

**T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**A GENEALOGICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL SURVEY OF THE
APOCALYPTIC GENRE OF LITERATURE IN THE ANCIENT NEAR
EAST, BRITISH ROMANTICISM, AND THE ANTHROPOCENE EPOCH**

MASTER'S THESIS

Furkan TOZAN

**Department of English Language and Literature
English Language and Literature Program**

AUGUST, 2022

T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES



**A GENEALOGICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL SURVEY OF THE
APOCALYPTIC GENRE OF LITERATURE IN THE ANCIENT NEAR
EAST, BRITISH ROMANTICISM, AND THE ANTHROPOCENE EPOCH**

MASTER'S THESIS

Furkan TOZAN

(Y1912.020082)

**Department of English Language and Literature
English Language and Literature Program**

Thesis Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Esma TEZCAN

AUGUST, 2022

APPROVAL FORM

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the study “A Genealogical and Developmental Survey of the Apocalyptic Genre of Literature in the Ancient Near East, British Romanticism, and the Anthropocene Epoch” which I submitted as a master’s thesis, is written exclusively by me and without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the proposal phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited from are those shown in the reference list.
(05/08/2022)

Furkan TOZAN

FOREWORD

I'd like to begin by thanking my thesis advisor Asst. Prof. Esmâ Tezcan for her patience, sympathy, professionalism, and mentorship. But for her, nearly none of the good things that have happened in my life these past years would have happened. No words can do proper justice in expressing the gratitude and respect I have for her.

The following are all the teachers I've had the utmost privilege of being taught by. Each has had a transformative effect on who I am today both personally and academically; Prof. Dr. Esra Melikođlu, Assoc. Prof. Gamze Sabancı Uzun, Assoc. Prof. Murat Seđkin, Assoc. Prof. Canan Őavkay, Assoc. Prof. Yıldız Kılınç, Asst. Prof. Arpine Mızıkyan, Asst. Prof. Buket Akgün, Asst. Prof. Defne Demir, Asst. Prof. Sanaz Alizadeh Tabrizi, and last but not least, Lect. AyŐegöl Deniz Toroser. And although I have never been her student in an official capacity, Prof. Dr. Ferma Lekesizalın has all my thanks for being an academic model for me to aspire towards. Her hard work and unyielding determination as a researcher and a teacher are second to none.

Asst. Prof. Elvan Karaman has become a part of my life over the course of a year, a part I cherish every single day. Her unfaltering sense of work ethics, professional discipline as well as the humanity that imbues all of her actions come together to encapsulate in her person a rarity of character deserving of all the respect and admiration in the world.

I count myself exceedingly fortunate to have made the acquaintance of Robert K. Weninger, emeritus professor of German and Comparative Literature at King's College London. I'd like to thank him for our email correspondence that has been of inestimable value to my thesis. His excellent book *Sublime Conclusions* as well as the personal attention and guidance he most generously provided me with ensured I kept my focus on what should and shouldn't matter to the scope of my thesis.

I'd like to thank Tara Brabazon, professor of Cultural Studies at Flinders University in Australia for the hundreds of tips that helped shape and reshape aspects of this thesis invariably for the better. Her video series on graduate research and our

email correspondence have been and continue to be a compass pointing me in the right direction.

I'd like to thank Merve Şahinbaş for always believing in me, especially at those times years back when I couldn't find much in myself to believe in within the drowning monotony of a previous life. Without her incessant encouragement—or rather, her loving harassment—over the years I'm convinced that none of this would be possible.

Chance has a way of setting things in such a motion that incredible encounters occur, however rare they may be—but that's what makes them matter so much. I'm grateful that our paths have crossed and I've found a long-lost friend in each of these grad-school classmates of mine; Müge Karayaylalı Bayraktar, Şamil Korkmaz, and Rüveyde Müge Turhan.

What single-handedly sustained my sanity before I finally had the courage and the means to begin a master's degree was the literature and theory workshops I organized with my former colleagues (also the former members of our own little Bloomsbury Group—minus all the drama); Dilşat, Özge, and Didem. I will forever look back on those times with the fondest of memories.

Res. Asst. Sevdıye Kemik and Res. Asst. Nagihan Kartal deserve a place here for the friendship that has blossomed between us over the year, for always being there when I need to vent off and for always knowing how to cheer me up. How fulfilling it's been to grow together with you and hopefully for many, many more years to come.

My infinite thanks go to my parents Azmi and Ayten and my brother Gökhan for their inexhaustible support and love at every step along the way. Their compassion and affection have helped me stay on track, sound of mind, and emotionally stable enough to see this through to the end.

I'd like to finish by thanking my favorite person in life for unconditionally being the rock I rest on every single day, giving me the peace of mind and the courage to brave the journey ahead, come what may. I'm only looking forward to more of the six-year ride we've had so far.

August 2022

Furkan TOZAN

**A GENEALOGICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL SURVEY OF THE
APOCALYPTIC GENRE OF LITERATURE IN THE ANCIENT NEAR
EAST, BRITISH ROMANTICISM, AND THE ANTHROPOCENE EPOCH**

ABSTRACT

The end times, one of the most recurrent literary themes in recorded history, has captured the imagination of *homo sapiens* regardless of the spatio-temporal variations in the genre of apocalyptic literature. With its known beginnings in ancient Near East, it has since maintained its sui generis position in tackling perennial and emerging metaphysical questions alike and in speculating upon the dyad of futurity and finitude, especially in times of social crisis that threatens to disrupt humanity's familiar mode of being. The purpose of this study is to lay out a genealogical and developmental account of the genre as a thematic concomitant of various literatures throughout history while exploring the human ontics and tele propounded in such narratives. The study diachronically analyzes and compares apocalyptic works in the Near Eastern antiquity, the British Romantic period, and the Anthropocene Epoch by identifying the patterns in and amongst these three chapters in apocalyptic narration. It begins with a genealogical discussion of the ancient Near Eastern flood myths to map out how the theme of human finitude originated, which facilitates both a more historically consistent comparison with and an academically sounder analysis of the later literary selections.

The study historically identifies three distinct paradigms of apocalypticism with each addressing human finitude in ways unique to itself. The supernatural paradigm of apocalypticism lasts until after the Enlightenment and presents human finitude as a consequence of the divine impact on nature. Enabled by the secularizing effect of the Enlightenment, the natural paradigm of apocalypticism coincides with the rise of Romanticism and attempts to discredit both the religious and irreligious versions of anthropocentrism by depicting humanity's end as a mundanely natural event. Lastly, beginning with the First World War, the Anthropocenic paradigm of

apocalypticism focuses on the human impact on nature and problematizes its potentiality as being more conducive to destruction than life-affirmation. However, the overarching ideative essence that permeates all apocalyptic paradigms from the third millennium BC to the twentieth century CE is the self-deprecating suspicion that humankind will inexorably become extinct despite its best efforts. This literary insistence on extinction is expressed supernaturally in the ancient Near Eastern *Atrahasis* and the Book of Genesis, naturogenically in the Romantic last-man narratives—Lord Byron’s poem “Darkness” (1816/2006) and Mary Shelley’s novel *The Last Man* (1826/2004)—and finally anthropogenically in John Brunner’s post-war novel *The Sheep Look Up* (1972).

Keywords: Apocalyptic literature, ancient Near East, Romanticism, Anthropocene, human extinction, self-deprecation, culpability, autophobia

ANTİK YAKIN DOĐU, BRİTANYA ROMANTİZMİ VE İNSAN ÇAĐI'NDA EDEBİ KIYAMET TÜRÜNÜN SOYSAL VE GELİŐİMSEL İNCELEMESİ

ÖZET

Yazılı tarihin en çok tekrarlanan edebi temalarından biri olan zamanın sonu, kıyamet edebiyatı türündeki uzamsal-zamansal farklılıklardan bağımsız olarak insan türünün hayal gücünü her daim etkisi altında bırakmıştır. Antik Yakın DoĐu'daki bilinen başlangıcından itibaren kıyamet edebiyatı hem kadim ve yeni ortaya çıkan metafiziksel sorularla mücadele etmekteki hem de özellikle insanın alışa geldiĐi var olma biçimini deĐiőtirmekle tehdit eden toplumsal kriz zamanlarında gelecek ve sonluluk ikilisi üzerine tahminler kurgulamaktaki kendine özgü konumunu korumuştur. Bu çalışmanın amacı, bir yandan bu tür anlatılarda öne sürülen insanın varlık özellikleri ve amaçlarını irdelerken, diĐer yandan tarih boyunca çeőtli edebiyatların tematik bir eşlikçisi ola gelmiş edebi kıyamet türünün soysal ve gelişimsel bir tarifini ortaya koymaktır. Çalışma, kıyamet anlatımının bu üç bölümü içindeki ve arasındaki örüntüleri tespit ederek, antik Yakın DoĐu, Britanya Romantik Dönemi ve İnsan ÇaĐı'ndaki kıyamet eserlerini artzamanlı olarak analiz etmekte ve karşılaştırmaktadır. Çalışma, insan sonluluĐu temasının nasıl ortaya çıktığının izdüşümünü belirlemek için antik Yakın DoĐu tufan mitlerinin soysal bir tartışmasıyla başlar; bu, hem daha sonraki edebi seçimlerle tarihsel olarak daha tutarlı bir karşılaştırmayı hem de bu seçimlerin akademik açıdan daha sağlam analiz edilmelerini mümkün kılmaktadır.

Çalışma, tarihsel olarak, her biri insanın sonluluĐunu kendine özgü yollarla ele alan üç farklı kıyamet paradigmasını tanımlar. DoĐaüstü kıyamet paradigması Aydınlanma sonrasına kadar sürer ve doĐa üzerindeki tanrısal etkinin bir sonucu olarak insanın sonluluĐunu sunar. Aydınlanma'nın laikleştirici etkisiyle mümkün kılınan doĐal kıyamet paradigması, Romantik Dönem'in yükseliŐiyle örtüşür ve insanlığın sonunu sıradan bir doĐal olayı olarak betimleyerek insan merkezietçiliĐinin hem dini hem de din dıŐı versiyonlarını itibarsızlaştırmaya çalışır.

Son olarak, Birinci Dünya Savaşı ile başlayan ve kıyametin İnsan Çağı'na tekabül eden paradigması, insanın doğa üzerindeki etkisine odaklanır ve insanın yaşamın olumlanmasından ziyade yıkıma daha elverişli olma potansiyelini sorunsallaştırır. Tüm bu paradigma özgünlüklerine rağmen, M.Ö. üçüncü binyıldan M.S. yirminci yüzyıla kadar tüm kıyamet paradigmalarına nüfuz eden kapsayıcı fikrîsel öz, insanlığın tüm çabalarına rağmen amansız bir şekilde yok olacağına dair insanın özdeğersizliğini ifade eden şüphesidir. Nesil tükenmesi konusundaki bu edebi ısrar, antik Yakın Doğu'da *Atrahasis* ve Yaratılış Kitabı'nda doğaüstü bir şekilde, Romantik son insan anlatılarında—Lord Byron'ın “Darkness” (1816/2006) şiirinde ve Mary Shelley'nin *The Last Man* (1826/2004) romanında—doğallaştırılarak ve nihayet John Brunner'ın savaş sonrası romanı *The Sheep Look Up*'ta (1972) sebepselliği insana bağlanarak ifade bulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kıyamet edebiyatı, antik Yakın Doğu, Romantik Dönem, İnsan Çağı, insan neslinin tükenmesi, özdeğersizlik, suçluluk, özkorku

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
FOREWORD	iii
ABSTRACT	v
ÖZET	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ix
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE BEGINNING OF THE END IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST	8
A. Apocalypticism and the Deluge in the Literatures of Sumer and Akkad	12
1. The Antediluvian Ontics: The Myths of Primordial Chaos, Theogony, Cosmogony, and Anthropogenesis in <i>Enuma Elish</i>	12
2. The Sumero-Akkadian Deluge Myth in <i>Atrahasis</i>	22
B. The Judeo-Christian Deluge Myth in the Book of Genesis	28
C. The Proto-Covenant, the Noahic Covenant, and Their Onto-Apocalyptic Implications	32
III. THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ROMANTIC LAST-MAN NARRATIVES	38
A. The Secularization of the Apocalyptic Genre.....	38
1. Post-Enlightenment and Demystified Nature	38
2. The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 and the Abandonment of Theodicy	42
B. Natural Catastrophism and Antihumanism in the Romantic Last-Man Narratives	47
C. Apocalypticism in Lord Byron’s “Darkness” (1816/2006) and Mary Shelley’s <i>The Last Man</i> (1826/2004)	50

IV. THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY POST-WAR APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE	62
A. The Re-Problematization of Human Potentiality: Anthropogenic Crises and the Abandonment of Anthropodicy	62
B. Post-Nuclear Ecodystopian Visions: The New Nihilism and Apocalyptic Nostra Culpa	68
C. Apocalypticism in John Brunner’s <i>The Sheep Look Up</i> (1972)	74
V. CONCLUSION.....	84
VI. REFERENCES.....	93
RESUME.....	100

I. INTRODUCTION

Apocalyptic imagination possesses a cultural relevance that dates back to the farthest points in world antiquities, permeating most human societies and accompanying the histories of literature in all continents from their respective embarkations onwards. Wherever a human society of reasonable size and cultural complexity appeared, it is almost a historical given that they not only imagined but also found it significant enough to write about the end of the world known to them and to preserve that record for posterity. In most cases, in fact, such visions of the end times were built into the very structure of their belief systems at a time when the supernatural combined in itself every mode of thought (Taylor, 2007: 2). These systems governed—to varying degrees—the way they made sense of the world and their position within by providing “epistemological insurance” and “by using stories about the end of the world, or of some aspect of the world, to structure temporal experience” (Pitetti, 2017: 444). The fact that the known beginning of apocalyptic literature coincides with the invention or importation of writing in different parts of the world must raise a reasonable amount of suspicion as to its true origin. It is likelier that apocalyptic imagination predates even writing itself, having taken root in pre-literary periods where few instances of proto-writing existed alongside widespread obligate analphabetism. It was then carried over from oral to textual form when writing was finally available. It is less likely, however, to assume that writing and apocalyptic literature were incidentally invented at the same time. It is, in this light, the exact point of departure for the thesis at hand to begin with the premise that narrating the end ranks among the oldest of historical phenomena with the unique caveat that it is, in the same breath, always new; perpetually enlivened and, thus, renovated to suit the ethos of every chapter of history.

