City”, her missing is reported in the news and the government is willing to start a war to get her back. Spike, which is only a head, is more valuable to the government than the human lives of the refugees, some of whom are children. Spike is a symbol of pride and progress, and “’she’s the future” (183), contrasting with the refugees, who represent disgrace, shame, and the past.

In this book, there is a clear fusion between technology and human life – human bodies change through contact with technology and robots adjust through the relationship with humans. Following this line, *The Stone Gods* leads us to question if there are any intrinsically human characteristics and, if yes, which are they. Within this context, food references serve as relevant symbolic tools within this fictional world since they make it possible to trace a line between humans and “non-humans”, as even the most marginalized people (like the nuclear war refugees) need to eat, in contrast with the robots (like the Robo *sapiens)* that are solar-powered. This embodies the idea that even in a posthuman world food is still the basis for human survival and that it is so important that even though robots do not need to eat, Spike knows how to catch a fish and prepare a meal the “old-fashioned way”.

To the same extent, the sun as nourishment holds a relevant position in a posthuman perspective, as the book portrays a world where humans intimately interact with machines that are very similar to humans, which allows for the questioning of the basis of human nature. However, despite the similarities, they do not eat as humans do.

According to Hope Jennings in “"A Repeating World": Redeeming the Past and Future in the Utopian Dystopia of Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*”, “ironically, it is Spike, the Robo *sapiens*, who demonstrates the redeeming power of desire for human connection, and that love itself is ‘the chance to be human’” (140).

According to the ideas of this book, it is possible to conclude that humans are not autonomous and are not the center of the world[45] since they decide to let go their practical knowledge to machines and are just one part of an interconnected world. Following this line, as Jennings argues, “Robo *sapiens* are offered as the utopian model for humanity: they can never forget the mistakes of the past and are thus always evolving toward a more perfectible, sustainable future” (143). For Luna Dolezal, in “The Body, Gender, and Biotechnology in Jeanette Winterson’s *The Stone Gods*”,

> unlocking this capacity for abstract human thought and developing an “inner life” and the capacity for love—an alternative to the narcissism current social structures encourage—is where Winterson indicates we should place our hope. As Spike lies dying, her heart, impossibly, starts beating. Through her love for Billie and her capacity for poetry she has become truly human, a flesh-and-bone body with a beating heart. Embodied romantic love, expressed through poetry, becomes a utopian microcosm for the human world. (108)

2.3. Biotechnology: animal rights and the meals of the future in The Year of the Flood

The Year of the Flood is the *MaddAddam* Trilogy’s second book and focuses on the stories of Toby and Ren, two former members of the environmental pacifist community called God’s Gardeners, who, among other Gardeners and a few other people, survive the plague (waterless flood), which was planned and executed by Crake in the first book. Besides trying to annihilate human life, as he believed humans were flawed, Crake created a new species to replace humanity called the Crakers[46]. Therefore,

[45]The idea to place humans at the center of the world points to the concept of humanism. According to Jay David Bolter, humanism “was by definition anthropocentric; humanism as a historical phenomenon drew on a renewed and reinterpreted appreciation for the rhetoric and civilization of Greece and Rome, in placing man (rather than God) at the center of its literary and philosophical project” (1).
[46]In the name of their creator – Crake, which reinforces the idea of the mad scientist.

whenever necessary, references from *Oryx and Crake* (2003), an earlier book, will be used for contextualization.

Like *The Stone Gods, The Year of the Flood* envisions a posthuman era, in which the notion of what it means to be human can be reevaluated. According to Lars Schmeink, in "The Anthropocene, the Posthuman, and the Animal",

> it is interesting to note, then, that Atwood does not relativize any readerly perceptions of her posthumans by allowing identification with them. In *Oryx and Crake* as well as *The Year of the Flood*, the Crakers remain passive reflections of the failure of human civilization and voiceless allegories for the potential of genetic engineering. (102)

Crakers are an explicit reference to the novel's posthuman approach, as they are genetically engineered to be a better and more sustainable version of the human species, generated from Crake's utopia. That is why they are vegetarian.

Before the waterless flood, the environment was damaged due to climate change and many animals were already extinct or in the process of extinction. Nevertheless, scientists and their families lived a privileged life in Compounds, high-tech facilities named according to the experiments being conducted there, such as the HelthWyzer and CryoJeenyus Compound, while the masses tried to survive in the dangerous "pleeblands". In this dystopian world, a policed multinational corporation – CorpSeCorps – controls the general society, as Toby narrates, when thinking about the time she was younger.

> Already, back then, the CorpSeCorps were consolidating their power. They'd started as a private security firm for the Corporations, but then they'd taken over when the local police forces collapsed for lack of funding, and people liked that at first because the Corporations paid, but now CorpSeCorps were sending their tentacles everywhere. (25)

In this fictional world, innovation influences all aspects of daily life, including food. The narrative encourages a debate around ethics regarding food production and animal life while projecting future meals. Unlike *The Stone Gods*, which does not provide much information about the food that is produced in the labs, *The Year of the Flood* has

detailed references to unfamiliar food, as modern biotechnology techniques, such as the connection of two pieces of DNA from different organisms, are used to develop or improve food in this dystopia.

An enigmatic case concerning biotechnology that serves food purposes only is "ChickieNobs", which are only the consumable parts of genetically modified chickens[47]. As seen before in *Oryx and Crake*, this product avoids waste, because "they'd removed all the brain functions that had nothing to do with digestion, assimilation, and growth" (203); "you get chicken breasts in two weeks – that's a three-week improvement […]. And the animal-welfare freaks won't be able to say a word, because this thing feels no pain" (203).

Therefore, according to the scientists in this dystopian world, not only is ChickieNobs good for preventing food waste, it also protects animal life as animals do not suffer as a consequence of their production. In fact, because the product is formed only by the consumable parts of chickens, ChickieNobs cannot fit into the same category as animals, so this product makes the act of consumption so absurd and blur that Mordis, a character from *The Year of the Flood*, tells Ren that ChickieNobs are vegetables:

> I remember what the dinner was, that night in the Sticky Zone: it was ChickieNobs. I couldn't deal with meat very well ever since the Gardeners, but Mordis said that ChickieNobs were really vegetables because they grew on stems and didn't have faces. (129)

The ambiguity that is associated with ChickieNobs makes us question the boundaries of ethics, as the animals involved in the process do not suffer. However, ChickieNobs are not the same as animals, as they, for example, do not have a face, but they are not vegetables either, as they are made of parts of an animal. In this sense, it is very difficult to classify this product, due to its ambiguous nature. While allowing for a large quantity of food to be produced, by accelerating the process of obtaining chicken breasts by three weeks, ChickieNobs are in a limbo, positioning themselves as

[47]Although this idea seems completely unfamiliar and dystopian, in "Fifty Years Hence" (1931) Winston Churchill had a similar thought, imagining being possible in the future to grow only some parts of a chicken through the knowledge of hormones (par. 12).

affordable, as well as good for the environment and animal life, but this product has no "soul". According to Manuel J. Sousa Oliveira,

> food such as the ChickieNobs is past the point of being real, it has become a laboratory simulation of what food should be. Artificial food sacrifices sustainable agro-farming production for convenience and mass-production; it sacrifices the sensory elements of food for the mere appearance of food and satisfaction of hunger. As a consequence, "[w]hen the real is no longer what is used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning" (Baudrillard 1993: 197). In other words, one cannot escape the desire for those authentic meals of an idealised past. (53)

The scientists also produce pigs with human neocortex tissue, due to gene splice technology, as the character Croze/Crozier tells Ren: "Zeb says they're superpigs, because they're spliced with human brain tissue" (390). Scientists from the HelthWyzer compound, such as Jimmy's father[48], are responsible for conducting secret experiments to try to find a way to grow human pieces like kidneys[49] and lungs and transplant them into this kind of pig, "figuring out how to transplant human stem cells and DNA into pigs" (220-1).

This creature is named pigoon — "like pig balloon, because they were so big" (221), as Ren points out as she hangs out with Jimmy, who tells her about them when they are young. As these animals share human DNA, they are not produced for eating purposes. However, in the third novel of the trilogy, the survivors eat ham made of pigoon. As Shelley Boyd in "Ustopian Breakfasts: Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam*" argues "eating pigoon meat is a transgression of dietary taboos from the Compounds featured in *Oryx and Crake*, […] and the consumption of pigoons not only challenges this status but seems 'horribly cannibalistic.'" (167). According to Katherine V. Snyder, in "The End Of The End Of The World",

[48]Jimmy, also known as Snowman, is the protagonist in *Oryx and Crake*. He lived in the HelthWyzer compound, because his father is a scientist there.

[49]As literature has represented and imagined new advances in science over time, *The Year of the Flood* is no different as the book imagines that is possible to create and transplant kidneys from a genetically altered pig, which, according to what Roni Caryn Rabin wrote in *The New York Times,* occurred in real-life for the first time in 2022.

> the Crakers and the Pigoons represent the two different faces of the post-humanity that has inherited this blighted earth. They are, quite literally, brother species to humanity—family members who embody both self and otherness—with whom the surviving humans must learn to coexist. (par. 20)

Within this context, hybrid creatures created by humans with no relation to the regular evolutionary process appear repeatedly in this dystopian narrative. There is the case of the so-called "liobams", which, as Toby thinks, "maybe the sheep smell them, but the scent must be confusing — part lion, part lamb" (238). Toby considers that liobams seem to be tender creatures, particularly because they have curling tails and wavy golden hair, but they are dangerous, as they have sharp canines. Their sound is a combination of roar and baa (94).

> The lion-sheep splice was commissioned by the Lion Isaiahists in order to force the advent of the Peaceable Kingdom. They'd reasoned that the only way to fulfil the lion/lamb friendship prophecy without the first eating the second would be to meld the two of them together. But the result hadn't been strictly vegetarian. (94)[50]

Modified bees are also referenced in the story, as Toby encounters one: "though maybe the bee is one of the transgenics they let loose after the virus wiped out the natural bees; or it may even be a cyborg spy, wandering around with no one left to control it" (319), as well as rabbits, "like some degenerate bonobo/rabbit splice" (289). In this fictional world, rabbits can be green, as can be observed in the episode where Toby is thinking of hunting them to survive, "she could shoot a green rabbit, maybe; but no, it's a fellow mammal and she isn't up to that kind of slaughter" (320). Other fictional animals are "rakunks" (part raccoon, part skunk) and "bobkittens" (smaller bobcats), whose improvements do not entail eating purposes, as the first ones can be pets and the second ones are dangerous felines: "but the wild was totally wrong for Killer[51], because she'd be eaten by bobkittens" (223).

[50]Frequently symbolizing peace, "the lamb with the lion" is often paraphrased by Isaiah.
[51]"Killer" is a rakunk that becomes Jimmy's pet in *Oryx and Crake.*

In this dystopian imagined world, with the use of genetic engineering, animals are transformed, as is the case of ChickieNobs. However, as observed in *Oryx and Crake*, there is also the fact that "bobkittens" which were created to hunt green rabbits ended up attacking young Crakers (159). Besides that, there is the affiliation between animal species, like the wolvogs and dogs. However, despite being part wolf/part dog, the wolvogs eat "real dogs", as can be observed in the first book of the trilogy:

> that's the worst thing about wolvogs: they still look like dogs, still behave like dogs, pricking up their ears, making playful puppy leaps and bounces, wagging their tails. They'll sucker you in, then go for you. It hasn't taken much to reverse fifty thousand years of man-canid interaction. As for the real dogs, they never stood a chance: the wolvogs have simply killed and eaten all those who'd shown signs of vestigial domesticated status. (108)

Besides that, not only are the techniques of gene-spliced used in animals, but also in fruits and vegetables, such as the so-called "polyberry", as Toby points out in *The Year of the Flood*: "on the bright side, there should be some polyberries by now, ripe ones. The strength of the polyberry gene splice is that it produces at all seasons" (164). Besides the reference to a fruit that grows in all seasons, the dystopian novel also refers to other foods like soybits and soydines.

> That prize is a picture painted by Nuala, our talented Eve Nine: Saint Brendan the Voyager, shown with the essential items we must include in our Ararat storerooms in preparation for the Waterless Flood. In this artwork, Nuala has given the tinned soydines and the soybits their due prominence. But let us remind ourselves to refresh our Ararats regularly. You wouldn't want to open that tin of soydines on the day of need and find that the contents have gone bad. (89)

Soybits and soydines are products set for the Ararats[52] of the God's Gardeners, as both are ideal to store for an emergency, probably inspired by food that already exists in the real world, as they both are composed of soy. Soydines seem to be a vegan version

[52]The name is probably inspired by Mount Ararat, which is believed to be the place where Noah's Ark rested. Ararats are the Gardeners' food storehouses for use only in an emergency, for when the waterless flood would come. Thus, they were hidden.

of tinned sardines — with soy instead of fish. Other unfamiliar food references are chickenpeas and beananas. The word "chickenpeas" reminds us of chickpeas, and "beananas" gives the impression of being an intersection of beans and bananas. The terms are used by Toby when she is narrating her situation concerning food when she is alone, trying to survive, at a luxurious spa: "luckily, everything in the garden is doing well: the chickenpeas have begun to pod, the beananas are in flower, the polyberry bushes are covered with small brown nubbins of different shapes and sizes" (16).

The hybrid creatures and new species of fruits and vegetables are supposed to be upgraded versions from the originals, because in the process of making them there is a transference of beneficial genes to serve human interests. This happens not only for food consumption, but also for organ transplantation, as in the case of the pigoon. However, the gene-splicing is caricatured in Atwood's book in a passage where the character Toby describes two bright-blue kudzu-moth caterpillars: "in one of those jokey moves so common in the first years of gene-splicing, their designer gave them a baby face at the front end, with big eyes and a happy smile, which makes them remarkably difficult to kill" (16). Although created by humans with the purpose of meeting the needs, not everything goes according to plan: "developed as a biological control for invasive kudzu, they seem to prefer garden vegetables" (16).

Genetically modified organisms are used in the chains of restaurants referred to in this dystopian narrative. Much like real-life fast-food franchises[53], the restaurant chains in the book pose ethical problems. One of them is a coffee franchise called Happicuppa, as it appears in one of Adam's One's[54] discourses in "Saint Rachel and All Birds' Day": "we have gained entrance to the storeroom, thereby procuring access to much Happicuppa product: the dried milk substitute, the vanilla-flavoured syrup, the moccachino mix, and the single-serving packets of sugar, both raw and white" (371-2). The production of their products damages the environment and the drink itself is harmful to human health, as Toby says to the character Zeb, another God's Gardener, "'gen-mod, sun-grown, sprayed with poisons? It kills birds, it ruins peasants — we all

[53] In *The Stone Gods*, in "Post-3 War", there is also a brief reference to two fast food franchises: MacDuck's and Burger Princess that "started offering food in place of wages" (167).
[54] He is the God's Gardeners' leader, who will be analyzed more thoroughly later.

know that.'" (185). Despite the negative environmental effects, characters like Toby (185) and Ren (221) consider that the drink Happicappuchino has a delicious taste.

When it comes to food, there is one particular franchise in this dystopian narrative called SecretBurgers, as Toby narrates.

> Toby's new job was with a chain called SecretBurgers. The secret of SecretBurgers was that no one knew what sort of animal protein was actually in them: the counter girls wore T-shirts and baseball caps with the slogan *SecretBurgers! Because Everyone Loves a Secret!* The job paid rock-bottom wages, but you got two free SecretBurgers a day. (33)

In this case, the consumers do not know the protein that is in the burgers, "the meat grinders weren't 100 per cent efficient; you might find a swatch of cat fur in your burger or a fragment of mouse tail. Was there a human fingernail, once?" (33). As in *Soylent Green* (1973), dead bodies were used as proteins, as Toby points out: "they also ran corpse disposals, harvesting organs for transplant, then running the gutted carcasses through the SecretBurgers grinders. So went the worst rumours. During the glory days of Secret-Burgers, there were very few bodies found in vacant lots!" (33).

The association of this restaurant chain with cannibalism represents a profound critique of capitalism, by amplifying its negative consequences, as well as exposing human greed.

> The year before, SecretBurgers had gone too far. The CorpSeCorps had closed them down after one of their high-placed officials went slumming in the Sewage Lagoon and his shoes were discovered on the feet of a SecretBurgers meat-grinder operator. So for a while stray cats breathed easier at night. But a few months later the familiar grilling booths were sizzling again, because who could say no to a business with so few supply-side costs? (34)

Nevertheless, by providing cheap meat, this business provides an answer to a food problem, which is, in the words of Warren Belasco, "as population grew, food prices would rise and meat consumption would decline" (264). However, at a terrible cost. Other products often mentioned in Atwood's novel are protein bars called Joltbars and a drink called Zizzy Froot, a "warm, sugary, fizzy liquid" (381).

Another restaurant chain that sets profit above ethics in this dystopian narrative is “Rarity”. However, as Toby stresses, this one is meant for the elites, as it is expensive and promotes the idea that money could buy everything by offering an exquisite experience, which includes eating illegal meat.

> The skinned carcasses were sold on to a chain of gourmet restaurants called Rarity. The public dining rooms served steak and lamb and venison and buffalo, certified disease-free so it could be cooked rare — that was what “Rarity” pretended to mean. But in the private banquet rooms — key-club entry, bouncer-enforced — you could eat endangered species. The profits were immense; one bottle of tiger-bone wine alone was worth a neckful of diamonds. (31)

Besides “Rarity”, in this dystopia there is also a HelthWyzer vitamin supplements franchise, in which Toby’s mother worked before being ill.

> Then Toby’s mother came down with a strange illness. She couldn’t understand it, because she’d always been so careful about her health: she worked out, she ate a lot of vegetables, she took a dose of HelthWyzer Hi-Potency VitalVite supplements daily. Franchise operators like her got a deal on the supplements – their own customized package, just like the ones for the higher-ups at HelthWyzer. (25)

Some former scientists and other members from the God’s Gardeners community find out that these supplements cause diseases since they were designed for the pharmaceutical industry to gain profit, as Ren narrates: “confessing that HelthWyzer had been sticking a slow acting but incurable gene-spliced disease germ inside their supplements so they could make a lot of money on the treatments” (293). Faced with a ransom demand for a kidnapped employee, the company decides that it is more valuable for them to protect the business than the life of the employee: “HelthWyzer had done a cost-benefit analysis, said Lucerne, and they’d decided the disease germs and formulas were worth more to them than Frank was”[55] (293).

[55]Frank and Lucerne are Ren’s biological parents.

As the nation-state was substituted by a policed multinational corporation in *The Year of the Flood*, the food and drink franchises previously mentioned are profitable as the products are made of low-cost supplies and are widely consumed by the larger society of this dystopian fictional world. As has been discussed, none of them have ethical concerns about animal rights and life on Earth in general. The people who consume their food products choose to ignore the negative impact on them or think that the unfavorable comments are just rumors, which can be compared with the unconsciousness of real-world consumers regarding unethical known practices of some multinational companies. This comparison can be a strategy to bring this dystopia closer to reality. As the world falls out due to the waterless flood, these businesses also fail. However, the survivors find some memories from that time, as in the discourse of "Saint Rachel and All Birds' Day": "we are grateful also for this temporary abode, which, though it is a former Happicuppa franchise, has sheltered us from the grilling sun and the gruelling storm" (371).

Before the waterless flood, environmental groups like the God's Gardeners, who favor all that is natural and look down on technological progress and consumerism, condemned the lack of ethics in food production and animal life within the story. This religious group[56], which will be discussed in more detail in the third chapter, produces everything their community eats and uses in daily life. The God's Gardeners consider all living beings as "God's Creatures", even the "manufactured" animals, as happens with Toby: "she holds one of the pigs in the scope — the boar, an easy shot, he's sideways — but then she hesitates. They're God's Creatures" (18).

Believing they should not kill without a cause, the group preserves animal rights through their foodways — they are vegetarian and only eat what they produce. Besides that, the group treats animals as fellows, as in one of Adam's One's discourses "some of you have chosen to allay suspicion by courageously eating the flesh of our fellow Creatures; (…) If in doubts as to your limits, confine yourselves to a SoYummie ice cream. Such quasi-foods may be swallowed without undue strain" (276).

[56]The God's Gardeners are not the only religious group in the story. There are others like Known Fruits and Petrobaptists.

The vows of the group with nature are often expressed in the discourses of their leader — Adam One, as well as in The God's Gardeners Oral Hymnbook.

> How shrunk, how dwindled, in our times
>
> Creation's mighty seed —
>
> For Man has broke the Fellowship
>
> With murder, lust, and greed. (14)

Adam One and the God's Gardeners refuse the idea that Man should be placed at the center of the world, valuing back-to-nature ideals and the notion of the world as an ecosystem in which all living things are equally important. The group can represent a critique of progress, contrasting with the ideals of the larger society, which seem to support the comfort of innovation and technological advances. They represent the clash of ideas in the book when thinking about food — from the convenience and efficiency of synthetic food to the authenticity and virtuousness of labor when it comes to organic/natural one.

However, it is important to consider that before the group was formed, the members led a life within the normal standards of the larger society, as is the case of scientist and founder Adam One: "my name is Adam One. I, too, was once a materialistic, atheistic meat-eater. Like you, I thought Man was the measure of all things. (…) "In fact, dear Friends, I thought measurement was the measure of all things!" (40). The same character incurs a contradiction as he is against technology but probably uses it, as Ren points out: "Adam One stepped in through the gap in the fence. He always seemed to know if there was something unusual going on. Amanda said it was just like he had a phone" (151); as well as Toby,

> for instance: the Adams and Eves had a laptop. Toby had been shocked to discover this — wasn't such a device in direct contravention of Gardener principles? — but Adam One had reassured her: they never went online with it except with extreme precaution, they used it mostly for the storage of crucial data pertaining to the Exfernal World, and they took care to conceal such a dangerous object from the Gardener membership at large — especially the children. Nevertheless, they had one. (188-9)

2.4. Conclusion

To imagine a cornucopian future by abolishing the old to make room for the new is an idea present both in *The Stone Gods* and in *The Year of the Flood.* Both narratives encourage the idea that humans tend to collapse the world. In the first case, in "Planet Blue", people with the help of an android travel to space to occupy a new planet, because their own planet is environmentally deteriorated due to climate change. In the second case, a pill is responsible for a plague that kills almost every human being, as a scientist believes that humankind is destroying the planet. These narratives demonstrate that humans tend to fail – accidentally killing all life on the new planet; creating an imperfect "pre-human" species to replace humankind.

Therefore, through a fierce critique of contemporary societies, both literary works reject the idea that humans should be placed at the center of the world, redefining standard divisions, such as "self" and "other" or "human" and "animal", and leaning towards a posthumanist approach. Both dystopias pinpoint the idea that humankind should not be the measure of all things since scientific advances contribute to poisoning the environment, other species, and even human life. Thus, the two narratives express the idea that humans prefer to continue exploiting animals and resources, then stopping unbridled consumerism.

In both *The Stone Gods* and *The Year of the Flood*, human beings have an explicit relationship with technology, which is present in daily life, particularly in foodways, through genetically modified organisms and synthetic food like meat produced in labs. Despite revealing the excesses of technophilia and the negative view on progress in general, including a certain tendency for technophobic ideas, neither narrative rejects technology, as they blur utopian and dystopian elements related to it. On one hand, both pinpoint the control and manipulation of technology by corporations, which are connected with surveillance and repression – MORE-*Futures* in Winterson's case and CorpSeCorps in Atwood's novel. On other hand, anthropomorphizing machines like the Robo *sapiens*, in *The Stone Gods,* can be an attempt to approach the virtuous side of technology, as Spike has human attributes and food knowledge about cooking and how to cultivate, in "Planet Blue", while in *The Year of the Flood*, the leader of the God's

Gardeners community, who promotes life in balance with nature and criticizes technology, uses a computer and probably a cellphone, implying a contradiction.

Scientists and consumers in the fictional worlds broadly use the argument that the advances in technology enable animals to stop suffering. However, it is debatable whether creating consumable chicken parts, like the ChickieNobs, or producing food in laboratories is ethically correct. Thus, the larger societies in both dystopias seem to be alienated from the ethical problems of biotechnology and innovation in general, as they tend to favor the efficiency and accessibility of food that is produced in the labs, which highlights the dystopian elements in both narratives.

While artificial food represents resilience, adaptability, and innovation, natural food, as well as the act of cooking, embodies the past – an ancient knowledge that is at risk, as it happens in "Planet Blue". However, it is desired by many characters within the two narratives. Within this context, communities like the God's Gardeners in *The Year of the Flood* and the alternative communities of Wreck City in *The Stone Gods*, who choose to follow different foodways from the general society, can embody utopian elements and, thus, will be analyzed thoroughly in the following chapter.

Chapter III: The role of food in the construction of intentional communities

3.1. Introduction

Both *The Stone Gods* and *The Year of the Flood* have utopian impulses within their narratives. That is achieved through the creation of communities that can work as a way of resistance when facing the collapsed worlds, namely the communities that live in Wreck City in Winterson's book and an environmental group known as the God's Gardeners in Atwood's novel. Both communities have different values and lifestyles from the general dystopian society that, in both cases, is associated with technology and the convenience of scientific advances, which sets a radical gap between them.

Authors like Lyman Tower Sargent consider that it is possible to connect utopianism and communitarianism, but not all scholars agree, as in the case of American Arthur E. Bestor. In "Patent-Office Models of the Good Society: Some Relationships between Social Reform and Westward Expansion", Bestor distinguishes between "communitarianism, or the impulse which constructed these hundred model communities"[57] and "utopianism, or the impulse to picture in literary form the characteristics of an ideal but imaginary society" (505). Lyman Tower Sargent tries to counterargument in "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited" (13), approximating the terms: "*collective*, *communal* and its variants, and *communitarian* all imply an economic system without private property as, in fact, did the word *utopian* in this context" (14).

Concerning the possible connection between the two concepts, Sargent points out that there is no consensus about the taxonomy to use (13), suggesting that it is better to use the term "intentional community"[58] since he believes that is "a relatively neutral term" and it is better to use "for contemporary scholarship" (14). The author defines "intentional community" as "a group of five or more adults and their children, if any, who come from more than one nuclear family and who have chosen to live together to enhance their shared values or for some other mutually agreed upon purpose" (15).

[57]Bestor refers to "hundred or so co-operative colonies, where various types of improved social machinery were hopefully demonstrated" (505).

[58]Rather than "utopian society", "commune", "alternative society", and others (14). One can say that if utopianism is about social dreaming, as seen before, utopian communities would be an attempt to achieve the dreams shared by the members of that community.

Sargent adds that there are some necessary conditions, namely: the group must come across with intent; share some values or projects; have a minimum number of members that need to come from more than one family. Following this thought, the author claims that less than five people are not a community but a group of people that intend to become one, and it is not conceivable if the members are all from the same family. However, he is aware that his definition, like any other, excludes other possibilities (15). For this dissertation, since it is more neutral and inclusive, the term "intentional community" will be used.

Concerning dystopian narratives, food, as a basic condition for survival, enters into the daily life of intentional communities and can represent resistance to the dystopian societies/scenarios. An example is in Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York 2140*. As seen previously, in the face of a disaster, the members of the MetLife Tower are able to organize around food, building a community, cultivating together, and sharing the available resources with their members. Teresa Botelho, in "What Will We Eat?", describes the intentional community as following:

> their daily comings and goings illuminate the ways inventiveness and cooperation have been mobilised to turn that building, and most others in the area, into a kind of utopian community that provides its members with the precious food that has become more valuable than money, isolated as they are from most of the still operating farming areas of the country. (44)

Within this context, the purpose of this chapter is to explore the role of food, as a complex sociocultural phenomenon, in the creation and maintenance of the intentional communities of the two dystopian narratives – the ones who live in Wreck City and the God's Gardeners. Thus, the intent is to explore the importance of these communities within the dystopian narratives, focusing on how food shapes them, as these groups of people adopted alternative ways of living, contrasting with the larger society that tends to be alienated in both dystopian imagined worlds.

3.2. The example of the alternative communities in Wreck City

When thinking about Wreck City in the last section of *The Stone Gods*, it is possible to perceive that it is a place radically different from Tech City, as the first is a marginal area and the other is, as Billie narrates, "the official part of town" (179). However, in this section, there is not much information about it. In "Planet Blue", Tech City is described by Billie, as the narrator, as the place "where every single robot in the twenty-two gee-cities of the Central Power is designed and made" (16), as it embraces a life filled with the latest technology, which includes food that is created in the labs, as seen in the previous chapter. In "Post-3 War", Billie describes Tech City as follows:

> In Post-3 War economics, Capitalism has gone back to its roots in paternalism, and forward into its destiny — complete control of everything and everyone, and with our consent.
>
> This is the new world. This is Tech City. (167)

In the same section, Billie points out that the world is dominated by MORE, a corporation responsible for any trade, as "MORE had been the world's most aggressive free-marketeers, regulation-wreckers, carbon-kings" (160), which includes owning the State distillery. MORE obtained power mainly due to the War on Terror, which led to widespread fears, including of the stranger/ the Other (161).