The second characteristic of apocalypticism, then, is its ubiquity. Unbound by spatial and temporal variations across the ages, end-time narratives have enjoyed popularity in world literatures starting with its literary inception in the ancient Near Eastern clay tablets. Since then, the fervency and excitation surrounding the end times

have been sustained through innumerable depictions, revisitations, and adaptations of stories that purport to speak of epoch-making cataclysms in the past or to foretell those to come. Indeed, since the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Anthropocene Epoch in the middle of the twentieth century, apocalyptic fiction has gained such a cultural momentum that a considerable portion of all literature and film produced today consists of works that either completely revolve around the theme of the end times or contain sizable elements thereof (Mussgnug, 2012: 333). The fascination with and the rather morbid curiosity about human extinction or the termination of a phase of humanness—as generally understood at a given time and place—are immediately indicative of a series of functions performed by the genre. Without these essential functions, it cannot be plausibly argued that apocalyptic fiction would have survived to this day either as a form of imagination or that of self-conception for humanity. What follows then, in discussing such a case for its unremitting recurrence, is the sequitur that apocalypticism has survived because it serves purposes that are so vital as to not have tapered off towards the peripheries of human cultures, let alone expire completely.

Apocalypticism is often mistaken for what it is not. It is not millennialism or utopianism, even though many apocalyptic groups are millennial in their outlook or utopian in their social agendas. It is not messianism or fundamentalism, even though apocalyptic literature regularly features messianic figures, and apocalyptic social movements can be fundamentalist in their attitudes. Apocalypticism is not eschatology, but it is eschatological, insofar as apocalyptic eschatology is one form of the study or doctrine of the “last things.” Nor is it the same as prophecy, conspiracy theory, or esotericism, even if for many people the notion of “apocalyptic” calls to mind the disclosure of hidden mysteries, the contrivance of secret plans, and the quest for arcane knowledge. (DiTommaso, 2014: 473–474).

Although it may incidentally include some of what is recounted above, apocalypticism is an overarching way of comprehending the world with a unique cognitive methodology “that makes axiomatic claims about time, space and human existence” in order to delineate each in a mutually sensical fashion. The ways and means of the transmission may change in time; nevertheless, “it is the message” at the receiving end of that transmission, “filtered through the lens of the worldview” of apocalypticism

that makes any cultural and artistic expression apocalyptic. Nothing, for that matter, can be proclaimed to be intrinsically *apocalyptic* unless enabled by a generally accepted way of reading circumstances and phenomena *apocalyptically* (474).

The two notions that lie at the heart of apocalypticism that enable the reading of circumstances and phenomena apocalyptically are the immanence of crisis and the imminence of finitude which create together a profoundly tenable and viable template in which for apocalypticism to manifest itself. Considering all literary apocalyptic expressions from the ancient Near East onwards, these two notions seem to be central to the genre to such an extent that they reflect an imaginative compulsion: the compulsive belief that some form of crisis is always poised to threaten us and the compulsive belief that the end will result from that crisis very soon. The fear of an undesirable turning point and the sense of always being on the cusp of a break in *the way things are* indicate “a peculiarity of the imagination that it is always at the end of an era” (Kermode, 1966/2000: 96). Therefore, an apocalyptic ideation that is received by a culture as being significant enough to be expressed in fiction seems under every condition to present itself “grander, more immediate and more unique than any that have preceded it” (Skult, 2019: 192). The solipsistic alarmism of any given apocalyptic idea helps single out and prioritize the underlying circumstances of crisis that have given rise to it and denies the cultural focus any chance to wander off towards less taxing and less perturbing topics of concern. Works of apocalyptic literature serve the function of pointing out perceived problems that collectively face humanity and “have a paradigmatic aspect” which allows them to “be studied in historical depth.” They also have pragmatic value as fictions (Kermode, 1966/2000: 103) that deal with and cathartically alleviate humanity’s cognitive and psychological struggle against its fears of history unfolding apocalyptically to bring about one disaster after another. Similarly, apocalyptic literature serves another function, acting on its semantic roots in ancient Greek, and “illuminate[s] the true nature of what has been brought to an end.” Being either supernaturally or secularly revelatory, it problematizes the most dominant causes for concern in the culture that produces it (Berger, 1999: 5–6).

Having established the general sense in which the term *apocalypse* and every possible derivative thereof are to be used, it is this thesis’ argument that—despite the period-specific characteristics which enable historically meaningful delimitations, the main strand of apocalypticism that is pessimistic in the way it depicts the end displays

a substantial uniformity in its underlying governing principle. This thesis is willing to concede that every historical chapter of apocalyptic literature embodies the socio-cultural ethos of its time and place so that it is always academically viable to focus on what distinguishes a certain period from the rest. However, because most existing scholarship has tended to concentrate on isolating a period of one's choosing, virtually none exists as yet that comparatively and diachronically deals with both the localized differences of and the overarching similarities amongst the major periods of apocalyptic fiction. To this end, the thesis offers a holistic overview of different periods and the fundamental human connection to the concepts of crisis and finitude contained in literary works from these periods. It situates the genre within the greater context of the history of apocalyptic anxieties by treating all pessimistic visions of the end times—from the ancient Near East to the present—as contingent subgenres which constitute an uninterrupted literary continuum.

This thesis adopts a multidisciplinary methodology, synthesizing elements from history of ideas, history of mentalities, anthropology, and ontology in order to achieve the diachronicity and holism in its research design. For this purpose, every chapter focuses on a major period of apocalypticism along with a selection of literary texts that optimally communicate the corresponding ethos of apocalyptic thought. It closely follows in its chapteral plan the three historico-apocalyptic designations laid out by Weninger (2017). These “discrete paradigms of annihilation” (2) allow for a temporally consistent ordering of the three major periods of apocalyptic literature in terms of both their respective cultural milieux that first separate them and the apocalyptic intertextuality that—in the final analysis—subsumes them under the general rubric of existential anxiety, self-deprecation, and autophobia.

Chapter II is concerned with the first paradigm of annihilation that is fundamentally premised on the principle of phenomenological supernaturalization of all processes and events perceived by humanity in itself and its environment. Literary texts produced in this paradigm have a distinctly mythological structure and try to form intelligible symbolisms by way of transforming *what appears to be* into *what is made easier to comprehend*. Such texts often come in the form of myths of origin that offer etiologies of the universe, deities, Earth, and humankind and assign each a set of more or less schematic *raison d'être*. Myths that speak of an apocalypse may serve all of the same purposes as origin myths do in their narrativization of causes and effects. All

myths of whichever classification are—at their core—cognitive attempts at rendering circumstances and phenomena as meaningful as possible with the sense-making tools and methods available in a given culture. Therefore, they oftentimes display a tendency to recontextualize events so that rain, for instance, is no longer merely the liquid precipitation of atmospheric vapor but transcends its unimaginatively physical properties to signify certain divine moods. If it is timely and in the right amount, it indicates a general divine contentment; but if it is absent, too little, or too much, it must be because humanity has done something wrong to anger gods. So, recontextualizing is one of humanity's earliest recorded means of fiction and allows supernatural associations to be formed so that *things as they are* cohere as much as cognitively possible.

The texts selected to delineate the supernatural paradigm of apocalypticism begin with the *Enuma Elish* epic. This epic contains the primary myths of origin from the primordial realm to the creation of humankind and helps establish the ideative background for the next epic. Expressing the first known sample of apocalypticism in history, the flood myth in the *Atrahasis* epic is the major anthropological piece of fiction that attempts to locate humanity in a cosmic order. *Enuma Elish* and *Atrahasis* constitute the Sumero-Akkadian tradition of apocalypticism in the ancient Near Eastern mythology and raise essential questions about humanity's approach not only to the phenomena in its environment but also to the way in which it conceptualizes itself as an entity of that environment. The Judeo-Christian tradition that forms the second part of the ancient Near Eastern mythology adapts the *Atrahasis* flood myth. Although it substantially retains the source version, the seemingly slight changes it makes have far-reaching consequences in humanity's self-perception in the following millennia. For this purpose and so as not to transgress the parameters of the thesis' scope, the Book of Genesis from the Hebrew Bible—or the Old Testament—is selected for a comparative analysis of the recurring flood myth in the ancient Near East.

Chapter III engages the second paradigm of annihilation which began to appear amid the ambient post-Enlightenment ideas of primarily the eighteenth century. The growing tendency to dissociate natural philosophy from Scholasticism cleared a laicized space and by the nineteenth century an alternative apocalypticism introduced the concept of nature operating only in accordance with its own laws. This de-divinized

and naturalized imagination of the end-times made some key changes to the previous paradigm, the most important of which was the downgrade of humanity's status within the universe. As it abandoned the entire category of supernatural references, it simultaneously did away with the sense of human exceptionalism borrowed from the previous paradigm and put forth in response the idea that humanity is no more than an ordinary animal species that can and will go extinct when natural circumstances catalyze its extinction. The Romantic last-man narratives of the 1800s are the literary representation of this paradigm of natural catastrophe. They demystify nature by severing its ties both to the supernatural paradigm and to the secular notion of human mastery over nature so that nature is no longer perceived as a divine or human instrument only. They also sublimate it in their characterization of nature as having replaced the divinity to become the new superlative determinant that steers the course of events and humanity's fate. Lord Byron's poem "Darkness" (1816/2006) and Mary Shelley's novel *The Last Man* (1826/2004) have been selected to offer a reading of these texts that addresses the major principles of the secular-natural paradigm and analyzes the texts in terms of how and to what extent humanity is re-situated in the apocalyptic imagination of the period.

Following the rather ephemeral popularity of last-man fiction, a new mode of apocalyptic anxiety began in the twentieth century. Chapter IV breaks down this particular paradigm of annihilation into two subchapters which diachronically follow a series of catastrophic checkpoints at which the literary mood of pessimism and theme of *nostra culpa* progressively intensified. The catastrophism evoked during the century first resulted from the two world wars and the detonation of the first atomic bombs which demonstrated the undesirable culmination of scientific progress into alarmingly more effective means and tools for humanity to destroy each other. The second phase of exacerbation occurred in the aftermath of the new-found nuclear capabilities and the threat of nuclear winter. The anxiety expressed in the apocalyptic texts of this period emphasized humanity's potential for mass destruction and—beginning in the 1960s—the growing concern over the human impact on the environment. The novel selected from the second half of the twentieth century, John Brunner's *The Sheep Look Up* (1972), expresses somber frustration with the end result of human technicity since the Industrial Revolution. The institutions in place that are supposed to be responsible for the well-being of humanity fail to avert the environmental crises that result from

the abject abuse of nature while the chronic disregard for the ramifications of this abuse ensures their indefinite prolongation and effects a totalizing sense of future indeterminacy.

II. THE BEGINNING OF THE END IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

The ancient Near Eastern history—along with its literature and the ontological implications contained therein—spans approximately three millennia “from the late fourth to the late first millennium BCE,” which is an immensely long period of time without even taking into account the oral history that predates the invention and spread of the proto-writing systems first and the cuneiform writing later. However, even the recorded three millennia, during which various ancient Near Eastern civilizations existed alongside or through each other by adaptation and assimilation, constitutes “the first half of history” and connects to the second half “from the collapse of the Near Eastern cultures to our own time.” By way of further adaptation and assimilation the notions that pertain to different aspects of humanity and human society have been carried over to every subsequent worldview ever since. And the trajectory of cultural retention from then on has been uninterrupted and hereditary to the extent that the ancient Near Eastern civilization “is now considered part and even the very foundation of our own Western history” (Liverani, 2005: 3).