In contrast with Tech City, in the last section, Billie, as the narrator, defines Wreck City as a "No Zone", meaning that it is an area with no insurance, no assistance, no police, and no welfare (179). Regarding geography, two spaces compose Wreck City – "Front" and "Back". The perimeter bar between Wreck City and Tech City is called the "Front" and is the place where tourists go "to drink and meet girls" and "guns are accepted, as are sexual services" (180). People on the "Front" cannot pay with "jetons", the acceptable currency used in Tech City, but only with "real money", "jewellery" or barter things like "pre-War stuff" (180). MORE employees are advised not to visit e it. "Back" is where the people of Wreck City live, and phones do not work there. The residents "live in the shells of houses and offices, and they build their own places out of

the ruins" (179). By the edge of Wreck City, there is a place called "Red Zone"[59], which is "policed and controlled" (191).

At the beginning of this section, Spike, the android with only a head, and Billie, a MORE-*Futures* employee who works on the Robo *sapiens*, visit Wreck City for the first time. They enter the "Front" by tram and then walk (179). They end up entering a bar "into the Lalique carriage of the Orient Express" (180). Spike's first impression is that Wreck City is a ghetto (182). From that point of view, which supposedly would be objective because the android is designed to be neutral, Wreck City is a poor place, where people do not have the same conditions as the "civilized" ones in Tech City. However, in response to this remark, Friday, the barman that Billie and Spike meet , who was an economist with the World Bank before World War Three, tells them that there "nobody forced nobody" (182) and they "got no laws, no rules, no quotas, but if you got no legs, somebody will carry you, and if you got no arms, somebody will stroke the dog for you" (182).

In line with this idea, Wreck City can be associated with a strong sense of support and solidarity between its members. There is also a link to freedom (and anarchy), which is also represented in the following passage when Friday is telling Billie to be careful in Wreck City because of the wild animals: "the ones [animals from the Zoo] who escaped [the bombing] came here, like everything else that didn't want to go back into a cage" (189). For Friday, Wreck City symbolizes "real life", in contrast with Tech City, which he considers to be a "puppet show" (182)[60]. He claims that the people who live in Wreck City lead a different way of life from the standard, describing them as refugees from Tech City and its life (187). When an International Peace Delegation that wants to bring Aid and Sanitation to War Refugees talks to Friday, he clarifies that the Wreck City is not composed of people unable to live a normal life because of the War, but "we were unable to live a normal life before the War (…). That's why we all came here after the War" (184).

Regarding residents, Friday does not know how many people live in Wreck City, but several communities have their homes there, including queer ones: "Wreck City had

[59]Dead Forest is part of it (192).
[60]The differences between the two culminate in a war at the end of the section.

twenty alternative communities ranging from the 1960s Free Love and Cadillacs, to a group of women-only Vegans looking for the next cruelty-free planet"[61] (207). The Alternative[62], Chic X, and Sisters in Christ are some of the mentioned communities. Billie, as the narrator, describes the place as "where you want to live when you don't want to live anywhere else. Where you live when you can't live anywhere else" (179). People who do not want to live or cannot live anywhere else since they are rejected and take refuge in Wreck City do so to get away from a world in which they do not recognize themselves.

Since all of the twenty communities share the fact that their members can be considered marginalized people who intend to escape from the life in Tech City, it is possible to consider all of Wreck City's communities as one. In this context, despite the differences between the heterogeneous groups of people, they can fit into the definition of "intentional community" proposed by Lyman Tower Sargent. Regarding intentionality, as seen previously, Billie presents two possible cases – people who choose not to live in Tech City or cannot live there as they are rejected. In the second case, it is possible, however, to argue that if people choose to change their minds and adjust, they could live in Tech City.

Thus, each person or group has its intentions and characteristics, but there is a broad intention that unites them all – to have a different life than the one lead by most people. According to Hope Jennings, "Wreck City is representative of a utopian albeit imperfect society attempting to survive and move beyond the devastation of "torn out years" (141). In this framework, as Le Guin's short story "The ones who walk away from Omelas" reveals, utopia should be "imperfect" as it should not provide a model. In view of that, Wreck City is characterized by no one imposing anything on anyone, so, in this sense, it is in its imperfection that lies its perfection.

Thus, Wreck City can be related to the idea of plurality since it shelters multiple communities that are very different but connected not only because of the common ground values, as seen previously, but also because they share the same geographic

[61]The group of vegan girls called Chic X are also lesbians and dinosaur-friendly (207).
[62]Alaska explains to Billie what it means to be part of the Alternative: "Pre-War we were in a squat escaping from the expectations of our families. Post-3 War, we're here" (205).

space. This idea of plurality is represented within the story, for example, when at the bar, on the "Front", the barman says to Billie and Spike that they only sell whisky, beers, or champagne in double or triple doses: "this isn't a singles bar" (181). All the members of this community have the choice to decide, as when a decision needs to be made, Wreck City's inhabitants meet in "Playa"[63], as Friday explains to Billie. Wreck City is also independent: "[it] is its own state – like The Vatican" (212), as Alaska enlightens Billie, clarifying that the phones do not work there.

Still on the topic of intentional communities, there are many relevant scenes in this section that involve foodways. That is the case when Billie is walking for the first time in the Back with Friday to find Spike, and she encounters the following scenarios:

> dogs and cats ran up and down, squirrels and monkeys swung from balcony to balcony. Chickens scratched in the dirt, and a donkey harnessed to a cart was waiting patiently to pull a fridge. A fat woman, in front of one of the houses, was cooking over a tin barrel, flames escaping from under the pan. (188)

Because Friday tells her where Spike is, Billie ends up entering the house of the so-called The Alternative. A naked girl named Alaska opens the door and offers her champagne from a *Veuve Clicquot 1995*[64] bottle, as she tells Billie that she and the other girls prefer it to the *Bollinger* (205). They find all the champagne in an "open cellar underneath the Bank of England. It was just racks and racks of champagne" (205), as Alaska tells Billie. They keep the champagne bottles and throw them into a junk room, as Billie observes: "behind was a junk room, filled floor to ceiling with champagne bottles – not stacked or racked, just thrown in" (205). This group has some environmental concerns since their members "recycle all the glass" (205), and Alaska confirms that "nothing gets wasted" (205). However, they use leather in the house and are not vegetarian, as they eat fish since they found one million sardines' tins: "two containerloads of sardines in olive oil. That is, one million tins" (206).

Besides this episode at their home, the group appears at the section's beginning, when Spike and Billie are at the bar with Friday, asking them not to get fish-oil on the

[63]Billie describes it as "I was in s Spanish playa, built like a favela, and here in front of me was a Venetian campanile" (188).
[64]This brand of champagne, as well as another that is referenced in the book – *Bollinger* – is non-fictional.

velvet (183). The hint that they are the same group is because “they were drinking champagne” (180), which is expensive – “a lot of Black money” (180), as Billie points out, and eating sardines. Regarding money, Friday, while speaking with Billie, refers to them as “rich refugees” (187). As the narrator, Billie, observes that “they were drunk. One of them was eating sardines out of a tin” (183). Friday switches bottles for them (183), which means that they do not only drink alcohol at home but also at a bar, despite the fact that it is not affordable, and they have stock.

Eating sardines and drinking champagne, as well as the fact that the décor of their house is full of white leather, are some elements that characterize this alternative community. However, the elements are provisional and have a trivial meaning: “‘these things are temporary’, she said. ‘It’s what we could find at the time’” (206). Nevertheless, Alaska explains that they have intentionality: “we are founding an alternative community” (206). This community is compared by Billie to the Pilgrim Fathers:

> I was thinking about the Pilgrim Fathers, setting sail in the *Mayflower* in 1620. They were going to found an alternative community, and who is to say that Bibles, axes, ropes, flour and salt pork are better basis for a new way of life than white leather, champagne and sardines? (206-7)

Within this context, one can conclude that the Alternative group is parasitic on the food this community inherits, as they do not grow anything and just eat sardines all the time and for every meal. However, it could have been any other food since the reason they have it is random. It is important to note that both champagne and canned goods last, which means that the group does not have an urgent need to look for other food sources.

Concerning the Sisters in Christ, as the name implies, the reader gets to know that this community is composed of nuns who share the same religious beliefs. The only member named in the story is Sister Mary McMurphy, a “small, smiling Irish woman” (211), as described by Billie as the narrator, and it refers that there are other five Sisters. Sister Mary mentions that she had rung the bell in Wreck City as in the convent in Cork, but no one had brought them food. Therefore, she asks for food at Alaska’s house, as she is “a practising Catholic” (211). As the only food the group has is sardines, Alaska

offers them to the Sister, who mentions the Biblical passage of "the miracle of the five loaves and two fishes" (211). Given this, Alaska clarifies that she does not have bread since the girls from the Alternative "don't do carbs" (211), and when the Sister asks her if she has something else, she offers champagne instead (211). Sister Mary McMurphy accepts the champagne and recalls another Biblical passage: "there is the example of Our Lord's First Miracle […] 'The Feast at Cana. The water into wine. I'll take some, sure an' I will" (211); "she [nun] took her sardines and champagne, blessed Alaska, glared at me and left the house" (212). On the one hand, food represents the flexibility of the nun who accepts the offered food and justifies with religious allegories. On the other hand, food symbolizes solidarity and the fact that both groups trust each other.

The text shows this plurality and acceptance when the alternative communities come together to have a celebration. At the Wreck City's party that Billie and Spike go to, a variety of food is mentioned, which is symbolically aligned with the multicultural environment of the place.

> A pig roasting on a spit of split Applewood. Two women[65] grilling sliced aubergines and courgettes. Potatoes pierced on a length of metal road and put to cook in the ash of a pot-fire, its cauldron steaming above with lentils, tomatoes, lamb.
>
> The pink Cadillac[66] with a trailer on the back working the Playa as a mobile bar, trailer piled with beers on ice. (223-4)

At this party, different views and lifestyles are depicted, since vegetarians have a meal and mix with other people, who probably have other diets, which include pork or lamb meat. One can say that foodways' diversity is synonymous with ideological pluralism. The allusion to "aubergines", "courgettes", "potatoes", "lentils" and "tomatoes" makes one think that there are communities within Wreck City that grow them because these vegetables have to come from their place or have been bought at Tech City, which is not probable as people do not have jetons. When Billie is running from a bull terrier, she describes the following: "allotments, cabbages, sheds, trees, a forest ahead" (191),

[65]Only women are referenced to cook at the party.
[66]There is a luxurious car at the party, probably because one of Wreck City's communities, as has been noted, is prone to celebrating 1960s Free Love and Cadillacs.

which foregrounds the idea that people cultivate in Wreck City. Besides that, regarding domestic animals, they probably raise them as well in Wreck City for eating.

When Friday finds Billie in the Dead Forest, she is invited by Friday[67] to come to his home and get something to eat (192). In his house, the kitchen is makeshift, separated by a curtain. In Friday's kitchen, "there was a strong smell of coffee as he turned the hand grinder" (192). Besides the fact that the coffee is ground by hand, he still uses matches to make the fire. Therefore, Friday asks Billie to "throw a match on the burner" (193), and Billie "hunted around for the pack and gingerly lit" (193) what she describes as "one of those Tarmac burners the Murphys used to use when mending the roads" (193). In this episode, some elements are described as big: "wide flame" and "huge tin kettle" (193). Friday talks about the war with Billie while he cooks eggs: "he was breaking eggs with one hand into the smoking pan" (196).

After he finishes cooking, the two "sat down to eat on a beautiful table" (197), which belonged to Friday's grandfather. The table is considered to be a "safe place" for Friday: "'I lay under it when the roof fell in" (197). Friday tells about his private life, such as his family situation (197) while they have their meal. Besides that, he turns out to be a very welcoming host: "shoved the bread across the table towards me [Billie]" (197). In the end, "he turned to clear the plates" (199). This entire scenario is intimate and familiar, constituting an alternative to new and inventive ways of eating, maintaining the traditions of consumption around the table with natural food, such as real coffee, made by humans.

Within this context, it is possible to conclude that in Wreck City, foodways are a present element that reinforces the contrast between the two ways of life – Tech and Wreck City, as the people in Wreck City choose to eat non-artificial food. Thus, the foodways in Wreck City have several meanings, such as the connection and dependence from the past, as part of the food is recovered from the remnants of war, generosity within the heterogeneous communities, ideological pluralism, and an alternative form of consumption that maintains tradition and familiarity.

[67]As the character Friday in *Robinson Crusoe*, Friday is also seen as a marginalized "Other".

3.3. The case of the God's Gardeners

If it can be more ambiguous to argue that the alternative communities in *The Stone Gods* follow all the criteria of the definition proposed by Lyman Tower Sargent, *The Year of the Flood* presents a clearly defined intentional community – the God's Gardeners. This community, which is more homogenous than the one from Wreck City, chooses to live together in balance with nature and share a place called the Garden[68], which is located in the "pleeblands" that radically contrasts with the Compounds[69]. In "Margaret Atwood: the road to Ustopia", Atwood herself describes this community as utopian.

> This book, too, has a utopia embedded within a dystopia; it's represented by the God's Gardeners, a small environmental religious cult dedicated to the sacred element in all creation. Its members grow vegetables on slum rooftops, sing sacred-nature hymns, and avoid hi-tech communications devices such as cellphones and computers on the grounds that they can be used to spy on you – which is entirely true. (par. 27)

In terms of the members, it is possible to name at least twenty[70], which meets Lyman Tower Sargent's criteria for "intentional communities" regarding the minimum number of people, them being: Toby, Ren, Amanda, Pilar, Nuala, Rebecca, Adam One, Lucerne (Ren's mother), Zeb (Lucerne's lover), Bernice, and others[71]. In this community, almost everyone has a well-defined role, and they help each other by sharing duties and knowledge[72]. Nuala, for example, is in charge of teaching the little kids, and Pilar is the beekeeper and has relevant knowledge about mushrooms and other plants that allow her to recognize the edible ones from the poisonous ones. As a community, they are a solid and homogenous group, as Pilar explains to Toby: "all the bees of a hive are one

[68]The Garden is described as "so beautiful, with plants and flowers of many kinds she'd never seen before. There were vivid butterflies; from nearby came the vibration of bees. Each petal and leaf was fully alive, shining with awareness of her. Even the air of the Garden was different" (43).
[69]The "Compounds" are safe and fenced places where scientists and their families live.
[70]Besides said twenty members, there is also a reference in the novel to a refugee named Hammerhead, who is sheltered by the Gardeners (248).
[71]The others are Burt (Bernice's father), Veena (Bernice's mother), Katuro, three brothers: Shackleton, Crozier and Oates, Philo (acts as father of the three boys), Surya, Mugi, Marushka Midwife, and Stuart.
[72]The characters Veena and Lucerne are the exceptions, as they are kind of outsiders. The first is in a state of depression, so she does not have the will to do anything and the second is only part of the group because she fell in love with Zeb and followed him with her daughter.

bee: that's why they'll die for the hive. 'Like the Gardeners,' Pilar said. Toby couldn't tell whether or not she was joking" (99). Contrasting with the communities in Wreck City that live in a kind of anarchy, where "nobody forces nobody" in the fictional world of Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*, the God's Gardeners have a leader – Adam One.

When it comes to the creation of the community and the ideals that started with Adam One, their moral and ethical values have to do with the unbalance between humanity and the environment. In this sense, their ideals can be considered to line up with deep ecology, in which, according to Bill Devall in "The Deep Ecology Movement", "the person is not above or outside of nature. The person is part of creation on-going" (303). The same author claims that "deep ecology is liberating ecological consciousness" (322) and that it can represent a utopian alternative, not based on the domination of nature, as proposed by Francis Bacon, but as

> some persons, such as Aldo Leopold, have suggested that we begin our thinking on Utopia not with a statement of 'human nature' or 'needs of humans' but by trying to 'think like a mountain.' This profound extending, 'thinking like a mountain,' is part and parcel of the phenomenology of ecological consciousness. Deep ecology begins with Unity rather than dualism which has been the dominant theme of Western philosophy. (309)

The God's Gardeners have the desire to protect what is left from the planet and all life by conserving the natural resources and respecting nature, while at the same time refusing consumerism and violence. They use and reuse everything, as Ren points out, "there was no such thing as garbage, trash, or dirt, only matter that had not been put to proper use" (90). Ren's mother, Lucerne, thinks that the Gardeners "deprived themselves of proper food and clothing and even proper showers" (114). Concerning other rules, swearing is forbidden and they do not smoke cigarettes.

Regarding religion, Adam One tells Toby, when he is in a procession in front of the SecretBurgers booth with the other Gardeners, that at the beginning, before starting the community, he heard a "Voice", which he associated with the divine:

> ‘But then, one day, when I was standing right where you are standing, devouring — yes! — devouring a SecretBurger, and revelling in the fat thereof, I saw a great Light. I heard a great Voice. And that Voice said —’
>
> ‘It said, ‘Get stuffed!’’
>
> ‘It said, Spare your fellow Creatures! Do not eat anything with a face! Do not kill your own Soul! And then ...’. (40)

Following this line, the God’s Gardeners celebrate their own saints, which emphasizes the connection of religion with science since they are named according to real people who are/were related to science and have or had an impact in the real world, such as “Saint Yossi Leshem of Barn Owls” and “Saint Dian Fossey”[73]. The Gardeners also sing their own hymns[74] and even protest, using slates with slogans like “God’s Gardeners for God’s Garden!” (39). The Biblical references can be found not only in the place they live — Garden as Eden’s Garden — but also in the Gardeners’ names — men are called Adam and women are called Eve, followed by a number. For example, the character Pilar is Eve Six, and Zeb is Adam Seven (125).

Regarding the hierarchy, Toby points out that "Adam One insisted that all Gardeners were equal on the spiritual level, but the same did not hold for the material one: the Adams and the Eves ranked higher, though their numbers indicated their areas of expertise rather than their order of importance" (45). Besides this kind of rigid structure, some of their members are morally condemned, as Philo, for example, gets drunk: “the older Gardeners said he’d transcended language and was travelling with the Spirit, though Amanda said he was just wasted”, as Ren observes (83).

Concerning personal relationships, the God’s Gardeners endorse fidelity “as long as a pair-bonding was current” (115) and have rituals within the community, like marriages and divorces, as Toby observes.

> They exchanged green leaves to symbolize growth and fertility and jumped over a bonfire to symbolize the energy of the universe, then declared themselves

[73]Yossi Leshem is a Senior Researcher in the Department of Zoology in the Faculty of Life Sciences at Tel Aviv University and Dian Fossey was an American primatologist.
[74]In 2009, Orville Stoeber released a CD called “Hymns of the God's Gardeners” inspired by *The Year of the Flood*.

> married and went to bed. For divorces they did the whole thing in reverse: a public statement of non-love and separation, the exchange of dead twigs, and a swift hop over a heap of cold ashes. (115)

These ideals contrast with the wedding ceremony of the Corporation Security Corps (CorpSeCorps) that favored official marriages, which according to the God's Gardeners had only to do with the purpose of "capturing your iris image, your fingerscans, and your DNA, all the better to track you with" (115), as Toby narrates and believes. Technology is portrayed once more as repressive in this dystopian narrative.

If someone wants to be a Gardener, he or she must follow the modest lifestyle and the dietary restrictions of this community since they make cautious use of the natural resources and follow a vegetarian diet, as Toby claims: "once she was with the Gardeners and had taken the Vegivows, Toby suppressed the memory of eating these [SecretBurgers] burgers" (33). As seen previously, this community is also known to believe in the waterless flood, which they assume would cause the eradication of humanity and the other species. To prepare for this disaster, they set up "Ararats", which are hidden food storehouses (47). Therefore, when the flood came, they would have available food that would allow them to survive.

Nevertheless, as the story unfolds, the narrative reveals that some members of the God's Gardeners are involved with the waterless flood, even though they are against the eradication of any type of species. That happened since some of them were once part of the MaddAddam, a group of scientists that became bioterrorists, as they were against the Corps. Crake, the scientist responsible for the pandemic, manipulated some of them to work on human genes splice, which enables his BlyssPluss pill creation — the cause of the human annihilation. The God's Gardeners are involved in ambiguity, as some members can be indirectly involved in the waterless flood, and they cannot prevent the global catastrophe. However, it is important to stress that many of their members survive the waterless flood not because they have immunity like the character Jimmy, but "because they saw a disaster coming and chose to change" (Canavan 155).

Regarding consumption, God's Gardeners cultivate the food they eat. However, they use it not only to feed themselves but also to sell on the market Tree of Life, where other communities sold there. The community sells products like mushrooms, vinegar,

honey, and other vegetables to "affluents from the SolarSpace gated communities, Fernside showoffs, even people from the Compounds" (141). As Ren observes,

> they claimed to prefer our Gardener vegetables to the supermarkette kinds and even to the so-called farmers' markets, where — said Amanda — guys in farmer drag bought stuff from warehouses and tossed it into ethnic baskets and marked up the prices, so even if it said Organic you couldn't trust it. But the Gardener produce was the real thing. It stank of authenticity: the Gardeners might be fanatical and amusingly bizarre, but at least they were ethical. That's how they talked while I was wrapping up their purchases in recycled plastic. (141)

Ren refers that "the Adams and the Eves used to say, *We are what we eat"* (400)*,* and the Gardeners believe that the "digestion was holy and there was nothing funny or terrible about the smell and noises that were part of the end product of the nutritional process" (63), which highlights the importance that this community has given to food. The same character observes that the God's Gardeners "were against refined sugar products and were strict about brushing, though you had to use a frayed twig because they hated the idea of putting either plastic or animal bristles inside their mouths" (216), as they also banned meat consumption.

Besides that, the Gardeners are against any artificial food or medications, as Toby narrates: "but Corps pills were taboo among the Gardeners, so she'd been using extract of Willow, followed by Valerian, with some Poppy[75] mixed in" (112). For the God's Gardeners, Corporation pills were wicked, as they were designed to give and not to treat diseases, as Pilar tells Toby:

> 'but now you must promise me: those Corporation pills are the food of the dead, my dear. Not our kind of dead, the bad kind. The dead who are still alive. We must teach the children to avoid these pills — they're evil. It's not only a rule of faith among us, it's a matter of certainty.' (105)

Although some members like Katuro and Marushka were once doctors before being part of the community (105), currently they opt to rely on traditional medicine, incorporating plant-based medicines, as Toby narrates during the time Zeb is injured: "Pilar and Katuro

[75]The God's Gardeners use poppy, as well as chamomile, for relaxation.

sponged Zeb's cuts with vinegar, then rubbed on honey. Zeb was no longer bleeding, though he was pale. Toby got him a drink of Sumac"[76] (108). She also observes that the Gardeners practice "maggot therapy" to heal faster (107) and use the meat of the SecretBurgers to feed the maggots: "Pilar handed the ground meat to Toby. 'It's for the maggots,' (107). For healing, the God's Gardeners commonly use teas and herbs as remedies like the "Rescue Tea" (251).

Even though the God's Gardeners could eat eggs, not a lot of them did, as Ren observes:

> Adam One said that eggs were potential Creatures, but they weren't Creatures yet: a nut was not a Tree. Did eggs have souls? No, but they had potential souls. So not a lot of Gardeners did egg-eating, but they didn't condemn it either. You didn't apologize to an egg before joining its protein to yours, though you had to apologize to the mother pigeon, and thank her for her gift. (134-5)

As has been seen, and Ren points out, the meat of any kind is banned[77] and considered "obscene as far as the Gardeners were concerned" (62). Nevertheless, she also notes that they teach: "if you killed a thing you had to eat it" (287). Another cherished motto of theirs is "use *what's to hand*" (259), as Toby narrates.

Although the God's Gardeners are devoted vegetarians, children are taught survival tactics, including hunting, in case of necessity. Zeb is the member in charge of teaching the children these skills, as Adam One addresses: "the older children will have a demonstration by Zeb, our respected Adam Seven, concerning the trapping of small Animals for survival food in times of pressing need" (125). The God's Gardeners are aware of famine circumstances caused by a possible collapse, and so they learn what to do in those situations. However, they do not forget their environmental concerns and respect animal life as much as possible, as Toby remembers: "when in extreme need, Adam One used to say, begin at the bottom of the food chain. Those without central nervous systems must surely suffer less" (325). Besides that, he also says that "nothing

[76]Sumac is used in traditional herbal medicine practices because it is rich in antioxidants and beneficial nutrients.

[77]Children use the word "meat-breath" as an insult (70), as well as "pig-eater" and "slug-face" (217). However, to call someone a "vegetable" is also an offense among the Gardeners.

is unclean to us if gratitude is felt and pardon asked, and if we ourselves are willing to offer ourselves to the great chain of nourishment in our turn" (125). Therefore, sacrifice is a value that Adam One encourages in his speeches.

Equally, as in the episode when Billie and Friday are eating in *The Stone Gods*, Ren also narrates that, while a Gardener, she and her family eat together in *The Year of the Flood*, maintaining old practices of consumption around a table that is improvised, and using kitchenware that is collected or handmade by the Gardeners:

> we eat our meals in the main room, on a table made out of a door. All of our dishes and pots and pans were salvaged — gleaned, as the Gardeners said — except for some of the thicker plates and mugs. Those had been made by the Gardeners back in their Ceramics period, before they'd decided that kilns used up too much energy. (63)

Therefore, one can say that this community not only maintains traditional habits regarding food production and consumption but also imposes restrictions concerning food and lifestyle, as seen before.

3.4. Conclusion

Unlike Wreck City's alternative communities in *The Stone Gods* who are not homogenous, the God's Gardeners in *The Year of the Flood* are more consistent, as most of their members share the same practices and beliefs. That brings them closer to a cult, as they have rituals and stay firm in their convictions, as Toby narrates: "she doubted a lot of things. But she kept her doubts to herself, because *doubt* wasn't a word the Gardeners used much" (100). Despite the differences between the two, these fictional communities both fit Lyman Tower Sargent's definition of "intentional community", as they are groups of more than five people who come from more than one nuclear family and who have chosen to live together to enrich their shared values – ones escaping from the life in Tech City, and the others trying to save what is left from the planet.

Regardless of the connection with utopianism, one can say that the two groups do not provide concrete answers on how to build an ideal community. In the first case, the people who are part of the Wreck City's community are different from the norm,

but they live in anarchy, and their formation is not planned. According to Luna Dolezal, in "The Body, Gender, and Biotechnology in Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*", "she [Winterson] does not provide a concrete vision of an alternative society: the three linked stories all spiral to an end with destruction and death" (108). In the second case, the God's Gardeners are a rigid community in what concerns their practices, as well as ambiguous as some of them are indirectly responsible for the global catastrophe. The Gardeners represent not only the imminence of scarcity and the destruction caused by consumerism but also the survival of the human species that is able to change in a dystopian world that is very close to our own – a world deflated by the climate crisis.

Serving as a symbol of resistance against the dystopian worlds in different ways, one can associate freedom with the alternative communities in Wreck City and repair with the God's Gardeners through food references. In the first case, the group respects individuality in a multicultural environment, where different people choose to live together to escape the tech-life; contrasting with the second one, where the collective is favored, and they are trying to save the planet. As for food representations, in the first case, the members are not very strict when it comes to food, eating what they can find, and even the nuns can drink alcohol; in the second case, the members have to eat according to the rules established by the community if they want to be part of it, which means following a no-meat diet and a sustainable way of life, addressing the common ground that they are part of nature, and should protect it and repair the human damages. They are also getting ready for the end of the world or, as they called it, the waterless flood.

Despite these dissimilarities, both communities are marginal, seeking to escape and refusing to follow the values shared by the dominant society. Therefore, these two intentional communities have in common the fact that their nature lies in an alternative response to the way of life of a larger society in a tech-world environment, which is portrayed, in both dystopian narratives, as a failure. This can also be seen through the food, in which lab meat and artificial food represent a collapsed and overexploited world, as happens in the Compounds and in Tech City, which contrasts with the natural food of the God's Gardeners and the dependent food from the past, remains of the war, of the Wreck City's community. In both cases, natural and familiar food is produced,

such as vegetables, and consumed in intimate settings around a table, as it happens with Ren and her family and Billie and Friday. Nevertheless, in these dystopian worlds that face climate crises, women are part of a vulnerable group of people. Following this line, the next chapter will explore female characters and their relationship with food in the two dystopian narratives.