The mere longevity of a regional history is never sufficient on its own to have the kind of impact the ancient Near East had on Western culture. Without the transmission of the ideas expressed in the Sumero-Akkadian literature into the most influential didactic texts later in the ancient Near East—especially the Hebrew Bible—and through them and repeated social practices into the thought and literature of Europe, this hereditary chain of culture would have been severed. This is not to say that Western civilization has exclusively borrowed from this particular cultural lineage as it is, indeed, a culmination of many notable Eurasian influences. Although the ancient Greek, for example, has traditionally been assigned a pivotal role “in generating the foundational values of freedom, democracy, individual personality” and such, it is just as equally—if not more—important to acknowledge the “indebtedness to the Ancient Near Eastern civilizations in the material foundations of culture ... and in the field of religion” (3).

In tracing such a heritage there has been some debate concerning how and whether there is such a thing as a singular ancient Near Eastern civilization per se that can be treated in a totalizing manner. The suggestion of cultural uniformity may well be considered implausible or logically erroneous in today's extreme global multiplicity as cultures gradually but surely undergo constant variations around the world despite a different kind of connectedness that did not apply to the ancient Near East. The circumstances that negate such a possibility for the twenty-first century world were simply not present for the ancient Near East. Granting that a number of different geographical, lingual, literary, and lifestyle systems coexisted then (3), the ancient Near East was a very limited physical space with the population, the sheer number of interacting and competing cultures, and the rate at which new knowledge was generated being incomparable with those of today. While today's connectedness does not suffice to outdo the multiplicity and thus renders a cultural singularity both a qualitative and quantitative impossibility, the opposite scenario in Mesopotamian antiquity ensured that the ancient Near East "remained remarkably uniform ... [w]hether predominantly Sumerian or predominantly Semitic, whether radiating from Ur or Uruk or Nippur, or else from Agade or Babylon or Assur or Nineveh, it was always recognisably the same civilisation" (Cohn, 2001: 31). This uniformity was primarily "because of intensive cross-fertilization" among the neighboring cultures at the time and it was this relative homogeneity that kept such a geographical unit as the ancient Near East a meaningfully collective cultural unit as well (Liverani, 2005: 4).

The world that the ancient Mesopotamians perceived was—to reiterate—a limited space and "did not extend beyond Mesopotamia and the countries that had dealings with Mesopotamia." The lack of mythological competition and the resulting obligate cultural singularity, therefore, meant that everything that ended up in their mythology necessarily reflected an element of universalism—be it the myths of cosmogony, theogony, or an apocalyptic deluge. The physical environment available to the ancient Mesopotamian perception served as the foundation upon which the stories they created and refined to ascribe meaning to that same environment and to their relationship with it were based. "[G]overned by Mesopotamian gods and goddesses," the world as understood then was an essentially Sumero-Akkadian world and the explanations they had come up with were the be-all and end-all of making any sense of that world (Cohn, 2001: 32). It should also be noted that the propensity for

mythological universalism was not peculiar to Sumero-Akkadian culture. In fact, it is an inevitable and deliberate characteristic of all apocalyptic narratives that followed the Deluge myth of Sumer and Akkad—irrespective of when and where they were first produced—to generalize the catastrophes depicted to the entirety of humankind by overscaling and overselling them in order to intensify the narrative effect. The ancient Deluge myth—the first in line to feature a series of natural catastrophes that befall the entire world—had exclusively to do with the human struggle against nature which includes not only the famous flood apocalypse but plagues and famine as well. Accordingly, ancient Mesopotamians drew inspiration for their mytho-literature, as they went about imagining a *modus operandi* of the world, from their immediate physical environment.

Arguably one of the major factors that contributed to the way in which the ancient Mesopotamian worldview came to invest a great deal of importance in affairs and events concerning nature at large is the fact that survival and sustenance posed a constant challenge to people. A land, which otherwise “would have remained a hot, barren desert,” could be kept irrigable and fertile thanks to the year-round grueling effort “by a vast labour force.” However hard ancient Mesopotamians tried and ingenious a labour system was in place, there was no knowing whether the Tigris and Euphrates would abate and “turn the land into a desert” or would flood and create a swampland. Either scenario could easily devastate the societies that relied too heavily on a geographical and meteorological equilibrium in order to avoid droughts, famine, and starvation (31). This uneasy existence, further exacerbated by the ever-looming threat of war, raids, and of the resulting “wholesale slaughter and destruction” (32), was to be maintained both despite and thanks to phenomena outside of the control of humanity. Nevertheless, the realm of natural phenomena that can potentially overrule all human effort gained a central place in how ancient Mesopotamians made sense of the world and their place within that world. Their mytho-literature, as a consequence, reflected an ontic incongruity between nature and humankind whereby the latter was always at the mercy of the first—as was the case in their lived experience with rivers, clouds, and wind coming to stand for substantially more than mere forces of nature.

The existential dependence on nature as well as the appreciation of the sustenance it provides and the affliction of a myriad of disasters it brings gave way to the existential subordination to nature. Therefore, in the ancient Near Eastern

polytheism, deities were deemed to “represent aspects of nature” and the relationship between the divine and the natural caused the two to ontically commingle to a degree (33). Because nature’s significance was a literal matter of life and death and the sum of natural phenomena, as a consequence, could not simply remain inanimate, incommunicative and too non-human overall to contend with, they were deferred to anthropomorphized deities. This anthropomorphism not only ensured communication and relatability but also expressed the human desire to gain mastery over nature. Indeed, the catharsis accessible to the readers and listeners of the Sumero-Akkadian myths was the consolation and reassurance they derived from being subjects to gods with human characters, emotions, needs, and desires who could manipulate and bend nature to their will. It was because of perceiving divine will as the cause for natural phenomena that ancient Mesopotamians had entities imagined in their own likeness to fear, thank, pray to, and seek solace in as they went through times of bounty and welfare or sparsity and peril.

The long succession of the ideas that dominated ancient Mesopotamian mythological sources would not come to a halt with the only nominal disappearance of the civilizations that had produced them in the first place. Gradually written some two thousand years after the Sumero-Akkadian clay tablets, the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament was the last literary addition to the ancient Near Eastern mythological writing that sought to find meaning in human existence. As the text did so, it relied on the ways and means of both sense-making and story-telling already available to the writers of the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Jewish people it addressed following the end of the Babylonian exile. This thesis does not intend nor attempt to evaluate the Hebrew Bible in its entirety but only focuses on the monotheistic retelling of the flood myth in the Book of Genesis, written sometime during the post-exilic period in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE (Enns, 2012: 5) in order to delineate the cultural and literary continuum of the flood myth as the common era drew near.

The way in which ancient Mesopotamians positioned themselves relative to their deities and nature and the kind of apocalypticism present in the literature of Sumer and Akkad constitute the primary means in this thesis of comparatively and diachronically analyzing the next point of focus in this chapter, that is, the Noahic adaptation of the ancient Deluge myth contained in the Hebrew Bible. Being markedly more alike than different, the two versions of the myth present enough material to

reconstruct the ontological assumptions dominant at the time (Bandstra, 2009: 62) and to shed light on the trajectory of the apocalyptic genre since then. The relationship between the two renditions of the flood myth as well as the self-contained features of each are, likewise, utilized to indicate how and to what extent the genre as a whole has been influenced by them over the ages.

A. Apocalypticism and the Deluge in the Literatures of Sumer and Akkad

1. The Antediluvian Ontics: The Myths of Primordial Chaos, Theogony, Cosmogony, and Anthropogenesis in *Enuma Elish*

Tales of the period before the Great Flood were told by the peoples of the Near East as points in time as far back in the past and as ancient to them as their writing is to us. For ancient Mesopotamians what felt ancient was this particular period-narrative and the “knowledge of what occurred before the deluge” presented the highest form of wisdom, “the alpha and omega” that had set the course of all existence they wrote of in their mytho-literature (Foster, 2002: 31–32). Moreover, in the temporal symmetry that dominates ancient Mesopotamian thought it is not only a matter of mere chronological convenience to classify periods with relation to the flood but it also serves to demarcate the alterations in the paradigm before and after the flood. Nevertheless, what came to be in the fictionalized antediluvian period provides the main ontological frameworks of reference by which to name, designate the status of, and to assign attributes to both the gods and humankind. In other words, the particular set of ontic specifications and suggestions offered in texts that pertain to the time before the flood regulated the etiology and teleology of humankind as well as the mode of operation of their physical environment as expressed in the gods whom they legitimized in their works of fiction no matter what adjustments were later to be made to human ontology following the flood.

Enuma Elish, composed sometime in the second millennium BCE—during the Old Babylonian period, is a prime example of the creation-myth tales that deal with the antediluvian period and form the first chronological chapter of the ancient Mesopotamian mythological canon. “The most significant expression of the religious literature of Mesopotamia,” *Enuma Elish* is founded upon “the struggle between cosmic order and chaos” and was “a fateful drama ... renewed at the turn of each new year” as part of the New Year festival celebrated widely and observed ritually by the

ancient Mesopotamians (Speiser, 1950/1992: 60). This struggle will prove a defining and recurring theme that informs the dynamics involved in the relationship between primordial beings and gods as well as gods and humankind. The ontology proffered in *Enuma Elish* is, therefore, essential to the analysis of the flood apocalypse in *Atrahasis*, primarily in terms of discussing the matters of self-deprecation, culpability, and autophobia on the part of humankind.

Enuma Elish “does not begin with a pantheon of gods, but only with undifferentiated and chaotic waters” embodied by the primordial beings, Tiamat and Apsu (Oliver, 2017: 10). The pre-creation period in the epic is represented by two complementary entities residing in the temporal and spatial ambiguity that is commonly referred to as the primordial chaos. These entities—characterized as female Tiamat and male Apsu—are ascribed no status as having being created via the agency of other older supreme beings nor as having come into existence by other means than a willful act of creation. Poised against all scenarios that can be conjectured as to their origin, the absence of any explorative narration of the time before the creation of gods in *Enuma Elish* assigns a unique place to Tiamat and Apsu and make them signify the absolute first generative force to set in motion all ordered existence that would ensue. The primary takeaway from the origin myth laid out in the text is that before the creation of gods Tiamat and Apsu existed unaccompanied and in quiescence. A creative stasis permeated the primordial realm and nothing but the two entities and their respective waters were present but suspended in that stasis. It is true that none other than Tiamat and Apsu themselves would break this stasis—albeit temporarily—and initiate the line of creation that their divine offspring would later inherit. However, the common default character of Tiamat and Apsu rests upon a lack of action and motion with their creative potential confined in an ontologically inevitable inadequacy making a future dispute and rivalry with their active and vigorous offspring inescapable.

Enuma Elish opens with a brief note on the primordial chaos that accommodated naught but Tiamat and Apsu. The symbolic significance of naming and being named into existence is the primary notion that dominates the opening part of Tablet I of the epic:

When on high the heaven had not been named,
Firm ground below had not been called by name,

Naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter,
(And) Mummu-Tiamat, she who bore them all,
Their waters commingling as a single body;
No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had appeared,
When no gods whatever had been brought into being,
Uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined—
Then it was that the gods were formed within them.
Lahmu and Lahamu were brought forth, by name they were called. (*Akkadian
Myths and Epics*: 60–61)

The power and privilege of nomenclature not only serve to classify the dyad of creator and creature but also herald the act of creating rather than to simply point to pre-existing entities. Nevertheless, the act of creating is spared such an abstraction as calling something into being and substantiated with the waters of the primordial pair—incapable of formation on their own—now merging to bring forth the first instances of life. The text does not indicate a tool use of the water by Tiamat and Apsu and does not differentiate between them and the waters they represent. The creative material referred to as water is both the substance of Tiamat and Apsu’s being and gives substance to the first creatures, Lahmu and Lahamu. This sameness of material helps to infer and foreshadows a similarity of temperament between them and their divine children as the next part introduces the first conflict in the epic:

The divine brothers banded together,
They disturbed Tiamat as they surged back and forth;
Yea, they troubled the mood of Tiamat
By their hilarity in the Abode of Heaven.
Apsu could not lessen their clamor
And Tiamat was speechless at their [ways].
Their doings were loathsome unto [...].
Unsavors were their ways; they were overbearing.
Then Apsu, the begetter of the great gods,
Cried out, addressing Mummu, his vizier:
“O Mummu, my vizier, who rejoicest my spirit,
Come hither and let us go to Tiamat!”
They went and sat down before Tiamat,

Exchanging counsel about the gods, their first-born. (61)

The key point addressed in the lines above revolves around the idea of an irreconcilable polarization between the two sides by the incitement of shock and intense disapproval of how the younger gods seem to act and conduct themselves. What first characterizes the younger gods and sets them as a contrarian unit against Tiamat and Apsu is their swift organization into a group when they “banded together,” from which point onwards they exhibit behaviors in unison much to the dismay of Tiamat and Apsu. The way these lines distinguish the two sides leaves no ambiguity as to the sheer extent of the conflict. Further, the apparent generational chasm is significant enough to conduce to a vehement reaction and a heightened desire to find a solution for the disturbance caused by the younger gods. It should be granted that the cause for the conflict textually falls short in invoking a clear enough image of exactly why Tiamat and Apsu perceive the younger gods so fundamentally offensive against themselves. Nevertheless, what is abundantly clear and taken to be more important than attempting to define the terms of a justification for Tiamat and Apsu’s reaction is the fact that the two sides are meant to clash as a result of an inescapable necessity for the resolution of the ontic disjunction that has now manifested itself between the two sides.