Chapter IV: Food from the female perspective

4.1. Introduction

Scientific and technological progress flourish in the fictional worlds of both *The Stone Gods* and *The Year of the Flood*, but it is not aligned with gender equality. In the first section of the first literary work, this can be noted in passages such as the ones that follow: "science can't fix everything, though – women feel they have to look youthful, men less so, and the lifestyle programmes are full of the appeal of the older man" (11); "the future of women is uncertain. We don't breed in the womb any more, and if we aren't wanted for sex…" (26). The same occurs in the technological world of *The Year of the Flood*, in which dominant and powerful male characters, such as Blanco, contrast with deprived and weaker female characters, like Toby and Ren, whose bodies are property of others.

The study of food can intersect with many theoretical perspectives, including gendered perspectives. As has been seen in the first chapter, and as Lyman Tower Sargent argues in "From Production to Disposal: The Interaction of Food and Society in Utopias", "throughout the history of the literature, food is deeply interconnected with gender relations and relationships of power more generally" (16). Thus, food representations can depict gender stereotypes, not only about, for example, who cooks, cleans the dishes, who eats what and how much but also about body construction. Since the two literary works are critically acclaimed feminist dystopian narratives, this chapter aims to look at food references through the lens of gender and women studies, examining the female gender and how it is constructed within the dystopias.

Thus, if one can say that food not only reflects social and cultural elements but it is also a tangible element in the construction of subjectivity, it becomes relevant to explore characters individually when it comes to literary representations. In this sense, the present chapter will focus on the relationship between four female characters and food: Billie and Pink, in *The Stone Gods* and Ren and Toby from *The Year of the Flood*[78],

[78]Regarding characters' points of view, it is important to note that Pink is introduced from the perspective of Billie, whereas Billie speaks in the first person. In *The Year of the Flood*, despite the fact that both Toby and Ren are main characters, Toby speaks in the third person, while Ren speaks in the first one.

and the role of food in their construction. All the mentioned characters are human beings and central within the stories, except Pink, who is a minor character, but not less relevant to the matter at hand, since she symbolizes women from the general society in the section “Planet Blue”. As such, this chapter aims to explore the role of food production and consumption in the construction of the four female characters in both dystopian narratives.

4.2. The Stone Gods

Starting by considering the role of women in *The Stone Gods*, in the section “Planet Blue”, there is social pressure regarding body image, especially towards women. Getting older is not socially accepted, so people use genetic engineering to fix ageing, and food, which is mostly produced artificially, is regulated as there are only two sizes of clothes. Thus, the human body, and particularly, the female one, is constrained and is mainly artificial. In this dystopian world, robots cook and do chores. In contrast, in the section “Wreck City”, two alternative communities detailed in the section – Alternative and Sisters in Christ, as well as the brief reference to the group of vegan girls named Chic X, are composed by women[79]. Within this framework, these women can be considered the “outsiders”, because they decide to search and create alternative ways of living that are different from those of the general society. Besides that, many are lesbians and others practice celibacy, which reinforces the idea of freedom and diversity. So, what place is left for women in these dystopian worlds and what do they eat? To answer these questions, the following sections will focus on the role of food in the building of the characters Billie and Pink.

In all sections of *The Stone Gods* except for one, a main character named Billie appears as a woman, whereas in the "Easter Island" section, a central character appears as male. In this way, it can be said that the choice of the character’s name was a strategic one, since “Billie” can be used as either a female or male name, and in “Easter Island” there is even a slight variation of spelling – “Billy” – to underline the gender difference.

[79]Two of the female characters of the story who belong to these alternative communities are named after two US states’: Alaska and Nebraska.

Winterson's use of the same name in the different sections of *The Stone Gods* can underline the idea than the world is always repeating. Besides the ambiguity related to the name, the character can also be classified as queer, suggesting that she/he can symbolizes the outcasts within the dystopia. For this analysis, the following section will focus on the character Billie from the sections "Planet Blue" and "Wreck City". Besides Billie, in the section "Planet Blue", Pink (real name Mary McMurphy) appears as a married fifty-eight-year-old woman, "Fixed" at twenty-four[80], who defines herself as a "celebrity-chaser" (42). Despite being a secondary character, studying Pink and her food habits is fundamental in understanding how the female gender is represented in this dystopian narrative, particularly women from the larger society in the section "Planet Blue".

4.2.1. Billie, the nostalgic scientist

In the first section of *The Stone Gods*, Billie Crusoe is a thirty-year-old scientist who works in Enhancement, which means that her job is to visit people who need to talk about their problems at their homes. Billie does not believe in the system, claiming that "it's repressive, corrosive and anti-democratic" (54). Besides being considered an activist, she is accused of hiding Unknowns[81]. Following her boss' suggestion, Billie goes aboard the Starship *Resolution* on a trip to Planet Blue to avoid being arrested, as she is responsible for activating the fire alarm and evacuating the building when the bombing is happening on MORE-*Futures*'. This episode occurs because she is against Genetic Reversal (71) which allows people to return to a younger age. After all, as a scientist, Billie believes that this process should have gone along with an open debate about its ethics (71).

Besides being accused to help terrorists, Billie is, according to her boss Manfred, not an ambitious person since she could have been promoted to Management, but instead continued to visit people (10). In addition, he looks at her "the way you look at a pre-packed sandwich you don't want to eat" (40). In this analogy, she is comparing

[80]Meaning she was genetically modified to permanently look as if she were twenty-four years old.
[81]Unknowns are the people who sabotage official decisions and function as a kind of resistance. When they get out of jail (if they get out), they become "an X-Cit", or, in other words, "an ex-citizen" and "are micro-tagged for life as an Unknown" (30). There is no record of them having existed one day, which means they cannot travel, register or buy anything (30).

herself to unexciting food, seen through the eyes of her boss, meaning she becomes an object (and a non-desirable one). Besides that, this analogy reinforces the idea that Billie is bound to the past, as briefly discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation, as she is trying to maintain the same lifestyle and habits, such as preserving the same old job and traditional ways of food production and consumption. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that even though she looks down on technology and does not want to live in a dehumanized world where robots substitute humans, she develops feelings for Spike – an android associated with the female gender. She is not very open or clear about her own sexuality, as when a man in Peccadillo asked her about it: "you're not straight, are you?'" (24), and she replied "'not exactly'" (24).

The construction of this character's otherness is partly accomplished by the fact that she has a farm and insists on producing and consuming natural food. Billie has twenty hectares of farm, probably one of the few that remain in this dystopian world, as she points out: "my farm is the last of its line – like an ancient ancestor everyone forgot. It's a bio-dome world, secret and sealed: a message in a bottle from another time" (13). Besides that, an Enforcement Officer[82] calls her farm "Cast Out Farm" (48). Billie lives in a "compact stone house, water-barrel by the front door, apple tree at the gate" (48), has a "real" dog[83] named Rufus, horses (48), and other animals.

According to Tyler Bradway, in "Queer Exuberance: The Politics of Affect in Jeanette Winterson's Visceral Fiction", "Billie's sentimentality represents her melancholic attachment to a human past that has been disavowed in favour of techno-futurism" (194). This can be observed in the episode in "Planet Blue" when an Enforcement Officer tells Billie that she needs to pay three million dollars to Central Power and she tells him that "I have been trying for one whole year to speak to a human being in Enforcement. I want a human being to look at my permit" (50). Food references are also intimately connected with Billie's state of humor in "Planet Blue". That is the case of an episode where Billie feels stressed and mad, and throws an egg at the plasma

[82]There are Enforcement Services and Enhancement Services in this world. The last one is where Billie works, talking and helping solve people's problems that will improve the Community. The first one steps in when there is no possibility of resolving the previous situations (11).

[83]In "Planet Blue", people can have robots as pets, as the Enforcement Officer tells Billie: "I got a Robo-collie. He's a real nice round-up dog" (51).

wall in her house in “Planet Blue” (52), as she was informed that she has to pay three million dollars in one week or her farm would be taken away (50) and also about the possibility of Central Power revoke the animals and farm licenses (51), which equally puts her farm in danger.

In line with her feeling of nostalgia and longing for the past, while living in a techy world, Billie eats "real” food, meaning lab-free and natural food, such as the one she produces on the farm. As the pastoral life is nearly extinct in this world, the majority of people like her boss Manfred have a different type of diet. In his case, he is considered a "Natural Nutrition man”, which, despite the “natural” in the name, means, according to Billie that “he eats only the most expensive synthetics, protein- and mineral-balanced for optimum health” (52-3). Despite this way of life that favors an optimization of food, Billie does not follow this way of thinking. She still offers Manfred her food, as she has “messy real food on it [farmhouse table]: a brown loaf, butter, eggs in a bowl” (52). However, despite her offer, Manfred does not accept it.

Regarding her body, Billie wears a Model Thin size, but she used to be a Model Thinner: “‘your size used to be MTT,’ says Tasha[84]. ‘Are you happy with the extra weight?’ ‘Yes, I like it,’ I say” (29). According to this dialogue, and contrary to what one would expect in a society that cultivates the importance of body image, Billie is not concerned about having gained extra weight. The fact that there only exist two women’s sizes in Orbus means that all women are skinny and therefore very similar: “we all look more or less alike” (28), as Billie observes. Reflecting the fact that two different body sizes still exist, Billie thinks that this occurs because "we still have a dieting industry" (29). Through the previous quote, the existence of capitalism and its impact on this fictional world is reinforced.

In this fictional world, all food is regulated, which means that people can only eat a maximum number of calories in order to fit into the two official existing models. Following this line, eating too many calories or getting fat can thus be considered an act of rebellion. Billie having put on a little weight may already represent a deviation from the general standards of society. She does not want to draw too much attention, so she

[84]As Billie narrates in “Planet Blue”, Tasha “is in all the best women's clothing stores. It's a way of giving clone-clothing the exclusive but personal feel” (27).

cannot get too fat, but by gaining weight she does not necessarily obey the norms. Another rebellious act of her is that she thinks she is depressed, which is illegal in this dystopian world (27).

In the section "Wreck City", the character Billie works for MORE-*Futures* and particularly with the Robo *sapiens* Spike. She lives in Tech City, however, she goes to Wreck City with Spike. While there, she drinks in a bar in the Front and accepts drinks from the character Alaska when she enters her house: "'Yes, I'm sure it will be lovely. Thank you very much.' When I am nervous or unsure, I cover up with excessive good manners. I have not had any practice at unexpected drinks with unexpected strangers – naked" (205). As seen in the previous chapter that covered the role of food within intentional communities, the character Alaska is part of a community named the Alternative, and the only food they eat is tinned sardines and drink champagne. In the same section, Billie tells that she loves tinned sardines (183), which can be seen as an analogy to the possibility that she is aligned with the Alternative's values that refuse to live in the techy-life of Tech City. This means that this character can share some values with Billie from "Planet Blue". Besides that, Billie is invited to eat at Friday's house in "Wreck City", in which they share a traditional meal with bread, eggs, and coffee at his table, as seen previously.

In this final section, without telling anyone and after Friday, a barman from Wreck City, has gone to the kitchen to talk with Alaska and Nebraska, Billie takes the food he had brought with him (216): "a couple of bottles of milk, a few bananas" (217) and puts it into her backpack (217). She does this as a precaution because she is scared and feels some dreadful event will happen. Despite this episode where she steals food, it is possible to agree that Billie is a character who cares about others. Besides the fact that she looks out for Spike, that quality can be noted when Billie shows human affection to the nuclear war survivors by offering them food. Thus, when she sees two nuclear war refugees – a boy and a girl in miserable conditions – she instantly gives them her lunch: "there was a bottle of water and a wholegrain bar. An orange and a banana" (202).

Nevertheless, as the opposition forces from Tech City invade Wreck City, Billie runs away from the war and turns her back on the people from the alternative

communities who sheltered her in Wreck City. Thus, despite suffering from the planet's degradation and dehumanization of life, Billie runs away from the battle, which means she does not take responsibility for her world and the future. In line with this, the narrative shows the pessimist idea that even the utopian communities like the ones that live in Wreck City would not be able to escape, and, in the end, probably would end up dying.

However, there is some light and hope that can be found in food references in “Wreck City” since before running away, Billie grabs a boy, who is a victim of the nuclear war, and runs (236). Because he is whimpering, Billie gives him a bottle of milk, and the boy “gave it to the dog to drink” (237) instead of drinking it first: “when he had done that with half of the milk, he drank the rest straight off” (237)[85]. It is important to note that when faced with a dangerous situation such as war, Billie runs but saves the boy and even offers him milk. This attitude is very maternal, and the milk promotes the comparison with breast milk. Besides that, the boy imitates her gesture of kindness by giving the milk first to the dog instead of putting himself in the first place, which is an empathetic gesture.

One can say that the role of food is to give the reader a sense that the character Billie in "Planet Blue" has a very different lifestyle than the general society, which defines her rebellion. That contrasts with the role of food as a form of control, as can be seen in the fact that there are only two body models, meaning that food is regulated in the same section. In "Wreck City", the sharing of food not only represents empathy, as in the final scene with the boy victim of nuclear war, but also socialization, as seen in the episode of the shared meal between Billie and Friday.

4.2.2. Pink, the never ageing woman

In “Planet Blue”, the first section, Mary McMurphy or Pink is obsessed with celebrities, which is represented in her house, which is covered with celebrities’ holograms – “this place is like a Hall of Fame” (19), as observed by Billie. Through a celebrity contest, Pink wins a trip to Planet Blue with the idea of creating a startup that

[85]This act of equally sharing a drink with a dog and satisfying the animal’s thirst before his own shows how someone that is dehumanized by the general society can still show humanity.

will connect people online on the new Planet to celebrities that remain on Orbus. Just as her name implies, her house, robots, clothes, and other objects are in the color pink. Apart from being Genetically Fixed to look younger, Pink also has silicon in her breasts, and her vagina reduced: "I'm tight as a screwtop bottle.'" (71). This female character does not accept aging as she compares it to having "skin that looks like fried onions" (70).