A close reading of the preceding lines from the same tablet does indeed reveal the impression of the text adopting a rather partial attitude and a predisposition towards the younger gods. As the part of the text about theogony unfolds and narrates the descension of gods, it suggests a progressive movement in the way divinity goes through alterations over time and seemingly always for the better:

Before they had grown in age and stature.
Anshar and Kishar were formed, surpassing the others.
They prolonged the days, added on the years.
Anu was their heir, of his fathers the rival;
Yea, Anshar's first-born, Anu, was his equal.
Anu begot in his image Nudimmud.
This Nudimmud was of his fathers the master;
Of broad wisdom, understanding, mighty in strength,
Mightier by far than his grandfather, Anshar.
He had no rival among the gods, his brothers. (61)

Gradually increasing wisdom and power down the divine lineage correlates to an escalating controversy of ontologies in the evolution of divinity by the time several generations come to pass. There now appears a fully-realized incongruity between the first-generation creators, Tiamat and Apsu, and their multiple-degree grandchildren. Consequently, it could be suggested that the text treats this conflict in favor of the younger gods as an almost inevitable and acceptable culmination of the course of gradual change in the ontics of divinity: if every generation surpasses the previous one in wisdom and power—when not at least being equal to them, then the conflict that is now about to break out is indicative not only of an apparent break with the divine and cosmic paradigm of the ceasing era but also of the desirability of this change. Hence, the upheaval, clamor, and waywardness which instigate such discomfort and disquietude in Tiamat and Apsu as to lead them to seek the utter annihilation of their kin are portrayed to simply emanate from the natural trajectory of the way things are.

During his counsel with Tiamat, Apsu proclaims his express wish for a solution so final that he summarily calls for a categorical end to all who disturb the peace and quiet and deprive him of rest and repose with their “mutinous ways.” He informs Tiamat that he “will destroy” and “will wreck their ways, that quiet may be restored.” Tiamat, on the other hand, has reservations about such an abrupt and disproportionate response to a problem which—granted—she, too, is negatively affected by but is in no way incensed by to the same extent. Her initial protest to Apsu’s plan shows her willingness to take on a more moderate and lenient stance in dealing with the unacceptable ways of the younger gods. In fact, her first reaction to his plan involves an element of shock in disbelief as she says “What? Should we destroy that which we have built? / Their ways indeed are most troublesome, but let us attend kindly,” which quickly proves ineffective in tempering his drastic solution. With the disagreement over how to handle this problem now visible, the conflict assumes a sub-layer of a lesser incongruity between Tiamat and Apsu. However, this disagreement is a short-lived one because Apsu remains adamant and subsequently, the news of his plan reaches the younger gods who waste no time in contriving a plan of their own to thwart Apsu’s intentions to destroy them (61).

The myth treats Tiamat and Apsu and their eventual downfall differently so that each has a unique place and function within the cosmic order. Possibly because of his enthusiastically swift decision to eradicate the younger gods, Apsu is the first of

the two to be rid of. The way one of the prominent younger gods, Ea, manages to overpower Apsu and to kill him suggests a sorry miscalculation of the odds, the means, and the logistics involved in such a conflict on the part of Apsu. The sheer ease with which Ea single-handedly accomplishes the otherwise daunting task of dealing with not only Apsu but also other gods who side with him is explained and justified by the very first lines that introduce Ea saying that “Surpassing in wisdom, accomplished, resourceful, / Ea, the all-wise, saw through their scheme” (61). Since Apsu is so easily defeated and the lines that follow his defeat mention nearly nothing of import as far as the plot is concerned, it may be gathered that Apsu’s primary role is to be the instigator of this conflict with his unreasonably harsh and rushed decision to do away with the younger gods. Advocating a more tempered and kinder reaction at first, Tiamat now finds herself in the impossible position between her predisposed lenience and an all-out war for survival.

Ea, having bested Apsu and his servants, continues the line of creation and weaponizes it when he and his wife, Damkina, form a god who has a pivotal significance in this myth and in the greater ancient Near Eastern mythologies over many centuries; Marduk, the patron deity of the city of Babylon. As has been noted earlier, the evolutionary divinization continues with the creation of Marduk with superlative attributes that ennoble beyond measure this new addition to the pantheon:

She who bore him was Damkina, his mother.
The breast of goddesses he did suck.
The nurse that nursed him filled him with awesomeness.
Alluring was his figure, sparkling the lift of his eyes.
Lordly was his gait, commanding from of old.
When Ea saw him, the father who begot him,
He exulted and glowed, his heart filled with gladness.
He rendered him perfect and endowed him with a double godhead.
Greatly exalted was he above them, exceeding throughout. (62)

Being the prime embodiment of the final stage of divine excellence, Marduk enjoys adulations which no other god ever does to an even similar extent. Aside from the occasional compliments present in the preceding tablets, a considerable portion of Tablet VI and the entirety of Tablet VII are dedicated to proclaiming the so-called “fifty names” of Marduk, each of which designates a separate aspect to him and invests

a new layer of significance in his divinity (69). Therefore, it is no wonder that Marduk alone can face the remaining and more challenging of the primordial pair; Tiamat.

The final encounter with Tiamat bears the crucial role in further distinguishing between her and Apsu's functions in the epic plot. When Apsu's defeat has been treated rather stoically, Tiamat's defeat and what unfolds afterwards define the new divine order and inform the process of creation that follows. Marduk kills Tiamat and uses her body for material to make the universe out of:

He split her like a shellfish into two parts:
Half of her he set up and ceiled it as sky,
Pulled down the bar and posted guards.
He bade them to allow not her waters to escape.
He crossed the heavens and surveyed the regions.
He squared Apsu's quarter, the abode of Nudimmud,
As the lord measured the dimensions of Apsu.
The Great Abode, its likeness, he fixed as Esharra. (67)

Tiamat's death and the watery chaos that she represents lay the foundation for the cosmogonical myth that provides an elaboration on the etiology for the universe. As it has consistently been the case since the first creatures—Lahmu and Lahamu, the creative design always involves a physically meaningful substance to create out of, which is Tiamat's body split in half and used by Marduk to reconfigure and repurpose the two halves to make the extraterrestrial space with celestial bodies within and the Earth respectively. Apsu ends up providing the material embedding with his fresh water substance—the ground water “beneath the earth ... called *abzu* or *apsu*” named after the primordial Apsu and “whence the English word ‘abyss’” (Cohn, 2001: 32). His chief narrative function in the plotline of the epic seems only to be the one to provoke in the first place the intergenerational and interdivine conflict which Tiamat later finds herself engulfed in. Tiamat's function, on the other hand, is to supply the vessel of cosmogonical stuff for Marduk to continue and diversify the line of creation. The increasing occurrence of various creative acts that follow the death of Tiamat gives the first hint at arguably the major cause for the ontic incongruity between the two primordials and the younger gods. Although the actual motivation of Tiamat and Apsu to create the gods in the first place and—by so doing—initiate a creative norm is unknown, what they indirectly and involuntarily cause to come into existence is their

own cataclysmic antithesis. “The gods,” just as they were created, “introduced a new principle into the world—movement” and they immediately came to represent youthful energy and uncontainable activity in direct contradiction with the creative inertia and obsolescence that typify the primordial paradigm of Tiamat and Apsu (45).

The first apocalyptic instance then in ancient Mesopotamian literature takes place in *Enuma Elish* and involves both the physical end of the primordial beings and the paradigmatic end of the primordial realm and makes way—as one chapter is concluded—for another, which is reactively founded upon a new set of principles that govern the new realm of existence. In this new paradigm made possible by the interdivine conflict, the passivity and stasis perpetuated by Tiamat and Apsu have left their place for the younger god’s restless motivity. The creative norm before the conflict was marked by an all-encompassing element of inhibition and self-restraint, ultimately limiting creation in terms of quantity and diversity. Nevertheless, under the rule of the younger gods such qualifying measures would be lifted and new principles of variety, expansion, specialization, servitude, and hierarchy would be introduced. The new cosmological *modus operandi* that the younger gods devise was now almost ready to culminate into the pre-apocalyptic antediluvian period when the second conflict—this time between the gods and humankind—would break out and usher in the flood apocalypse.

After so much change in the operation of the cosmos, one last addition is made further impacting the trajectory of both apocalypticism and the ontological framework that regulates the new realm of existence. Tablet VI of *Enuma Elish* opens with a plea of the lesser gods for Marduk to come up with a solution to their physical plight and Marduk’s solution is the creation of a servile breed of beings whose predetermined and divinely ordained task it is to serve the gods by taking on their labor:

When Marduk hears the words of the gods,
His heart prompts (him) to fashion artful works.
Opening his mouth, he addresses Ea
To impart the plan he had conceived in his heart:
“Blood I will mass and cause bones to be.
I will establish a savage, ‘man’ shall be his name.
Verily, savage-man I will create.
He shall be charged with the service of the gods that they might be at ease!

The ways of the gods I will artfully alter.
Though alike revered, into two (groups) they shall be divided.”
Ea answered him, speaking a word to him,
Giving him another plan for the relief of the gods:
“Let but one of their brothers be handed over;
He alone shall perish that mankind may be fashioned. (*Akkadian Myths and Epics*: 68)

Arguably the most significant plot point in the epic—as it concerns and catalyzes the apocalypticism of the flood myth—is not necessarily or essentially the mere creation of humankind as a compassionate gesture by Marduk to the other gods but the way in which they are created. In agreement with similar examples given previously, the act of creating humankind requires a material substance to create out of as all creative acts in the epic conform to the principle of *ex nihilo nihil fit*. While Marduk’s initial plan is not altogether clear and only suggests an amassing of material from multiple sources—in this case, possibly multiple gods, Ea’s counter-proposal involves sacrificing a single god to the same end. It has been intimated by now that in the epic the formative material of a being is not haphazard and has implications beyond the superficialities of the matter upon a first glance. Bearing in mind that the primordial beings and their divine offspring share the same formative material—saline and fresh water, the following lines do more than simply narrate how the human species comes to be and inform gods’ relationship with their human servants:

The king addresses a word to the Anunnaki:
“If your former statement was true,
Do (now) the truth on oath by me declare!
Who was it that contrived the uprising,
And made Tiamat rebel, and joined battle?
Let him be handed over who contrived the uprising.
His guilt I will make him bear. You shall dwell in peace!”
The Igigi, the great gods, replied to him,
To Lugaldimmerankia, counselor of the gods, their lord:
“It was Kingu who contrived the uprising,
And made Tiamat rebel, and joined battle.”
They bound him, holding him before Ea.

They imposed on him his guilt and severed his blood (vessels).

Out of his blood they fashioned mankind.

He imposed the service and let free the gods. (68)

Kingu, who loyally served Tiamat during the great battle that eventually cost Tiamat and Apsu their lives, is chosen as the sacrifice from whom blood is to be drawn in order for Ea to create humankind (Cohn, 2001: 47). The stern and rhetorical inquiry into the actual manipulator and instigator helps reveal Kingu as the principal culprit who “contrived the uprising, / And made Tiamat rebel” (*Akkadian Myths and Epics*: 68). The decision to use his blood to create humankind presents two cases of symbolic signification. The first one pertains to a present need for retribution. The ritual killing of Tiamat’s general to create such lesser and servile beings as humans acts as a punishment and humiliation to ultimately exact vengeance for his part in the battle against the younger gods.

The second one, on the other hand, is the foreshadowing of what will unfold in the flood myth in *Atrahasis* because the formative material chosen to imbue with and influence the human way of existence is not just the blood of any god but one that rebelled against, showed enmity towards, and murdered the younger gods during the great battle. The foreseeable consequences of the use of Kingu’s blood are such that humanity is partially divinized but in the same breath rendered innately rebellious and mutinous as well. Although blood consists of water—the primordial and divine material—and its source is an otherwise great god—Kingu, the transference of a degree of inborn waywardness is ensured in the process. Thus, at the exact moment of creation the human way of existence is marked with a proclivity for deviance and defiance due to humanity’s inevitable taking after their involuntary progenitor, Kingu. With humanity having been created as such with the problematic potentiality suggested in the anthropogenesis myth in *Enuma Elish*, the initial conflict between the two primordial beings, Tiamat and Apsu, and their divine kin over the ontic binaries of passivity, inertia, and stillness as opposed to action, esprit, and dynamism will now be mirrored in virtually identical terms by the conflict which the flood myth introduces between the gods and humanity in another epic, *Atrahasis*.

2. The Sumero-Akkadian Deluge Myth in *Atrahasis*

After the nonhuman apocalyptic event that takes place cumulatively in the myths of theogony, cosmogony, and anthropogenesis in *Enuma Elish*, a number of implications and ramifications of certain aspects of auxiliary events in these tales offer in tandem a narratologically meaningful framework for a thorough and comparative reading and analysis of the first human apocalyptic phenomenon of literary value in the epic of *Atrahasis*. The famous flood myth in the epic finalizes the Sumero-Akkadian outlook on the way of the universe—including those of the world and humanity—by establishing three general epochs to segment the ancient Near Eastern perception of history: the primordial, the antediluvian, and the postdiluvian. As the previous sub-chapter has dealt with the first and part of the second epoch leading up to the flood apocalypse, this one will focus on the onset and duration of the great flood by combining with its analysis of the flood myth in *Atrahasis* elements of significance in the origin myths from *Enuma Elish*.

Harking back to the causation of the great battle between the primordial beings and the younger gods, the *Atrahasis* flood myth mimics and reiterates the same ontic incongruity and problematizes this incompatibility by way of introducing only nominal changes to the structure of the new anthropo-divine rift. While it was previously Tiamat and Apsu who were bewildered and annoyed with the ways of the younger gods and decided to take measures, it is now the younger gods themselves who take offence with some of the basic anatomical characteristics of the humankind they have created. The essence of the conflict in the flood myth is two-fold albeit the two being interwoven: overpopulation due to there being no natural mechanism to check human reproduction and the resulting noise and upheaval that disrupt the order and deprive Enlil, the cardinal deity in the myth, of rest and sleep (Moran, 1987: 251–255).

600 years, less than 600, passed,
And the country became too wide, the people too numerous.
The country was as noisy as a bellowing bull.
The God grew restless at their racket,
Ellil had to listen to their noise.
He addressed the great gods,
'The noise of mankind has become too much,

I am losing sleep over their racket.

Give the order that suruppu-disease shall break out.’ (*Myths from Mesopotamia*: 18)

Contrary to its interdivine counterpart in *Enuma Elish*, the anthropo-divine conflict does not involve a hasty and disproportionate reaction to overpopulation and noise. In fact, Enlil’s reaction, differing from Apsu’s in this regard, is a process of culmination that gradually intensifies to counteract humanity’s reproductive capabilities. Therefore, the first measure taken is a pandemic, “headache, suruppu, asakku” in order to “put an end to their noise straight away” (23). The text pronounces that it does indeed stop humanity’s noise and commotion; however, soon enough Ea defies Enlil’s authority and communicates with a wise man of prophetic disposition by the name of Atrahasis:

Now there was one Atrahasis
Whose ear was open to his god Enki.
He would speak with his god
And his god would speak with him.
Atrahasis made his voice heard
And spoke to his lord,
‘How long will the gods make us suffer?
Will they make us suffer illness forever?’ (19)

The eruption of the anthropo-divine conflict with Enlil’s decision to have a plague sent and inflict humanity nearly simultaneously in the text reveals another conflict that is, by comparison, of a less antagonistic nature between Enlil and Ea (Walton, 1989: 31). Additionally, the sides that appear with the outbreak of this conflict are indicative of another incompatibility, not only the gods Enlil and Ea but more importantly between what they individually represent. In this particular tradition that pertains to the flood myth it is not Marduk but Enlil who created the world and therefore he is only partial to the world he created with little to no regard for humanity’s prevalence and wellbeing. In direct opposition Ea was responsible for the creation of humankind which explains his lenience and compassion towards them:

Enki made his voice heard
And spoke to his servant:
‘Call the elders, the senior men!

Start an uprising in your own house,
Let heralds proclaim ...
Let them make a loud noise in the land:
Do not revere your gods,
Do not pray to your goddesses,
But search out the door of Namtara.
Bring a baked loaf into his presence.
May the flour offering reach him,
May he be shamed by the presents
And wipe away his hand.’ (*Myths from Mesopotamia*: 19)

The god Namtara, executing Enlil’s order, is directly responsible for the plague. So, the solution Ea contrives to circumvent the plague is to have humanity rebel against gods and shame the responsible god by singling him out and giving him ritual offerings only. This solution yields the desired effect and Namtara “was shamed by the presents. / And wiped away his hand” (20).

Humanity’s intrinsic waywardness because of Kingu’s blood having been used as their formative material is further inflamed by their creator’s counsel to cause even more disruption. Nevertheless, Ea’s stratagem will prove only a temporary solution since Enlil persists in his adamant determination to pursue his plan to offset human overpopulation. Now that the plague has been lifted after a brief period of effect, humanity continues to exist as usual and to disturb Enlil:

‘The noise of mankind has become too much,
I am losing sleep over their racket.
Cut off food supplies to the people!
Let the vegetation be too scant for their hunger!
Let Adad wipe away his rain.
Below let no flood-water flow from the springs.
Let wind go, let it strip the ground bare,
Let clouds gather but not drop rain,
Let the field yield a diminished harvest ...’ (20)

The second measure Enlil takes comes in the form of a devastating drought and soil deterioration and for this task he assigns Adad to withhold rain. In addition to the cessation of precipitative water he arranges the ground water to not flow up so that

humanity is deprived of their sustenance and faces a mass reduction in numbers. This second catastrophe has abysmal consequences for humankind to the extent that as the drought rages on and famine begins to take a heavy toll on people, they resort to unthinkable deeds in order to survive. During the first year of the drought, they rely on the stored grain and as of the second year when the storage is finally depleted, their appearance and posture begin to show grave symptoms of malnutrition, “their faces covered with scabs like malt. / Their faces looked sallow. / They went out in public hunched, / Their well-set shoulders slouched, / Their upstanding bearing bowed” (22–23). In utter desperation people go so far as to practice cannibalism to avoid certain death. It is at that point when Ea opts to intervene a second time through “[t]he thoughtful man Atrahasis” and instructs what remains of humankind to follow the previous plan to shame the god responsible for the drought, Adad (26). People stop worshipping and showing reverence towards all the other gods but Adad and makes offerings only to him, which works again and as a result Adad concedes and makes it rain putting an end to the six-year-long drought (21).

When both of the graduated lesser catastrophes have now failed to decisively reduce human population and restore the kind of balance Enlil hoped to establish, he decides, this time repeating primordial Apsu’s first reaction, to eradicate humanity altogether as a final solution because they seem to be immune to any of his attempts to maintain a terrestrial order that he deems fit where humanity is no longer out of balance. To fulfill this final plan the great flood is summarily decreed. In the assembly of gods Ea demonstrates his unwillingness to condone this decision and proclaims in protest the following lines, thereby refusing any association with the flood:

‘Why should you make me swear an oath?
Why should I use my power against my people?
The flood that you mention to me—
What is it? I don’t even know!
Could I give birth to a flood?
That is Ellil’s kind of work! ...’ (29)

As with the first two catastrophes Ea communicates with Atrahasis through a reed wall and instructs him to build an ark and gives him an exact recipe to do so (30). “[W]ithout formally breaking his oath” and choosing to speak with Atrahasis not in person but

through a reed wall, Ea manages “to warn ... Atrahasis” so that he makes an ark and loads it “with his family and with all kinds of animals” (Cohn, 2001: 51).

The immense devastation of the flood has the unforeseen complication of threatening the gods, too. The undoing of the creation of humankind means the inevitable return of the gods to their laborious duties on Earth as they anthropomorphically need to eat and drink as humans do. Gods face starvation because it is humanity who does all the work instead of the gods and takes care of their nutritional needs via regular offerings. When the flood finally befalls the Earth and destroys most of humanity, gods begin to suffer due to lack of food and water. Whether or not it is because they have a vested interest in the survival of their human servants for their own sustenance, all of them except Enlil display a great deal of pity and cry at the sheer horror of the mass drowning of humanity. And when it is almost too late, they begin to voice their dissatisfaction with the sending of the flood now that it negatively affects them as well (*Myths from Mesopotamia*: 32–33). For humanity, on the other hand, the situation could not possibly be grimmer. Although Ea’s benevolent intervention prevents a wholesale annihilation of the human species, the atrocity that ensues means the death of most of them:

No one could see anyone else,
They could not be recognized in the catastrophe.
The Flood roared like a bull ...
The darkness was total, there was no sun. (31)

Unperturbed by the spectacle of abject destruction that wreaks havoc on Earth of his own doing, Enlil shows at this stage of the myth a natural, anesthetic, and matter-of-fact attitude as he’s only concerned with restoring a sense of harmony to the world because in his view the way in which humanity exists only threatens to cause chaos and discord unless a decisive quantitative reduction is imposed on humanity. The rift between him and Ea proves all the more manifest towards the end of the myth and the final ontic binary can be laid out with Enlil asserting his will in favor of his understanding of a terrestrial order and Ea unselectively taking the side of humanity at every point of the anthropo-divine conflict. One of the most distinctive aspects of this conflict that distinguishes it from the interdivine conflict in *Enuma Elish* is the fact that humanity has very limited means at their disposal to fend for themselves. But for Ea’s inexhaustive sympathy and benevolence, humanity would suffer indefinitely.

Although Ea's instructions throughout the epic seem to only make it worse for humankind, the ultimate benefit is attained when Enlil, upon noticing the ark and expressing anger at humanity's survival at first, comes around and shows mercy after Ea's tenacious confrontation with him "but only on the condition that the numbers were kept down. So the gods" introduced infertility, ritual chastity, infant mortality, and natural death to keep human population in check (Cohn, 2001: 51). Before these modifications to human anatomy and the human way of existence, "[t]he implication is that ... men could die, as indeed gods could, from acts of violence, from disease and otherwise at the will of the gods, but not naturally from old age. From the time of the Deluge onwards, death is to follow life as a matter of course" (George, 2000: xliv).

The epic may, at face value, be mistakenly construed to favor and prioritize humanity and their ever-supportive creator Ea who does not once falter in his resolution to ensure humanity's survival and well-being. Nevertheless, whatever assumptions that there may be to this effect are to deliquesce when the closing lines conspicuously ennoble and glorify Enlil exactly on the grounds that he has sent the great flood:

How we sent the Flood.
But a man survived the catastrophe.
You are the counsellor of the gods;
On your order I created conflict.
Let the Igigi listen to this song
In order to praise you,
And let them record your greatness.
I shall sing of the Flood to all people:
Listen! (*Myths from Mesopotamia*: 35)

The way in which the epic concludes serves to reaffirm humanity's original *raison d'être* by both pointing out the anthro-divine interdependence and humanity's prescribed subservience to their gods. "The myth of Atrahasis is not intended as a criticism of the gods, let alone of Enlil. On the contrary, the poem ends by praising the 'great feat' that he had performed in making the flood. Ruthless the gods might be, but it was not for mere humans to complain. They must accept the world as it was" unquestioningly and must always be mindful of the boundaries that set them apart from

and hierarchically below their gods and of their limitations by the very nature of their ontological design (Cohn, 2001: 51).

It is true that the text deliberately refrains from choosing and promoting a specific side in the anthropo-divine conflict and that it aims to inspire and instill a sense of awe in and respect towards the gods. However, the exact neutrality the text adopts also allows for a reading that acquits humanity of any premeditation in guilt. The flood may be superficially blamed on human overpopulation and noise but it is ultimately the gods who created them in the first place in such a way that they did only what they were designed to do and existed only in the way assigned to them. This moderate suspicion towards and the partial justification of human potentiality offer a relationing to all of the following versions of apocalypticism included in the scope of this thesis. The flood myth in *Atrahasis*, with implications before and after the flood combined, is the foundational apocalyptic idea which the Judeo-Christian flood myth, the Romantic natural apocalypticism, and the post-war environmental anxiety all rest upon.

B. The Judeo-Christian Deluge Myth in the Book of Genesis

The very last contribution to the epochal first half of human history, that is, the ancient Near Eastern mytho-literature from the 3rd millennium BCE leading up to the onset of the common era came in the form of multi-authored manuscripts appearing circa 3rd century BCE after the Babylonian exile of the Jewish people (Enns, 2012: 5; Gmirkin, 2006: 3; Greifenhagen, 2002: 212). Although it is not possible to set a specific date for the final version of the Pentateuch—of which Genesis is the first in order of the five books that comprise it, “on the basis of the extant manuscript evidence alone, 250 BCE represents the *terminus ad quem*,” plausibly the most recent date “for the production of the final text form” (Greifenhagen, 2002: 212). By the time the first five books of the Hebrew Bible appeared, the much-earlier Sumero-Akkadian versions of the origin and flood myths had been circulating for at least two millennia in the ancient Near East and had enjoyed quite an extensive amount of time being told and retold innumerable times in all corners of the region.

The Babylonian exile ensured a decisive Jewish exposure to the older myths and, as a result, the many similarities between the Sumero-Akkadian myths and specifically the Book of Genesis are attributable at least to a 5th-century exilic

exposure or a refinement at that time of a prior exposure if there had ever been one to speak of. Just as any other myths had gone through many versions and editions depending on the time and place of their reception and subsequent scripting, the Pentateuch, too, gained multiple renditions (Ulrich, 1996: 85). However, these renditions were far too alike to be considered self-contained texts and only point to a concerted effort to disseminate the contents of the books rather than claim individual ownership of the texts or impose an individual style on them. The Pentateuch as a whole—including the Book of Genesis—and “even the some six thousand variants in the Samaritan Pentateuch” that have been discovered or unearthed ever since “are ... largely minor and fall within a range of relative stability” (Sanders, 1992: 843).