In the same section, Bille, who has already been discussed, has different values from Pink. She has an appointment with Pink because she "wants to be genetically reversed to twelve years old to stop her husband running after schoolgirls" (14). In addition, because this action is illegal, she wants to take her case to the Court of Human Rights (14). Pink wants to be like "Little Señorita", "a twelve-year-old pop star who has Fixed herself rather than lose her fame" (19), as this celebrity is famous for not growing up, despite being illegal to be "Fixed" as a child. The best day of Pink's life was when Little Señorita cut the tape, crashed the bottle, waved, and kissed her on both cheeks, because Pink was boarding that day on the Starship *Resolution* (56).

Her desire to preserve youth and her image is triggered by her husband's sexual desire for younger girls. Concerning this topic, Pink talks with Billie about the fact that her husband is sexually attracted to children as if it is an ordinary thing:

> 'my husband likes girls.'
>
> 'Legal sex starts at fourteen,' I reply.
>
> 'But everybody does it younger. Y'know that!' (20)

When Billie asks if he has "underage sex at home" (20), Pink replies that "'oh, no, he always goes out. But I don't want to lose him.'" (20). Through this dialogue, Pink gives the impression that she considers that being a pedophile is acceptable as long as her husband has sexual intercourse with children outside of their house: "'do you think you can stop him from having sex with young girls by becoming one yourself?' 'Y'know, that's not my aim. He can do what he likes as long as he doesn't do it in the house" (20). Although this character seems to support male-dominant ideas, Pink sometimes criticizes men: "'they use us up, wear us out, then cast us off for a younger model so that they can do it all again.'" (69). Nevertheless, she is frequently dismissing their

misogynistic behaviors, especially the ones from her husband: "'he's just sentimental. When we go shopping, he always likes to visit the toy store. Men, y'know, they don't grow up – it makes sense that they like girls.'" (70), comparing him to a child.

Concerning food consumption, Pink is often drinking especially alcohol. In the episode where she is in her sitting room with Billie, Pink eagerly drinks a foaming beverage called "Nitrogen Ginseng" and swears by it (21). The drink is brought to her and Billie by Kitchenhands: "like pink rubber gloves" (20), as Pink prefers that robots do her chores. Besides drinking this probable energetic beverage, she also drinks champagne with captain Handsome, a space privateer[86] in the spaceship.

> 'Join the party,' said Handsome, which was a mistake as Pink McMurphy was sliding by, and to her the word 'party' was the same as the word 'drink' – lots of it.
>
> Handsome took his cue and brought out the champagne, fizzing the Jeroboam, and throwing it like liquid rope into bollard-shaped glasses. (58)

This is not the first time, as Mrs. Mary McMurphy often drinks champagne: "Pink poured herself some more champagne, and ripped into a bag of nuts" (77), and she sighed when Handsome tells that "'the champagne's in the cooler,'" (69). Not only does she like to drink, but she also encourages other people to do it, as when Spike is telling her that robots will be the future of the world, and she proposes to drink: "'let's have more champagne.'" (78). Pink also offers alcoholic drinks to Billie[87]: "'you think too much,' said Pink. 'I'll get you a drink" (77). As champagne is a common drink for celebrations, it is interesting to note that Pink drinks it at all times, as she is always partying. Being a regular drinker is not her only festive attribute, as Mary McMurphy also sings and dances (80-1).

Besides champagne, Pink is an enthusiast for other alcoholic drinks like wine, as well as for being in bars in general:

> I don't like boats unless they're big and white with a sun deck and a bar.'

[86]Handsome drinks to Planet Blue and Spike.
[87]Despite the various attempts of the character Pink in offering alcohol to Billie in "Planet Blue", it is relevant to note that she does not accept it.

‘You can cool a bottle of wine in the lake,’ said Spike. (85)

She gives so much value to drinks that when a bottle of wine falls into the river, while she is putting it in the lake to cool it, she does not want to let go the bottle:

’Let go!’ shouted Spike.

‘That’s Chardonnay Number One Vat,’ said Pink. ‘I’m not giving it to some fish.’ (87)

Moreover, when she is already safe in the canoe, after having fallen and almost died, her first concern is to open the rescued bottle: “‘I’m opening the wine before some other mutant takes a fancy to it.’ She pulled the cork and swigged straight from the neck, then sat upright, the bottle between her knees” (88). Then, she “threw the bottle playfully over to my canoe”. I [Billie] deliberately let it drop into the lake” (88).

For Pink, the definition of a great place to live is to be as artificial as possible and human-controlled: “I’d rather be in a bar overlooking an artificial lake – one where the fountain comes on every hour, and where the trees are all pollen-free, and where you can get a great steak and go dancing at midnight” (86). She believes that humans should control nature: “nature’s unpredictable – that’s why we had to tame her. […] I want to be able to go out for a drink without getting hassled by some gawp-eyed museum-quality cod.’” (88). She compares fish, in this case, cod, with men who stalk her: “whenever I go out for a drink at Home, I end up being followed by some gawp-eyed cod. I guess some things don’t change, whatever planet you’re on’” (88). The fish, because of the primitive nature that she implies, is connoted as undesirable and hassling.

Regarding artificial food, Pink considers that “lab-meat is cruelty-free” (86), compared to the practice of people breeding animals for eating, which she considers backward (86). This can be observed in the episode when the Robo *sapiens* is trying to teach her basic human-survival skills and when Spike kills a fish, Pink screams (85-6). Pink believes that a “real” fish is “Fossil Food” (89), which means that, according to her thought, eating “real” animals is dated. For Pink, the fish in the lake should be in a museum. As analyzed previously, her belief that everything in nature should be controlled is radically different from Billie's values since she preserves pastoral life.

However, after experiencing cooking with the Robo *sapiens* on the ship, Pink enjoys her homemade meal with "real" food.

> Spike cooked the fish, forcing Pink McMurphy into the kitchen, 'like a galley slave', and showing her how to gut, clean and season what Pink called 'Fossil Food'.
>
> At dinner, astonished by the taste and freshness of what she had made, Pink declared she was going to open a restaurant back in Cap City called Fossil Food,
>
> 'real expensive, niche cooking, gourmet stuff, the celebrities will love it.'
>
> 'I thought you said live food was barbaric.'
>
> 'I never tasted it.' (89)

Despite considering cooking and natural food "quaint" and "old-fashioned" (89), Pink changes her mind about the fact that "cooking from fresh, eating together" (89) is not worthy, as well as the idea of eating animals that she previously associated with barbaric actions.

As Pink thinks about the possibility of opening a restaurant, she reconsiders the option of being "Fixed" at a young age, as she believes that a twelve-year-old chef certainly would not be taken seriously (89). This character changes a lot in her brief passage through Planet Blue. That can be seen when she is leaving the same planet with Handsome and other crew' members, because of an emergency, and takes utensils with her to cook: "Pink McMurphy was wearing a thermal combat suit and carrying cooking equipment" (96), as Billie observes. However, she does not change completely, as Pink wants to open her own restaurant, but her main target is celebrities.

When comparing Pink to Billie, Pink is more vivid and favors technology; however, she does not accept her age or her own body, in opposition to Billie that chooses not to be "Fixed" and is comfortable with her weight, preferring a more traditional way of life, further away from technology. Another difference between the two characters is that while Billie has a farm and supports natural food, Pink does not even know how to grow potatoes nor how to cook them, using only pre-prepared meals:

> Pink, do you know how to plant potatoes?'

’You mean like chips?’

‘Or how to cook them?’

‘Sure I do – the bag goes in the microwave.’ (78-9)

While in “Planet Blue” Pink is a married housewife, who is in favor of technological advances and wins a contest that sends her into the occupation of a new planet, in the last section appears a character with the same name – Sister Mary McMurphy, a poor nun who left “the Holy Sisters of the Shining Mercy” (211), and asked for food at Alaska’s house in “Wreck City”. Besides the name, it is relevant to point out that the nun also has a champagne like the character Pink, which becomes a connection point between the two. However, the situations are different – Pink drinks champagne because she wants to and enjoys it, while Sister Mary McMurphy accepts to have it because she and the other nuns run out of food and the beverage and tinned sardines are the only two things that Alaska has (211). Besides champagne, in the end, both of them also eat fish. Thus, through food references and name, the different characters in distinct times and sections seem to be connected, reinforcing the idea that history repeats itself.

This character may represent the levity and alienation of the dystopian society, which no longer remembers or wants to know how to cook, and which does not recognize the taste of natural food, since it has never tasted it. However, and at the insistence of the android Spike, Pink learns to fish and cook and tastes food cooked not by human but artificial hands. The fact that she likes it and wants to become a chef shows that habits of the past, connected to the making and consumption of food, are still desired by the members of this society. It is also relevant to observe that Winterson plays with the idea of repetition through food-related elements that are observed between Pink and Sister Mary.

4.3. The Year of the Flood

Margaret Atwood’s *The Year of the Flood* presents female characters that face a world where resources are running out. That is the case of Toby, who is presented in the third person, and Ren, who speaks in the first person. Different in age, with Ren being

younger than Toby, both characters are former God's Gardeners who are able to survive the waterless flood when humankind almost goes extinct. During their life until the flood, they live in different realities.

Toby is an orphan sheltered by the God's Gardeners to escape her violent boss at SecretBurgers. Before the Gardeners, and while she was studying Holistic Healing – Lotions and Potions at Martha Graham, her mother got ill with a mysterious disease and ended up dying; after his mother's death, her father committed suicide. Because Toby is alone, has no money, and does not want to be identified by the Corps, she has to take a job as a furzooter[88]. She also sells her hair and eggs on the black market. After that, Toby worked at SecretBurgers, where her boss abused her. She is rescued when she joins the Gardeners. When the waterless flood comes, she is alone at a luxurious spa, where she barricades herself.

Regarding Ren, who is a trapeze dancer at a club named Scales and Tails, she grows up in two different realities: part with the God's Gardeners at the Edencliff Rooftop Garden in the pleeblands, and other in the comfort of the HelthWyzer Compounds facilities, a place with the latest technology. This transition from one life to another happens when she is a child as her mother Lucerne runs away with her to live among the Gardeners' community with Zeb, with whom she had fallen in love[89]. Even though Ren has living parents, in contrast with Toby, they are not very close, and she seems to have a more meaningful relationship with other people like her friend Amanda, who comes to rescue her at the club after the waterless flood.

As happened earlier, in the previous sections about *The Stone Gods*, the following sections will explore the role of food in the construction of these two female characters – Toby and Ren, concerning the different moments of their lives – before, during, and after being part of the God's Gardeners community.

[88]As per de novel, "the furzooters put on fake-fur animal suits with cartoon heads and hung advertising signs around their necks, and worked the higher-end malls and the boutique retail streets" (31).
[89]After a while, Lucerne returned with Ren to their home in the Compounds, where Ren's father lived. That happened because Lucerne believed that her love for Zeb was not to the same extent reciprocal.

4.3.1. Toby, the beekeeper

Before being part of the God's Gardeners community, the character Toby (or Tobiatha) seeks ways to survive the abuses of her boss Blanco, one of the managers of SecretBurgers. According to J. Brooks Bouson, in "'We're Using Up the Earth. It's Almost Gone': A Return to the Post-Apocalyptic Future in Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*", he is a rapist, "who is free not only to make Toby his sexual slave but also, if he wishes, to kill her and to literally turn her into meat" (12). Following this line of thought, Toby's body is just another type of meat to this man, who is fat indeed, as the novel reveals: "Blanco was still bouncer-shaped – oblong and hefty – thought running to fat: too much beer, said Rebecca[90]" (36) and has a tattoo on his back of "a naked woman, wound in chains, her head invisible" (37), as Toby observes.

She applies for the job at SecretBurgers, in order to have food and money, as her parents were dead, but instead, as she notes, "day by day she was hungrier and more exhausted" (38). Her boss Blanco "demanded her services during her lunch break – the whole half-hour – which meant she got no lunch (38), as Toby narrates. It is important to stress that while Toby gets thinner, Blanco continues to be fat. Regarding food consumption, Toby ingests artificial food, such as hamburgers from SecretBurgers, since she was a worker there and so she had two a day for free.

In the protest outside the restaurant, Adam One asks Toby if she knows what she is selling there and if she will eat her own relatives, Toby replies:

> 'I would,' Toby said, 'if I was hungry enough. Please go!'
>
> 'I see you've had a difficult time, my child,' said Adam One. (40)

This episode highlights her high sense of survival from the beginning, even before joining the God's Gardeners. Thus, Toby joined the community, not because of their values but to escape her predatory boss, as she observes, "freedom from Blanco was worth a lot: she was lucky she hadn't ended up fucked into a purée and battered to a pulp and poured out onto a vacant lot" (103). As a decisive element within the God's Gardeners' community, food is present in Toby's initiation into the group.

[90]Rebecca is a character that works with Toby in SecretBurgers. She also joins the Gardeners.

> That first evening, there was a modest celebration in honour of Toby's advent. A great fuss was made over the opening of a jar of preserved purple items — those were her first elderberries — and a pot of honey was produced as if it was the Holy Grail.
>
> Adam One made a little speech about providential rescues. The brand plucked from the burning was mentioned, and the one lost sheep — she'd heard of those before, at church — but other, unfamiliar examples of rescue were used as well: the relocated snail, the windfall pear. Then they'd eaten a sort of lentil pancake and a dish called Pilar's Pickled Mushroom Medley, followed by slices of soybread topped with the purple berries and the honey. (43)

In this regard, it can be seen that Toby is soon initiated into the importance of saving and saving food. Honey, purple berries, lentils, and soy are the key ingredients of that first evening, as well as pickles[91].

After being sheltered by the God's Gardeners, Toby believes that she will never be an Eve, and sometimes she thinks about deserting. However, she is led to follow the Gardeners' principles, not only because of the fear of being banned from the group and facing Blanco alone but also because she gets involved in the community. Even though she follows the Gardeners' dietarian rules, such as becoming vegetarian and respecting the environment, Toby ends up drinking a Happicappuchino after Pilar's death and considers that it has a delicious flavor, as she observes. "It seemed a lifetime since she'd drunk any of the stuff. She ordered a Happicappuchino. She'd forgotten how delicious they could be. She drank it in sips: it could be years before she got another, if she ever did get one" (185). Toby thinks about the fact that she forgot the taste of this drink, at the same time that she recognizes how delicious the beverage is, which can represent her feelings of nostalgia, in which she used to drink what she felt like and had a different way of life.