A number of themes from ancient Near Eastern creation myths seem to be reflected in Genesis: the overcoming of chaotic, formless waters in the formation of the cosmos (Gen. 1.1–2), humans made from the earth with an infusion of the divine (Gen. 2.7), and a re-creation through flood (Gen. 6–9). Indeed, the scholarly consensus concerning the authorship and date of Genesis indicates influence from surrounding culture, particularly Babylon. It therefore seems very likely that the composition of Genesis was significantly influenced by other ancient creation myths such as *Atrahasis* and *Enuma Elish*. (Oliver, 2017: 11)

All three factors given above that uncover the productive background of the Pentateuch are relevant to the scope of this thesis in demarcating a diachronically meaningful continuum of ancient Near Eastern mythologies. The fact that ancient Israelites were familiar with the older myths like every other nation from the region, that they most likely formulated the latest version of the Pentateuch by the 3rd century BCE, and that different editions of the Pentateuch manuscripts showed considerably minor variation all establish a mythic tradition which the authors of these texts abode by to a substantial degree. The overarching textual and thematic adaptation—without which the production of a body of writing such as the Pentateuch would have been inconceivable—enabled the transference of many notions previously entertained in Sumero-Akkadian clay tablets into the Hebrew Bible. “[T]he ancient Israelites freely adopted the themes of the much-older stories of the nations around them” (Enns, 2012: 5–6) in an unbroken succession of mythological intertextuality.

Notwithstanding a great many similarities with the earlier mythological texts, the Book of Genesis does indeed differ in a few key points which effects the transformation of certain aspects of the ontological implications proffered in the text. The human problem or the problem of the human way—as the theme emerged in its original form in *Atrahasis*—loses its ecological/environmental causation. While Enlil’s concern was focused on remedying the imbalance and the resulting symbolic regression to chaos which, in his perception, was caused by human overpopulation (Salvador & Norton, 2011: 50), the god of the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh instructs humanity to do the exact opposite of what Enlil would most certainly rather never happened. The specifics of the role of humanity in the notion of terrestrial order in Genesis help delineate the change from problematizing human expansion, overpopulation, and noise which dominated the earlier mythological writing to their polar opposites, that is, not only the sanctioning of reproducing and populating the Earth at will but also the strong encouragement thereof. In Genesis the god explicitly expresses in the imperative what he deems optimal for his idea of a proper mode of operation in the world when he says “[b]e fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it” (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible*: 13). This straightforward prescription for humanity to multiply arguably reflects a prominent paradigmatic shift in emphasis and may indicate that the compassion and lenience shown towards humanity in earlier texts are further expanded to now include a sense of welcoming and promoting the human presence on Earth.

Although Genesis introduces such a change to the effect of first normalizing and then glorifying the place of humanity in the world—because they are also expected to surmount and subordinate the world, the leeway the text allows itself proves only so far as to remove the idea of humankind inherently being an ecological threat to the cosmic order. Genesis uniquely voices a new ontic concern with the way humans are: the cosmogony which Genesis offers makes no mention of any potential flaw in the universe. In fact, every aspect of the universe in the process of creation is proclaimed to be “good” (11–12) and when creation is complete in its entirety, it is complimented as being “very good” (13). Therefore, it can be inferred that Genesis attributes no badness or evil to nature from the initial step of the separation of “the light from the darkness” (11) to the creation of nonhuman animals (12). In keeping with the divine instruction, humanity multiplies and fills the Earth at which point humanity as a

concept emerges incongruous with all that is nonhuman, including both the god himself and all of his creation:

“The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, ‘I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.’ But Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord.” (20)

So, the only interruption, malfunction, and error to ever exist in the universe lie with humanity to the very extent that evil, absent from everything else, is a permanent fixture in human ontology in the Book of Genesis. The conclusion made possible by the stark contrast which humanity is in with the “good” god and the rest of his “good” creation demonstrates the antinomic potentiality of humankind: the potential for goodness like their maker due to part of their formative material being the divine “breath of life” (13–14) and the concurrent potential for “wickedness” and “evil” (20) that could be blamed on the other part of their formative material, “the dust of the ground” (14), being subtly associable with the pre-cosmogonic chaos.

The Book of Genesis’ fidelity to the ancient mythic tradition it sprung from reiterates the motif of divine mercy implemented and communicated through a select individual who is always portrayed as having the favor of a god (Salvador & Norton, 2011: 49). The first use of this motif appears in the oldest version of the flood myth in literature in a Sumerian epic called *Eridu Genesis* from which every subsequent ancient Near Eastern rendition borrowed (Walton, 1989: 38). This singular prophetic character goes by different names in different versions of the myth: Ziusudra in *Eridu Genesis*, Atrahasis in the epic named after him, Utnapishtim in *Gilgamesh*, Noah in the Hebrew Bible, and Deucalion in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. However, the character nearly precisely retains all of the same functions he performs, especially in the aftermath of the deluge, across the many versions that span three millennia. This worthy individual along with a select few who accompany him provides a second creative milestone and represents re-creation and the introduction of new ontological points. When the great flood abates in the Book of Genesis and Noah survives the

apocalypse with a handful of people and a pair of each animal species, creation is allowed a chance to start anew:

“The Flood was no ordinary overflow. It is portrayed as a veritable reversal of creation ... God intended to return the universe to its pre-Creation state of watery chaos and then remake it using the microcosm of Noah’s ark.”
(Bandstra, 2009: 61)

The Genesis flood narrative thus follows—as do all prior flood accounts—in its own textual integrity and points out in its greater mythological structure a circular historicity of the thematic dyads of doing and undoing, making and remaking, and chaos and order in a self-repeating string of consecution. The key function performed by the human as a paradoxically hybridized character of both protagonism and antagonism is to be the causative agent catalyzing this circular historicity.

C. The Proto-Covenant, the Noahic Covenant, and Their Onto-Apocalyptic Implications

The *Atrahasis* flood account concludes with a mutual understanding between the divinity and humankind whereby pro-humanist Ea’s rivalry with anti-humanist Enlil as well as what they respectively represent—humanity and the Earth—results in the reframing of every permutation of relationship among the entities involved. The new way of things arrived at was founded upon a number of bilateral compromises, some of which were concessions in favor of Enlil’s ecological agenda and some in favor of humankind. Although humanity is subjected to certain modifications in their anatomy and has now been rendered naturally mortal, easier to die, and harder to reproduce, the anthropo-divine concordat, or in other words the proto-covenant—the first of its kind in literature, is far from a zero-sum case with humankind ending up obtaining the ultimate accolade due to two tacit consequences of the postdiluvian arrangement.

The first one is the acknowledgement of the essentiality of human labor. The very point in human existence has been to relieve the gods of their initial duties including such manual labor as tilling the soil, digging up and maintaining the canals, and harvesting the produce. Humankind was created to take on all the work which the gods had been responsible for (Cohn, 2001: 36). The cosmic order that was established

by Marduk or Enlil following the great battle between the primordial pair and their children was conditioned on the slave labor provided by humanity. They would perform all duties on behalf of and for the sake of gods. More importantly, gods would now depend on the offerings made by humans for their basic amenities. In this arrangement humanity would have no apparent return other than to be merely allowed to exist, preferably without any punitive/destructive manipulation of natural phenomena by the gods. However, the removal of humankind from this arrangement would have the far-reaching consequence of hurting divine interests as they would have to go back to work and, by so doing, to their previous physical plight which they used to lament (Foster, 2002: 26–27). For them, this arrangement was a much-deserved reward for their part in the great battle. With no substitute plan present, the hasty removal of humankind would mean the end of this cosmic arrangement and if Enlil had not been convinced, the consequences would have been far direr and far more chaotic for the gods than they did. Towards the end of the flood, the more humanity suffered and were incapacitated to perform their worldly duties, the more gods suffered in turn with their appearances deteriorating like their human slaves as they got closer onto the brink of starvation and dehydration without the regular offerings which humans would make before the flood (*Myths from Mesopotamia*: 32–33).

Interwoven with the acknowledgement of humanity's essential place in the cosmic order, the second consequence is Enlil's tacit concession that changes the status of humanity from being an immediate concern of cosmic significance to being excused altogether. The *Atrahasis* proto-covenant makes no guarantee that humankind will never be able to overpopulate and cause noise again. In fact, despite what the alterations made to human anatomy might imply, the absence of harsher measures and the relative triviality of the ones that have been taken against humanity are tantamount to permitting the human way of existence to continue as usual with their disruptive potential and inherent waywardness still intact. This new postdiluvian paradigm is thus suggestive of a divine choice to tolerate and excuse the human way in light of their pragmatic indispensability for the benefit of all gods in spite of Enlil's earlier perception of them as being unpardonably detrimental to the cosmic order (Foster, 2002: 27).

The *Atrahasis* proto-covenant stands uniquely poised to first problematize human existence as a threat to the nonhuman world, thereby creating a link to the

much-later environmental anxiety expressed in 20th-century apocalyptic works of literature and then to excuse the exact same problematics of human existence purely on pragmatic grounds to the effect of laying the foundation for the full emergence of anthropocentrism in the Book of Genesis. While humanity as depicted in *Atrahasis* was invested the sole role of servitude to gods, the god of Genesis has a different perception of and therefore a different prescription for the role he devises for humanity. No longer being simple servants with no function except for a pragmatic one and no longer being ontically meaningful only insofar as they are practically useful to gods, the Hebrew Bible's Yahweh offers an alternative conception of humanity:

“[H]ave dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth ... So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal ... and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.” (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible*: 13–14)

In this new conception humanity retains its ancient servitude to the divinity but the pragmatic aspect of this master-servant relationship is reformulated to exclude any apparent gain on the part of the god, which has the added implication that there is an even greater amount of compassion for them and a higher esteem which they are held in. The lenience shown previously by Ea because he was the one who had created humankind is further amplified in its scope and intensity in the Book of Genesis so that humankind is granted authority and superiority over the rest of god's creation. This lordly status is symbolically represented by the granting of the prerogative of nomenclature. Therefore, humanity is elevated in station closer to its maker by naming god's creation on his behalf.

The more tacit pardoning of the human way in *Atrahasis* takes on a clearer elucidation in Genesis and allows for the excusing of what was once regarded as unacceptable and used as justification for the flood apocalypse. The evil inherent to humanity is normalized as the god promises that “[he] will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth” (22) all the while choosing in effect to be indifferent since “in view of humanity's fundamental flaws, after the Flood the new world will almost certainly be just as bad as the one that was wiped out before” (Lisboa, 2011: 174).

The Noahic covenant in Genesis closely follows the proto-covenant in *Atrahasis* in terms of discontinuing the problematization of the human way but differs from it in its more pronounced tolerance and the elevation of humanity's status. What was once only a fleeting desire to trump and surpass nature expressed subtly through highly anthropomorphized deities in the Sumero-Akkadian mythology has now reached its full realization with the Noahic covenant, as part of which the god of the Hebrew Bible proclaims the immutable human mastery over nature. In breaking with the older versions of the flood myth, its Judeo-Christian retelling in Genesis shifts the focus from an environmental anxiety to a matter of religious observance (Salvador & Norton, 2011: 49–50). The text thereby introduces active responsibility and active culpability following the resetting of the creation with the flood apocalypse. Specific actions of righteousness or lack thereof matter the most in and permeate the postdiluvian ethos of the Genesis flood narrative as opposed to what was only passively present in human ontology in the *Atrahasis* flood account. In this regard, Genesis uniquely puts emphasis on the possibilities that human will can enable. Humanity in *Atrahasis* was prone to being molded and reconfigured as the gods saw fit and their compatibility with the cosmic order exclusively rested on the divine intervention in their ontology. Genesis, however, by stressing an active culpability to induce an apocalypse and the willpower to choose to do what is necessary to avoid divine punishment in the future, places a great deal of trust in the positive part of human potentiality. Humanity's newly-gained status and its higher sense of responsibility for its actions indicate the literary evolution of humankind into a far nobler and superior characterization so that they are finally ready to view themselves as masters of nature, which arguably marks the true beginning of the ever-relevant concept of anthropocentrism in the history of thought and literature.

Both versions of the flood apocalypse and both accounts of the covenant in *Atrahasis* and Genesis treat the matter of culpability similarly enough to be regarded together. The flood is divinely contrived as a measure to correct the cosmic order by ridding it of the human problem that is, in both texts, portrayed as chronically escalating and only becomes perceptible with the long-term consequences of their inherent waywardness maturing to begin to cause substantial disruption. However, this is not an exclusive guilt which reveals full accountability on the part of humankind but one that is tempered and partially redeemed. The mitigating factor that takes away

some of the human culpability is the fact that humanity poses problems not because they deliberately seek to do so but because of their anatomy and ontology over which they can exact very limited control.

The same mostly applies to the matter of penalty. It can be argued that part of the reason for the sending of the flood apocalypse is retributive insofar as humanity is, at least on the surface, punished for being wayward and going against and beyond the bounds of the established cosmic order. But those boundaries could not be more obscure until the flood. Indeed, if humanness is deserving of such a large-scale punishment, it will only continue to be so after the flood due to being introduced no substantial modification in their ontology. The covenant shows a change of heart by the divine and a willingness to tolerate the less-than-perfect human condition. Penalty, then, as was the case with culpability, is tempered with the implied admission that humanity knows no better than to only be the way it is and only act the way it is created.