Nevertheless, as previously seen, her life before the Gardeners was miserable and lonely, since Toby was an orphan who worked at a restaurant where she was

[91]Besides vegetarianism, the importance that God's Gardeners give to conserving their food can be noted with the allusion to pickles and the fact that this community has its own honey production.

constantly abused by her boss but had to work there to survive. Besides that, it is important to refer that it is Zeb who has the idea of drinking it and not her:

> C'mon, let's grab a Happicuppa. […]
>
> 'We're drinking Happicuppa?' said Toby. […]
>
> 'We're in deep cover,' said Zeb. 'You have to act the part!'" (185)

Zeb convinces her to drink Happicuppa after the death of Pilar, who was very dear to Toby. Through the course of the story, Toby develops feelings for Zeb, so she feels pleased to get a compliment from him, regarding her physical appearance: "'I bet you used to be a babe until the Gardeners got to you.' Used to be, thinks Toby. That about sums up everything. Nevertheless, she was pleased: she hadn't had a gender-weighted compliment for some time" (185).

Toby changes after being part of the God's Gardeners as she joins a cohesive group. Despite being initially reluctant, she fraternizes and cares about the community while she gets to know herself better, as she narrates: "at night, Toby breathed herself in. Her new self. Her skin smelled like honey and salt. And earth" (101); "I'm getting as mushy as the rest of them, thought Toby. Addled as an egg. Next thing I'll be talking to flowers. Or snails, like Nuala" (180). After becoming part of the group, she stopped taking care of just herself as she entered a community, in which people take care of each other.

One of Toby's main roles among the Gardeners is to be the beekeeper, an inherited role passed down from Pilar, who taught Toby everything she needed to know about bees, including that: "you can always tell the bees your troubles" (99). Besides that, "Pilar took her to visit the beehives, and introduced her to the bees by name" (99), as Toby observes. Contrasting with the other bees of the world, which were in trouble because of "the pesticides, or the hot weather, or a disease, or maybe all of these – nobody knew exactly" (100), the bees on the Rooftop Garden are safe and loved (100), as Pilar teaches Toby. Pilar believes that bees are loyal to the beekeeper and because of that, Toby plays a key role in replacing Pilar after her death. The queen bee is also a vital

element for the hive, as Pilar explains to her[92]: "since if you killed that bee, the rest lost their purpose. That's why the chess king doesn't move around much on the board — it's because the queen bee always stays inside the hive" (110).

As a new beekeeper, the bees allow Toby "to extract the honey by herself, and she got stung only twice" (99), as she observes. Regarding their contribution to the community, Pilar and Toby usually extracted the honey together and stored it in jars, which they stamped with a little bee stamp instead of lettering. As Toby and Pilar prepare for the waterless flood, some honey jars were set aside for the Ararat to add to the preserved foods (101). Pilar also taught Toby many sayings about bees, including that they were "messengers between this world and the other worlds […] between the living and the dead" (180);

> A bee in the house means a visit from a stranger, and if you kill the bee, the visit will not be a good one. If the beekeeper dies, the bees must be told, or they will swarm and fly away. Honey helps an open wound. A swarm of bees in May, worth a cool day. A swarm of bees in June, worth a new moon. A swarm of bees in July, not worth a squashed fly. (99)

Even before her death, Pilar wanted Toby to replace her: "'I want you to be Eve Six,' Pilar said. 'In my place. No one else has the talent, and the knowledge. Can you do that for me? Promise?'" (180). As she promised Pilar, Toby informed the bees of the death of the former beekeeper: 'bees,' she said. 'I bring news. You must tell your Queen.' Were they listening? Perhaps. They were nibbling gently at the edges of her dried tears. For the salt, a scientist would say. 'Pilar is dead,' she said" (181). As Toby replaces Pilar, she becomes Eve Six: "these were the words Pilar had taught her. She felt like such a dolt, saying them out loud. 'until then, I am your new Eve Six.'" (181), and she turns out to be the official beekeeper.

Before she dies, Pilar also shares with Toby knowledge about mushrooms and other plants, such as the benefits of Poppy plants. They also prepare remedies and elixirs together. Nevertheless, it is relevant to emphasize that the two duties complement each

[92]It is relevant to point out that Pilar says that "they used to think the queen of the bees was a king" (110), which represents that it is a general idea that the male gender has the power and domain the female in this fictional world.

other since “bees and mushrooms went together” (100), as Pilar says to Toby. According to this Eve, “there were mushrooms for eating, mushrooms for medicinal uses, and mushrooms for visions” (100) and three kinds of mushrooms: “Never Poisonous, Employ with Caution and Advice, and Beware. They all had to be memorized. Puffballs, any species: Never Poisonous. The psilocybins: Employ with Caution and Advice. All amanitas, and especially amanita phalloides, the Death Angel: Beware” (100-1).

Eve Six/Pilar can be considered a kind of maternal figure to Toby, as Toby narrates that she “spent all her spare hours with Pilar” (101). The fact that they both take care of the bees, as well as of the people in the community by creating remedies and storing extra food brings them closer to the role of motherhood, even though neither of them has children or is married.

> Pilar used to bring the news to the bees every morning. Would Toby be expected to do the same? Yes, she would. It was one of the functions of the Eve Six. If you didn’t tell the bees everything that was going on, Pilar said, their feelings would be hurt and they’d swarm and go elsewhere. Or they’d die.
>
> The bees on her face hesitated: maybe they could feel her trembling. But they could tell grief from fear, because they didn’t sting. (181)

However, like Toby's birth mother, Pilar dies: “but what about me? thought Toby. I’m being deserted. It was like the time her mother died, and then her father. How many times did she have to go through the process of being orphaned?” (179-80), leaving Toby parentless. Despite the relevant contribution of Toby to the well-being of the Gardeners’ community, the character Ren considered that Toby was rigid: “she was strict: you had to stand up straight and be extra polite” (142). Among the children from the God’s Gardeners, they used to call her “Wet Witch”.

Her serene life in the God’s Gardeners community is interrupted by fear of Blanco. When he encounters Toby, he threatens her and tells her that she is meat: “‘I see you, stringy-assed bitch!’ he’d yelled. ‘You’re meat!’” (255). Thus, the Gardeners send Toby to a clinic, where she modifies her hair and other physical attributes, so that Blanco would not be able to recognize her. She even works as a manager at a luxurious spa called AnooYoo Spa, and when the waterless flood happens, Toby stays safe inside the spa, where she remains for a long time. In the meanwhile, she manages to grow her

own vegetables and feed herself, following some of the Gardeners' teaching: "she's counting on this garden: her supplies in the storeroom are getting low […]. Luckily, everything in the garden is doing well" (15-6).

Even though she did not convert to the radicalism that can be associated with the God's Gardeners, some of her attitudes show that their way of seeing the world has been, to some extent, imprinted on her: "she picks some spinach, flicks off the iridescent green beetles on it, steps on them. Then, feeling remorseful, she makes a thumbprint grave for them and says the words for the freeing of the soul and the asking of pardon" (16); "they're God's Creatures" (18). Toby ends up remembering many of the conversations with Adam One and the other God's Gardeners, keeping their memory alive and following their practices. Therefore, she does everything to survive, even relocating slugs and snails (16).

By surviving alone, Toby transforms, and her body accompanies this change, as she notes: "her own hands are getting thicker — stiff and brown, like roots. She's been digging in the earth too much" (16). Although she still has food, Toby becomes thinner and thinner, probably because she is trying to save as much food as possible: "my body is shrinking, she thinks. I'm puckering, I'm dwindling. Soon I'll be nothing but a hangnail" (17), as she observes. Being a survivor is a quality associated with her since the beginning of the narrative. Toby goes stronger over the course of the story as she proves her independence and courage. Nevertheless, nostalgia haunts her several times from a period of her life that is even previous to the one she lived among the Gardeners: "at this point, Toby would have an image of the set of salt and pepper shakers that used to be on the kitchen table in her long-ago childhood home: a little china hen, a little china rooster" (117).

Toby can be considered a pragmatic person, which can be observed in the episode where she ponders on killing Ren by giving her "Death Angels" since the food would not be enough for both of them: "Toby considers the powdered Death Angels. It wouldn't take much. Just a little, in Ren's weakened condition. Put her out of her misery. Help her to fly away on white, white wings. Maybe it would be kinder. A blessing" (357). However, Toby does not do it. She is a guardian, not only for the hive but also for the other members of the God's Gardeners. That can be observed in the episode where she

is taking care of Ren when she is very weak: “Toby cleans out the gash and puts some honey on it. Antibiotics in it, Pilar used to say” (356); “‘I’ll give you some Willow and Chamomile,’ Toby says. And Poppy, she thinks. ‘You need to sleep.’ Ren will be safer on the floor than on the table” (356). She uses her knowledge to heal Ren:

> while Ren sleeps, Toby sorts through her store of dried mushrooms. She chooses the immune-system boosters: reishi, maitake, shitake, birch polypore, zhu ling, lion’s mane, coryceps, ice man. She puts them in boiled water to soak. Then in the afternoon she prepares a mushroom elixir — the simmering, the straining, the cooling — and gives Ren thirty drops of it. (357)

One can say that, despite her troubled past, Toby constantly fights for her survival — from a sexually abused orphan to an Eve of the God’s Gardeners, who is in charge of the hive. That change is also revealed through food – from a starved worker to a self-sufficient beekeeper who knows how to grow her own vegetables and heal people using medicinal herbs. Even though Toby improves, she continues to be thin, and she is forced to abandon the community to escape Blanco, having to change her own identity. Therefore, despite her resilience, she continues to feel the disadvantages of being a powerless woman.

4.3.2. Ren, the trapeze dancer

In *The Year of the Flood*, the character Ren spends her childhood partly at the HelthWyzer Compound, where her biological father works, and another part with the God’s Gardeners community. There is not much information about her life before the God’s Gardeners as she joined the Gardeners at a young age. Her mother Lucerne took Ren from the Compound to live in the pleeblands with her lover Zeb, among the Gardeners. After joining this community, Ren’s initial reaction is not immediately positive since her past life at the Compound was significantly different. That is particularly relevant to observe through the diet, as the Gardeners are vegetarian and restricting when it comes to food, and Ren used to eat meat and artificial food at the HelthWyzer Compound, as she narrates.

> While Zeb was singing in the shower I'd get myself something to eat — dry soybits or maybe a vegetable patty left over from dinner. Lucerne was a fairly terrible cook. Then I'd go off to school. I was usually still hungry, but I could count on a school lunch. It wouldn't be great, but it would be food. As Adam One used to say, Hunger is the best sauce.
>
> I couldn't remember ever being hungry at the HelthWyzer Compound. I really wanted to go back there. (65)

The modest lifestyle of the God's Gardeners contrasts with the abundant tech-life of the Compounds. Even though the adaptation period is demanding, Ren ultimately settles in and makes friends with the other Gardeners' children, like Bernice. However, despite the close friendship of the two, Ren eventually replaces Bernice for Amanda Payne, an orphan girl from the pleeblands who ends up living with Ren, her mother Lucerne, and Zeb. As for the relationship with her mother Lucerne, the two are not close. Regarding Lucerne, she usually does not cook or participate in the shared chores of the Gardeners.

However, on the morning of Zeb's demonstration[93], her mother cooked the breakfast, as Ren observes: "usually Lucerne stayed in bed until we were gone, partly to avoid Amanda, but today she was in the kitchen area, wearing her dark-coloured Gardener dress, and she was actually cooking. She'd been making that effort more often lately" (133). The unusual homemade meal is considered good by both Ren and Zeb: "for breakfast we had mashed-up fried black beans and soft-boiled pigeon's eggs. 'Nice breakfast, babe,' Zeb said to Lucerne. I had to admit that it was actually quite nice, even though Lucerne had cooked it" (133). For this typical Gardener's breakfast, organic ingredients are used — beans from the Garden and pigeon eggs from the rooftop (134). They share the meal as a family as Ren notes: "Amanda had one pigeon's egg. So did I. Zeb had three, plus Lucerne's. He needed more than us because he was bigger, Lucerne said: if we ate like him we'd get fat" (135). With this dialogue, the reader becomes aware that Ren is not overweight, and that the girls eat only one egg, in contrast with the male figure, who eats four.

[93]Zeb's Predator-Prey Relationship demonstration is when Zeb teaches the children how to hunt in case of emergency.

Ren followed a strict vegetarian diet while living with the God's Gardeners. Despite being born and raised in a meat-eating community, Ren seems to forget the taste of meat, as she claims: "Amanda and I — and Bernice as well — would be joining the older kids for Zeb's Predator-Prey Relationship demonstration, when we'd have to eat real prey. I had a faint memory of meat-eating, back at the HelthWyzer Compound" (132). She is repulsed by the meat flavor: "but I had the taste of rabbit in my mouth. It felt like I'd eaten a nosebleed" (140); "we'd hold our noses to avoid the stink of frizzling meat" (148).

As already discussed, the God's Gardeners perform tasks for the common good of their community. Therefore, the children have the practice to help sell organic products at the Tree of Life market. In that sense, Ren helps to sell mushrooms and vinegar, as she narrates: "after an hour selling mushrooms with Toby we were told to go over to Nuala's booth to help with the vinegar" (142). In addition, Ren also helps Pilar and Toby to pick mushrooms, as she observes: "any other Saint Euell's Week we'd have gone to the Heritage Park to look for mushrooms with Pilar and Toby" (148).

Ren's life changes dramatically when she returns to the Compounds. Her birth name was Brenda and so she readopted it. The change of the name embodies the transformation that followed her, passing from one life to the other, adopting two radically different ways of being. When she was Ren among the God's Gardeners, she was vegetarian and lived in the community, respecting the sacred habits of the group; meanwhile, Brenda had to live according to the standard life in the Compounds. That includes drinking "toxic" drinks, eating artificial and lab-grown food, taking long baths, going to a proper school, and spending free time at the mall, as she narrates: "the first morning at that school was very strange. I felt as if the classes were in a foreign language. All the subjects were different, the words were different, and then there were the computers and the paper notebooks" (216);

> after doing our homework Jimmy and I would hang out at the HelthWyzer mall and play tame video games and drink Happicappuchinos. The first time, I told him Happicuppa was the brew of evil so I couldn't drink it, and he laughed at me. The second time I made an effort, and it tasted delicious, and soon I wasn't thinking too much about the evilness of it. (221)

As food is both sacred and sinful for the Gardeners, Ren finds difficulties in readapting to her standard old diet after spending so much time with the community, as can be observed in the episode when she has school lunch and the children are eating bacon, fish sticks, and burgers: “I peeled the bun off my WyzeBurger[94] and tried to eat that, but it stank of dead animal” (216).