The last point central to the discussion in this chapter is the question of corrigibility. Both texts do give the impression—more than once—that the primary motivation for the actions taken against humankind is intended as corrective and perhaps it was for the audience of these myths so that they would receive them as cautionary tales. Nevertheless, the only correction that can be spoken of with any amount of certainty is directed towards reestablishing the order. For this purpose, the flood makes it possible for the Earth in *Atrahasis* and for the entire creation in Genesis to start afresh with the elimination of almost all of humankind. The divine wish in both accounts that gives rise to the flood is to restore not humanity but the order deranged by humanity to an earlier, more ideal state. This wish for a return to a better-functioning order is eventually superseded and made void by the covenant's consent to the human way of existence. Taking into account the significant limitations on culpability and penalty and the eventual futility of the previous corrective measures, the postdiluvian human emerges as an entity that can be sympathetically pardoned but cannot be realistically remedied.

Regardless of how both texts narrate the flood apocalypse and leaving now the suspension of disbelief, what is anthropologically striking is the fact that beneath the textual surface that assumes various appearances across the many versions of the myth lies the unifying theme that humanity is suspicious of its own capacity for harmonious co-existence—whether with each other, with its sentient and insentient environment,

or with its deities. In this regard, the sense of an apocalyptic autophobia is not a later, let alone a modern, invention but one that has run contemporaneously with the history of literature. Ever since the inception of cuneiform writing in ancient Near East, the idea that humanness and the entire sum of potentiality encapsulated in humanness have always been seen as conducive to setting in motion a chain of events that will morph into full-scale catastrophes and eventually threaten to bring humanity itself to extinction or, more leniently after much destruction, to the brink of extinction at best. What *Atrahasis* problematizes as a Malthusian noise or the Book of Genesis as evil is but the first and principal ideation of humanity's reservations about the possibility and practicality of its compatible and life-affirming existence on Earth. This is fundamentally premised on humanity's original anxiety calling into question the matters of culpability, penalty, and corrigibility all the while retaining a palpable sense of autophobia.

III. THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ROMANTIC LAST-MAN NARRATIVES

A. The Secularization of the Apocalyptic Genre

1. Post-Enlightenment and Demystified Nature

The history of apocalypticism and the literature it produced from the canonization of the Book of Genesis until the nineteenth century maintained a remarkable uniformity in its treatment of the genre. Emboldened and propagated by Christian beliefs, the apocalyptic literature of this period remained quite stable and revolved around the governing principle of human fallibility that is punishable by way of divine retribution and human perfectibility that is promised through divine redemption. This Judeo-Christian mode of making sense of and imagining the cosmos and the last things as a concept made way for a unique religious expression of apocalypticism known as the jeremiad. This particular narrative style “dates back to Puritan sermons of the 1600s and is closely related to apocalyptic discourse” (Salvador & Norton, 2011: 47). The jeremiad follows four stages through which its plot structure manifests itself: a group of people esoterically chosen as a sample first goes astray and deviates from righteousness; they are punished with some form of catastrophe as a result; they then repent and return to righteousness; and finally, the punitive catastrophe is lifted as an expression of the grace and mercy of their god (Johannesen, 1985, as cited in Salvador & Norton, 2011: 47). The jeremiad is a subgenre of the Christian apocalyptic thought that performs a heightened alarmism and is intended to incite in its audience a sense of urgency in conveying the religiously-minded anxieties that were prevalent at the time.

Although what is commonly called the Age of Anxiety is meant to indicate a much later period of time in history when socio-political conditions are ripe enough to result in a generalized sense of disillusionment, frustration, and hopelessness, it is far too difficult to claim that humanity has ever gone through any substantially long phase of bliss and peace without having some form of common references of social anxiety. By extension then, every human age is an age of anxiety containing relatively shared

concerns depending on the specific characteristics of that point in time and place. Thus, it would only be a gross oversimplification and an unfeasible whitewashing to treat the long pre-Romantic period as though people had their beliefs to invariably cling to and somehow that were enough and were all it took for them to secure a sense of absolute peace of mind. This was never the case: for the entire duration of human history when the supernatural ruled over people's outlook on the cosmos in one way or another, they were anxious—and immensely so—for the simple fact that so much was at stake at any given time for them and so much was out of their control. The age of the absolute supernatural was “[a]n age of great fears,” in which people were stricken almost on a daily basis with the “[f]ear of magic, of outsiders, of disorders, and of course of sin, death, and judgment.” Whatever relative prosperity and progress had been achieved by the Middle Ages did nothing to alleviate these anxieties; in fact, as of the fourteenth century they were further aggravated by “famines, wars, and above all the Black Death” (Taylor, 2007: 88). Leaving on its track the sheer extent and scope of devastation that it did, the bubonic plague pandemic was but a grim reminder of just how easily societies could be thrown off balance by forces utterly unfathomable and so unthinkably cruel to them. For centuries after the Plague, the general feeling and memory would remain such that it must have been ordained by the god to punish the erring, the wicked, and the unrepenting.

This paradigm where every phenomenon—either to one's liking or dismay—is related to an external, nonhuman source belonged to “the enchanted world” and there “the boundary between mind and world” as well as “the boundary between agents and forces” is highly permeable. Any given human agent is both conducive and prone to supernatural imaginings. But more importantly, “the boundary between self and other is ... porous,” which dominated the way in which people perceived the world around and beyond them. The enchantment that defines the period and informs the ethos of the apocalyptic genre until Romanticism was based on a phenomenological supernaturalization which explains the mainstream adherence to magic, spirits, miracles, curses, and—not the least—the idea of a monotheo favorably or unfavorably steering the course of events in response to human actions (Taylor, 2007: 39).

The shift in the apocalyptic paradigm in the last-man narratives of the nineteenth century was part of the larger socio-cultural turbulence that began in Europe with some key conceptual debates enabled by the Enlightenment in the seventeenth

century. These debates initiated a new way of approaching the *modus operandi* of the universe in general from a scientific, empirical perspective, but it was also a new way of calling into question how humankind can and should fit into this emerging understanding. The Enlightenment did not begin as an avowedly secular movement; likewise, its aims were not—at least initially—to refute the Judeo-Christian worldview (Henry, 2010: 41). A majority of the first Enlightenment thinkers only attempted to adapt religious thinking to the new concepts introduced then, the most prominent of which were reason and progress. “The new mechanistic science of the seventeenth century” proved no threat, in its infant stage of development, to Christianity. These concepts had distinctly religious undertones and were predominantly discussed and furthered on the basis of divine design. The dominant reception of science at the time was that since it was the Christian god who granted humankind the ability to think, it was not only desirable but encouraged as an ontological given to employ this god-given ability in the study of another aspect of god’s design; nature. The way the concept of reason was developed served the Genesis rhetoric that placed humankind as overlords of nature—both fauna and flora—and effectively justified human exceptionalism with the rising scientific atmosphere of the period. It was, at best, an attempt—for the better part of the seventeenth century—to reaffirm the Judeo-Christian conception of the cosmos (Taylor, 2007: 26). Nevertheless, it would become evident in the following century that the central role of religion, especially in the sphere of sciences and literature, would not last forever and an additional, yet this time a deleterious change, would occur in the theophilosophy of Europe.

The systematic preoccupation with nature and trying to investigate nature in irreligious terms—regardless if these investigators held any religious beliefs or justified their irreligious findings on theological grounds—provided the starting point of the acceleration of the irreligiosity of sciences. “Certainly, the natural philosopher was exclusively concerned to explain natural phenomena” by referring first and foremost to naturalistic evidence and causalities. Religious claims came later to reinforce the methodologically irreligious results they obtained from their investigations (Henry, 2010: 42). Particularly in England, “[t]he emphasis upon the intricacies of Newtonian natural philosophy to prove the existence of God meant that revelation was supplanted by reason ... and the result was the growth of Deism at the expense of the traditional institutions of the church, and arguably ... the beginnings of

secularization.” The shift of referential authority from the scriptures and the theologians who preached them religiously to natural phenomena and the natural philosophers who studied them naturalistically enabled the formation of a paradigmatic rift between the two (54–55). Furthermore, the advancements in and the proliferation of scientific methods and studies counter-correlatively allowed room for traditional means of sense-making and investigative practices. In the earliest stages of natural philosophy, “[w]here scientific explanation remained incomplete, religious thinkers might still plug the gaps with their gods, but further scientific advance would repeatedly shrink the jurisdiction of such gods-of-the-gaps,” effectively causing the sciences to expand into and encroach on more and more areas previously occupied by Christian theology (Topham, 2010: 106).

With a delimitable clash between science and religion now taking shape, the defining factor that would disenchant the world is what Taylor (2007) calls “autonomization of nature” by which “the negation of all super-nature” begins to seep into the spirit of the time that was under the influence of “a growing interest in nature-for-itself” (91). This made it possible “to relate to certain realities as purely ‘natural’, and disintricate them from the transcendent” so that eventually “encounter[ing] the sacred” can hardly be experienced any more in the disenchanted world (143). Even before the more pronounced prevailment of Deistic, agnostic, and atheistic currents of thought in Europe when theologically-informed ideas co-existed somewhat amicably with the rising scientism, a separation was well underway and it was generally held that the divine, being “the creator of the universe ... can interrupt or override the laws [of nature] so as to perform special divine acts” to punish, reward, or assist humankind. Yet, such expressions of the divine will “came to be defined as violations of the laws of nature” (Murphy, 2010: 246), allocating natural philosophy and sciences an autonomous sphere to preside over and thrive in.

In the enchanted world, what causes and sustains that exact enchantment is best encapsulated in “the fear and incomprehensibility of nature’s forces” which offers an explanation—according to Thomas Hobbes—for “the origins of religious belief” (Brooke, 2010: 106). Ever since the first instances of literature in the ancient Near East, humanity, at the mercy and in awe of all the natural phenomena that definitively make or break their lives, has been engaged in a lasting endeavor to master that fear of the unknown and the inexplicable in nature that surround them by producing mytho-

literary modes of sense-making. These mythic modes of perceiving the universe may not be altogether sensical in a strictly secularized scientific context and may accordingly be dismissed as being convictions of primitive folly but they are indeed perfectly sensical in tracing an anthropologically-consistent justification for the long-held need for supernaturalizing the natural.

The specific causation and interrelationality involved in the ontological, teleological, and etiological formula that had monopolized the apocalyptic genre for nearly five millennia since *Eridu Genesis* featuring a flood myth for the first time was on the trajectory of reaching a breaking point towards the nineteenth century. The highly spiritualized and supernaturalized view of causations and other noncausal relations between human acts and natural events had undergone unrelentingly repetitive spells of erosion with the advent of the Scientific Revolution from the sixteenth century onwards. Every minor clash between the sciences and theology incrementally intensified the manner in which each of the two vied for exclusive authority in the matter of explaining phenomena that pertained in some way to humanity. Every confrontation and every controversy that captured the popular interest and imagination upon the publication of a work or the start of a conversation among the intelligentsia ended up—inadvertently or not—refuting and undermining the Church doctrines. By so doing, it gradually set the stage for the relocation of the concept of finitude within a context where nature, no longer instrumentalized nor weaponized against humanity by the divine, could now reign supreme in its own right and free of any competition.

2. The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 and the Abandonment of Theodicy

The break that appeared in the perception of nature that gradually but surely resulted in its demystification was accompanied by an alternative approach towards natural disasters. If nature can be explained naturalistically without having to refer to an overall supernaturalizing framework, the conclusion which the some two-century-long evolution in European thought culminated in was not the best grounds for futuristic optimism. On the contrary, the realization that a disaster could befall a society suddenly and for no apparent cause other than the mundane operations of natural forces was all the more reason to be anxious:

“[P]eople realized that they were not, in fact, responsible for catastrophes, and that an entirely arbitrary disaster ... might wipe out mankind at any time. The rationalists of the Enlightenment could stop worrying that God might send another deluge to punish their apostasy, but they also had to stop believing in a divine protective power that would make sure nothing happened to the chosen people. The Age of Anxiety is therefore correlated in its rise with a developing awareness of man’s vulnerability to natural catastrophe. (Stableford, 1983: 101–102)

The successive age of anxiety thus began in the Romantic period, adapting its previous supernaturalized template to the ethos of this new realm of sense-making. By adapting as such it made sure to continue to impact how humanity expressed its anxieties in the literature they produced. What was symptomatically abandoned alongside the rule of the supernatural was the hopeful references of consolation and comfort which people used to resort to whenever they experienced an ordeal. Now that a natural disaster could easily be explained away and hence disallowed wishful anticipations of mercy or reward in the future in return for having experienced that disaster, what was left was too disorienting to come to terms with. “One tradition which grew from this issue ... was the series of ‘last man’ fictions” in which humanity’s finitude is exclusively attributed to natural causes (Seed, 2000: 3).