At first, Ren feels bad for breaking the sacred habits and beliefs of the God’s Gardeners, such as washing herself with “fake-flower bath essence” (209), and taking long baths. That contrasts with the Gardeners’ life habits, as they showered briefly and did not use lotions or non-natural products: “I missed the smell of my own skin, which had lost its salty flavour and was now soapy and perfumy” (210). The smells embody her longing for her past life with the God’s Gardeners: “I missed the leafy smells, of the Gardeners, the cooking smells, even the sharp vinegar tang; even the violet biolets” (209); “he’d[95] smell comforting, in the dream — like rained-on grass, and cinnamon, and the salty, vinegary, singed-leaf smell of the Gardeners” (214).

When Ren remembers her former life with the God's Gardeners, it is possible to note that there is a sort of detachment, particularly when it comes to the radicalism of the group that is expressed through food, as seen in the following quote.

> It was my first April Fish without Bernice. We’d always decorated a Fish Cake together when we were little, before Amanda arrived. We’d fight all the time about what to put on it. Once we’d made our cake green, with spinach for the green colour, with eyes of carrot rounds. It looked really toxic. Thinking about that cake made me want to cry. (203)

Despite the God's Gardeners' education, Ren dismisses the “green ideals” and follows the standards of the general society to fit into the system. Ren blends in and ends up relating to people who live at the HelthWyzer Compound, as the character Jimmy, for whom she develops strong feelings. Thus, when they grow up, the two characters actually end up dating. However, they argue and break up after Jimmy reads Ren’s diary. Besides the incident that leads her to lose her trust in him, she knows him as a

[94]Ren notes that WyzeBurgers “were made of meat cultured on stretchy racks. So no animals had actually been killed” (216).
[95]Ren is referring to Zeb, who turned out to be a father figure for her.

womanizer: “I couldn’t stand it that he would just include me in a big basket of girls, as if we were peaches or turnips” (227). It is relevant to note that Ren compares women to fruit and vegetable. She also studied Dance Calisthenics and Dramatic Expression at Martha Graham Academy but did not complete her degree.

When the waterless flood comes, Ren is able to survive as she is locked in an isolation room at a high-end sex club called Scales and Tails, where she works, as a trapeze dancer. Despite the teachings she had as a child among the God's Gardeners community, Ren chooses to take a job and follow a way of life that would have been considered sinful by the community, but she considers that working at the club has its advantages. Ren even likes her boss Mordis, who rewards her by offering her caviar as a treat for her good behavior, as she narrates: “Loyalty Snacks, he called them; he’d dish them out when you’d gone the extra mile, though you never knew in advance what that extra mile would be. That’s how I got to eat my first caviar” (324).

Ren does not stay alone at the club the entire time, as her friend Amanda comes to join her and opens the Sticky Zone room where she is locked. Contrary to Toby, Ren does not have to face the crisis alone. The two friends share the food that is leftover at the club like Joltbars, ChickieNobs, and Happicuppa: “then we put on the green Scales dressing gowns Mordis kept for his best girls and sat around eating Joltbars from the minifridge and microwaving ChickieNobs, and drinking some beers we’d found downstairs” (318); “then we […] went into the Scales kitchen where they used to make the bar snacks. We microwaved some frozen soybread out of the main freezer and had that for breakfast, with instant Happicuppa” (323); “in the evenings we’d have a few drinks — there were still some unbroken bottles behind the bar — and raid the expensive tinned foods Mordis kept for the high-roller clients and also for his best girls” (324). Besides the artificial food that they find at the club, they also drink champagne and try to enjoy the “end of the world”, as Ren observes: “one day we were drinking champagne and I said, ‘Let’s do our nails, they’re a wreck.’” (330); “after that we had some more champagne, and I had another party idea” (330).

Through the analysis of the food references, it is possible to observe that this character, despite having been taught about the importance of preserving the planet and habits, like vegetarianism, ends up molding herself to the social habits of the

community she is in. That can be considered an analogy with the informed consumer of the real world who chooses to adopt the prevailing habits to fit the environment where he or she lives. Regarding this, one can say that Ren does not have a demanding past as Toby. However, Ren also survives the waterless flood precisely because she was part of the God's Gardeners and recognizes the need for change. Contrasting with Toby, who cultivates and saves food to survive the waterless flood, Ren eats what she and Amanda could find, including drinking alcohol and eating artificial food.

4.4. Conclusion

When focusing on food studies in literature, it is possible to find connections with gender studies, as seen previously, which can be associated directly with power relations – usually powerful men in contrast to powerless women. That literary representation seems to reflect on reality as, even though women are gaining their emancipation and a place in the public sphere, gender inequalities continue to persist and are even broadened by the climate crisis, marking women as a vulnerable group, particularly when it comes to the access to food and water. Thus, this chapter explored food as a symbolic tool in the construction of four female characters from the two dystopian narratives in analysis.

In *The Stone Gods*, “In Planet Blue”, while Billie feels nostalgia about a humanized past, supporting a traditional way of living and eating natural food from her farm, which represents her rebellion, Pink embraces the commodities of progress, such as the robots that do her chores, including the cooking, and also the idea that women should “repair” themselves, which is aligned with the values of the general society. However, after being inspired by the Robo *sapiens* Spike, Pink thinks that cooking and eating natural food is rewarding, which means that the past habits connected to the making and consumption of food can still be desired by the dystopian society. In "Wreck City", and concerning Billie, the act of sharing food not only represents empathy but also socialization.

In *The Year of the Flood*, Ren uses her body to make a living as a trapeze dancer at Scales and Tails. Contrasting with Toby, who worked at SecretBurgers and develops a distressing relationship with her manager Blanco, while trying to go unnoticed. While

Ren expresses her femininity by dancing and showing her body and being confident about it, Toby is a more modest figure, as she is known as the “Wet Witch”. The two female characters are different as Ren is more passionate and vulnerable than Toby. That can be seen in her obsession with Jimmy, contrasting with Toby’s pragmatism, which makes her constantly think about survival.

However, despite their difference in age, background, and personality, neither one nor the other tries to fight the system and gain control of their own life – they only fight for their self-preservation, trading their bodies to survive, and become consumable goods. After leaving the God’s Gardeners, Ren and Toby continue to think about the values they shared as a community, the importance of vegetarianism, and survival techniques, but in different ways. At the HelthWyzer Compound, Ren eats the food that is sold there to fit the system, and, after the flood, she consumes all the available food, including the artificial one to survive, while Toby, during the flood, cultivates and has food provisions, as the Gardeners teach her.

After taking a deeper look into the four female characters and the role of food in their construction, it can be concluded that analyzing this relationship is symbolically relevant, as it shows that these dystopian worlds filled with technological and scientific advances continue to promote women’s objectification, through skinny bodies who have to fit into the system, and otherness, as eating natural food and gaining more weight can be considered an act of rebellion. Besides that, the act of self-preservation through the use of the body can be seen as a critique to the passivism some women display in gaining their emancipation.

Conclusion

Considering all that has been explored, we can question if literary representations of food are indeed a useful symbolic tool when it comes to dystopian narratives. One thing is certain – food is a common element between the readers and the fictional worlds; it not only defines the cultural and social settings to which we belong, but also evokes personal memories such as what we eat when we are children, who teaches us how to cook, and what our favorite dish is. Generally, one can say that, when thinking about food, the whole experience has to be considered: not only the sensorial aspects such as the smells, the taste, the sound, the touch, the colors, but also who we share it with, when and where.

Within this context, and has been discussed in the first chapter, foodways can represent both hope and despair when it comes to dystopian fiction. When it comes to hope, both natural and artificial food can be the solution to tackle scarcity. Even though technology is not necessarily bad, in many dystopian narratives, it has been portrayed as wicked, since it is not equally distributed, such as in Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife.* Concerning the more somber scenarios, hope comes from the fact that the reader can find a utopian impulse in their relationship with the text, as the dystopian imagination can lead to changes in the real world, by portraying a world the reader does not recognize. Thus, as tangible and grounding element as food is, literary representations of food can be a powerful symbolic tool to provide hope when it comes to dystopias that have utopian impulses within or outside the text.

Conceiving a dystopian world where food is scarce and the general society has little and limited access to it can scare people. This may eventually lead the reader to look closer at their own world and try to (re)think about innovative alternatives to the existing lifestyles. As some of the characters that survive or that serve as symbols of resistance organize themselves around food and share meals with others, readers can find empathy and human solidarity within the dystopian narratives. This symbolic relevance of foodways can also be explored through the lens of gender issues. Not only in literature but also in other fields, such as anthropology, sociology, and history, foodways are a powerful tool when it comes to the analysis of the social construction of female/male gender, as well as non-binary identities. Some questions that can be posed

when trying to observe if gender positionings can be identified in relation to foodways are, for instance: what do the characters eat? Who do they eat with? Who do they share food with? Who cleans the dishes? As Mervyn Nicholson notes in "Food and Power: Homer, Carroll, Atwood and Others", "food demarcates power relationships" (38) and "the language preserves the power relations: the powerful ate the animal, the weak produced it" (38).

This discussion leads us to the beginning of this study, which set out to answer three questions: how are *The Stone Gods* (2007) by Jeanette Winterson and *The Year of the Flood* (2009) by Margaret Atwood built around the issue of food sustainability? How exactly do foodways shape these dystopian narratives? Do the narratives express a gender positioning?

To answer the first question, it can be perceived that the two literary works project posthuman futures where technology can be associated with dark aspects, presenting a sort of dehumanized world, which can be observed through food references. In *The Stone Gods*, in "Planet Blue" Artificial Intelligence has taken over food production and preparation for humans, who do not know how to grown food anymore. In *The Year of the Flood*, even though the "natural" knowledge continues to be in human hands, the larger society favors artificial food and unethical food franchises. As people are freeing themselves from chores such as cooking and finding innovative solutions to tackle the lack of resources, in the first case, people lose their independence since most can no longer survive without robots, and, in the second case, people eat human flesh within hamburgers, and drink beverages that transmit diseases. In both literary works, the solutions that the general society finds through technology continue to destroy the environment.

However, anthropomorphizing machines like Spike can be an attempt to approach the virtuous side of technology, as she, in "Planet Blue" of *The Stone Gods*, has knowledge about food, which she teaches to humans: and in *The Year of the Flood,* Adam One, the leader of the God's Gardeners, who promotes life in balance with nature based on the deep ecology movement, uses technology. This seems to point in the direction that technology and innovation, in general, are not the problem, but rather the lack of ethics that can be associated with them, and the problems of inequality in

access, as seen in *The Year of the Flood*, in which the families of scientists live a comfortable life, which is abundant in resources and food, in contrast to the famine felts by the masses living in the dirt and danger of the pleeblands.

As for the second question, on how foodways shape these dystopian worlds, one can say that if food portrays misery and control of the body when it comes to the general society, intentional communities, as the one from Wreck City and the God's Gardeners, provide utopian elements within the narratives. Accordingly, the intentional communities allow the characters to survive in some ways and to transgress the installed order, representing hope. Although it is important to note that these communities are not perfect at all, they open a space for discussion about new ways to build a better society, aiming at values such as equality and inclusion, as the members of Wreck City accept the diversity from one another, and the God's Gardeners take care of each other, trying to preserve the environment. In this case, the foodways of the mentioned communities always differ from the larger society – from a more natural and sustainable, such as keeping a hive, to more artificial and unethical food, such as eating SecretBurgers; from the familiar, such as drinking coffee and eating bread around a table, to unfamiliar food like ChickieNobs; from vegetables grown in a farm to lab-grown meat.

Regarding the third and last question, which has to do with the representations of female characters, it should be highlighted that scientific and technological progress, instead of freeing women, constricts them, and pressures them into being genetically modified in order to have a desirable body, as happens with the character Pink in *The Stone Gods*. In *The Year of The Flood,* despite living in a protected and wealthy area such as the Compounds, Ren ends up working as a trapeze dancer at a sex club. In general, women are dispossessed of their own bodies, and, in some cases, the feminine body becomes food, as can be observed in the relationship between Toby and Blanco, who refers to her as meat.

Thus, these dystopian worlds continue to promote women's objectification and otherness through skinny female bodies who have to fit into the system, as gaining more weight or eating natural food can be considered an act of revolt. However, despite reinstating patriarchal ideals and oppressive corporations that use technology to control

the human body, especially the female one, there is also some hope within the dystopias. In this sense, and given the previous outcomes, one can say that if foodways portray the dehumanization of these two dystopian imagined worlds, they also reveal human resilience, rebellion, and solidarity. As far from perfect as the intentional communities and female characters are, standing as powerless and outsiders, they still represent an attempt to achieve a better model in a dystopian world that, in the end, is not so different from ours. In this sense, the references to foodways are a relevant symbolic tool when it comes to analyzing these two critical dystopias, as they embody the utopian impulse within the narratives.

Regarding the study that was carried out, it is important to note that one of the main challenges was that the two literary works are greatly different from each other in terms of the number of references regarding foodways. While *The Year of the Flood* is full of allusions to food, the same cannot be said for *The Stone Gods*. This happens partly because the latter is a smaller work composed of four sections, which contrasts with Margaret Atwood's novel which is a single story from a trilogy. Therefore, it was quite challenging to compare the two literary works in this sense. However, despite the constraints of form, the comparative analysis was possible through the definition of common themes, making it pertinent for the two works to be equated in this way. Moreover, the choice to analyze only two literary works, though limiting in some aspects, allowed for a deeper study, which would not have been possible, had the sample been larger. Another challenge had to do with the intersection of different themes and concepts within this study. Nevertheless, there was an attempt to overcome this issue by presenting a solid theoretical framework that included allusions to other dystopian narratives and explained the interconnection of the different concepts.

As a final remark, this dissertation aims to pave the way for new studies about food, gender, and literature, revealing the symbolic power of foodways in the literary imagination, while raising awareness of the importance of finding inventive ways to tackle future (or perhaps current) challenges depicted in many dystopian narratives. As Warren Belasco argues in *Meals to Come: A History of the Future of Food*,

> the fantasies of utopian and dystopian fiction have served to both reflect and shape the policy debate over the future of food. Speculative stories have also

> given greater voice to those who are not well represented by mainstream policy analysis – especially radical environmentalists, socialists, and feminists. (xi)

In a time when it is fundamental to fight climate change, and as stories can be a powerful approach to engage people and urge them to become more concerned about climate challenges, and even influence change, examining climate fiction, and particularly critical dystopias that imagine our future, seem to have proved its value.

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