The single most influential real-life catastrophe that arguably provided an excess of anxious inspiration for the first last-man narrative in history was the Lisbon Earthquake of 1755. Although the European society was not unfamiliar with large-scale disasters—by then they had already gone through multiple episodes of pandemic and famine for example, the coincidence of the Lisbon Earthquake with one of the most pivotal moments in European history—when the transition from the supernatural to the natural paradigm was taking place—sufficed to bring forth a renewed sense of vulnerability and alarm. “It was an event that was to embed itself deep within European consciousness, putting Enlightenment philosophy on a new trajectory” (Weninger, 2017: 8). Whatever disasters had been experienced prior to the Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 that had been nearly as massive was predominantly received by the European societies as a natural event that they supernaturalized and duly processed as such. Nevertheless, they were devoid of their previous means of processing this earthquake in a similar manner. The ramifications of the Lisbon Earthquake eventually intensified

to such an extent that a new chasm between the theologians and natural philosophers and a new controversy over theodicy—the problem of evil—ensued. Writing a year after the earthquake, Voltaire was one of the staunchest opponents to the varied interpretations of the problem of evil which attempted in unison to justify the existence of atrocities in the world and to reconcile them with the conception of a good god that allows them. “Voltaire attacked the foundations of the theophilosophical optimism that had come to dominate rationalist thought over the preceding decades. Eighteenth-century optimism is epitomized by two classic formulations, Leibniz’s maxim that ours is ‘the best of all possible worlds’ and Pope’s supplementary adage ‘Whatever Is, Is Right.’” In his 1706 poem he offers a morbid description of the aftermath of the earthquake but his main point throughout the poem is to demonstrate what he considers a series of fallacies and terminal inconsistencies that haunt “the philosophy of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Alexander Pope” (Weninger, 2017: 10):

Approach in crowds, and meditate awhile
Yon shatter’d walls, and view each ruin’d pile,
Women and children heap’d up mountain high,
Limbs crushed which under pond’rous marble lie;
Wretches unnumber’d in the pangs of death,
Who mangl’d, torn, and panting for their breath,
Bury’d beneath their sinking roofs expire,
And end their wretched lives in torments dire.
Say, when you hear their piteous, half-form’d cries,
Or from their ashes see the smoak arise,
Say, will you then eternal laws maintain,
Which God to cruelties like these constrain?
Whilst you these facts replete with horror view,
Will you maintain death to their crimes was due?
And can you then impute a sinful deed
To babes who on their mothers bosoms bleed?
Was then more vice in fallen Lisbon found,
Than Paris, where voluptuous joys abound?
Was less debauchery to London known,
Where opulence luxurious holds her throne? (Voltaire, 1756/2009: 158–159)

Voltaire's conviction that the problem of evil can, by no means, be resolved while retaining Christian doctrines is revealed through the harsh criticism he raises in his poem. What is also striking and aligns with the new natural paradigm that was gaining momentum in his time was his take on the traditional notion of disasters being punishment for sinfulness. One of the principal premises of his opposition is the arbitrariness with which divine wrath is used to explain such catastrophes. His view is that if sin applies to the Lisbon Earthquake as its cause, it must apply to every other city which must be accordingly devastated by wrathful instances of disasters. If the attachment or accusation of sin always comes after a disaster, then it can only function as too convenient a justification to be logically applicable to every disaster. In this way the poem asserts the rising secular scientism by doing away with the supernaturalizing tendencies that abound in the theodical discussions widely diffused in the century.

Adopting an earlier version of the natural philosophical predisposition, Kant (1756/2012) pens three essays soon after the Lisbon Earthquake in which he aims to lay out a working mechanism of such geological activities. What is most note-worthy about these essays is his attitude towards natural phenomena in general (327–373). “In the three texts, all references to divine teleology have vanished; instead Kant is trying his best to stay with material, causal explanations” and systematically refraining from the usage of allusions to the Church teachings that have long steered any debate on natural events. Apart from the irreligious methodology he adopts in investigating the causes of earthquakes, Kant—in keeping with the Enlightenment tenets—reveals his humanistic view of these disasters for future reference. “[T]he quiet confidence in providence has been replaced by a concern with materially founded prognostic procedures in order to avoid future catastrophes and an ethical obligation to try to come up with measures to prevent their effects” (Larsen, 2006: 362). Kant's material pragmatism in dealing with natural disasters typifies the growing tendency in the eighteenth century to seek explanations and solutions for any natural event that can be grounded in observable patterns of physically-meaningful mechanisms instead of the traditional approach that locates natural events in dichotomous relationships of divine reward and punishment.

Voltaire and Kant were not the only influential thinkers of their century whose views were impacted by both the Lisbon Earthquake and the discussions that broke out around it. Goethe shares this sentiment of disbelief in and shock at the claimed

agreement between the horrors in this world and the existence of a good god in his 1848 autobiography:

Sixty thousand persons, a moment before in ease and comfort, fall together; and he is to be deemed most fortunate who is no longer capable of a thought or feeling about the disaster. The flames rage on; and with them rage a troop of desperadoes, before concealed, or set at large by the event. The wretched survivors are exposed to pillage, massacre, and every outrage; and thus on all sides Nature asserts her boundless capriciousness ... God, the Creator and Preserver of heaven and earth, whom the explanation of the first article of the creed declared so wise and benignant, having given both the just and the unjust a prey to the same destruction, had not manifested himself by any means in a fatherly character. (Goethe, 1848/2008: 90–91)

What is demonstrated in his account of the disaster corresponds to the anti-theodical arguments that were renewed in earnest following the earthquake. The fundamental layout of the arguments that counter those of such thinkers as Leibniz and Pope consists in the insistence that the model of divinity long doctrinized and propagated by the Church cannot plausibly co-exist with instances of undifferentiating destruction that afflicts its victims equally and without consideration for their faith, character, and conduct. And the conclusive point of the eighteenth-century anti-theodicy is the fact that these two propositions are mutually exclusive. Either god is evil himself in his random distribution of catastrophes as opposed to his presumed absolute goodness or nature runs independently of the Providence which necessarily correlates to the willful indifference or the nonexistence of any god for that matter.

Half a century before the emergence of the first last-man narrative, Voltaire's unique mood and tone that imbue his poem and help accentuate the manner in which he decries this disaster and the theodical discussions at the time serve as a literary preliminary. The sense of despair, angst, and frustration which the poem is rife with anticipates the domineering pessimism that will be a defining characteristic of the last-man narratives in the nineteenth century. The unnerving reality of the spectacle of nature indiscriminately wreaking havoc in civilization was reason enough for Voltaire to voice the kind of despondence and surrender that he expressed in his poem. This mood is further revealed by Rousseau's letter to Voltaire in the same year where he challenges it. Rousseau elucidates in his letter his reservations about the practicality

and doubts the function of adopting such a mood. Comparing the hopeful theodical literature of Pope with the abject horror and despair depicted in Voltaire's poem, Rousseau writes:

This optimism that you find so cruel consoles me nevertheless in the very sufferings that you depict to me as intolerable. Pope's poem sweetens my ills and leads me to patience; yours embitters my pains, invites me to grumbling, and depriving me of everything beyond a shaken hope, it reduces me to despair ... "Man have patience," Pope and Leibniz tell me. "Your ills are a necessary effect of your nature, and of the constitution of this universe. The eternal and beneficent Being who governs you would have liked to safeguard you from them. Of all the economies possible, he has chosen the one which combined the least bad with the most good, or ... if he has not done better, it is because he could not do better. What does your poem now tell me? "Suffer forever, wretches. If there is a God who has created you, no doubt he is all-powerful; he could have prevented all your ills: do not hope then that they will ever end; for one could not see why you exist, if it is not to suffer and to die." (Rousseau, 1756/2007: 50)

Rousseau explicitly rebuts what he deems a counter-fatalism in Voltaire's poem. While the religiously-minded hold that disasters occur by way of divine ordinance and as part of fate and so does not allow any room for influencing what has been decreed by god, neither does Voltaire's position. In fact, according to Rousseau such a position serves no discernible purpose other than to lead one deeper into a sense of helplessness which counteracts everything held dear about humankind. However seemingly unproductive, dysfunctional, and chaotic Voltaire's position might be, it perfectly envisages the exact formulation of the last-man narratives that would emerge in fifty years' time in 1805.

B. Natural Catastrophism and Antihumanism in the Romantic Last-Man Narratives

The general anti-theodical orientation of the continental Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century and, not the least, the inevitable influence of the writings of Voltaire have helped shape the last-man fiction into its penultimate template with the publication of *Le dernier homme* (Grainville, 1805/2003)—*The Last Man*—by the French bishop Cousin de Grainville in 1805 (Weninger, 2017: 8). Grainville's science

fantasy novel is the first of its kind in separating the divine and the natural as two autonomous realms of existence with the emphasis laid upon humankind's vulnerability to natural phenomena no matter how hard they pray or try to preclude the many disasters that face them by other means (Wagar, 1982b: 16). The impact this novel had on Romantic authors inspired other works in quick succession which soon signified the birth of a unique genre into the perennial apocalyptic literature. The last-man fiction thus began with *Le dernier homme* depicting for the first time a world abandoned by god and abode only by the laws of nature and made no exceptions for humankind (Clarke, 2000: 17). "A fading sun, a desolate world, empty cities, plague and famine everywhere—these borrowings from Grainville's story became regular entries in the new fiction of Last Things" (19), introducing and popularizing a new mode of imagining the end of humankind in which nearly every traditional characteristic of apocalypticism was discontinued.

The reason why Grainville's structure of apocalypticism is the penultimate—and not the ultimate template—for last-man narratives is because of the nominal usage of theologically-inspired characters and motifs; and, in this sense, *Le dernier homme* "secularizes the Apocalypse without discarding its theological framework" while the motivation for that usage never serves to make assertions or implications that are compatible with the religious template for the apocalyptic genre in literature (Alkon, 1987: 175). Despite the quasi-biblical markers that are present in the novel, the depiction "of an earth worn out by time and humanity reduced to one fertile pair" is the generative leap towards a break in the supernaturalized mode of imagining the end that has persisted for nearly five millennia. The demise of the Earth and humanity, likewise, does not occur because of the traditional dichotomies that have governed apocalyptic literature up to that point but because of the sheer fortuity of a series of natural disasters which are neither decreed by the divinity nor induced by human actions. "Nothing in the biblical version of the last days prepares us for such scenes" as those in Grainville's *Le dernier homme*. "Grainville has taken the Epicurean view of nature, reinforced by scraps of modern science and metaphysical anguish, and has painted a terminal landscape that is both original and—within the limits indicated—secular" (Wagar, 1982a: 250). The novelty that is achieved in removing the divine as an influence makes *Le dernier homme* the first apocalyptic work of literature to take

the definitive step towards the secularization of the genre, notwithstanding the rather marginal limits indicated by the cosmetic use of theologism.

The natural catastrophism binds all last-man narratives together, being the literary culmination of the turbulence caused by the rift between theology and natural philosophy. It ensures the recurrence of the theme of nature's unquestionable supremacy over humanity's existence. What is repeated in every subsequent last-man fiction that follows the 1805 publication of *Le dernier homme* is the same frenzied anxiety shared by Voltaire in his anti-theodical poem about the Lisbon Earthquake. However, what is additionally significant about naturalizing the catastrophes and divesting them of any suggestions of the supernatural is the implied shock at coming to the realization that humanity, after all, as a species, could die a random and ordinary death all the way to its last individual. "[T]hat animal species could become extinct was perhaps imaginable" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because considerable progress had been made in anatomy, biology, and zoology by then and the discovery of fossils of species no longer walking the earth was enough to lead people to that conclusion. But the collective death of ancient species never occurred to humanity as a possible scenario for theirs as well. Last-man fiction disabused people of the self-important assumption that humanity will prevail forever by portraying—often in horridly graphic detail—the simple happenstance of their extinction. "[W]as it possible that *Homo sapiens*, Creation's crowning glory, might become extinct before its prime? This seemed unthinkable" in the Christian, supernatural paradigm of apocalypticism and "culminated in the axiomatic anthropomorphism" that had been the mainstay in almost all currents of thought after the proliferation of Christianity in Europe (Weninger, 2017: 340).

Last-man fictions are designed to inspire in the reader a sense of solitude and vulnerability in the face of the forces of nature and in so doing dissolves closed orders and identities that used to give the impression of operating uneventfully and in relative tranquility.

Beneath the question of whether and when the world will end lies the problem of how to reconcile individual experience with social constraints, how to render meaningful our existence in an indifferent or hostile world. (Mussgnug, 2012: 334)

Doing away with the divine and the supernatural and not being able to replace the functions they served with new ones that are as effective at suppressing the anxieties of both individual and collective death of human beings found its literary expression in last-man narratives. Moreover, because it was the uncontrollable anxiety being expressed in the changing paradigm of making sense of the world, last-man narratives never engaged the question of whether humankind was or ever could be—in some conceivable scenario—capable of preventing or surviving the extinction events depicted in such works.

“[I]t was atheism and a secular scientific worldview that laid the foundation for this leap to happen; atheism and science provided the vital ingredients: First, the loss of the sense of human singularity and exceptionalism—from the late seventeenth century onwards, man could no longer arrogantly regard himself as the uniquely God-given focus of the universe. (Weninger, 2017: 353–354)

On the other hand, the post-Enlightenment human primacy whose source was etiologically switched from god’s consecrated design to humankind’s glorified sapience was of no help at all at alleviating the ontic self-deprecation and vulnerability that seemed to define what it meant to be human (Stableford, 1983: 101–102). In this regard, last-man narratives make absolutely no attempts at presuming to offer any answers to the single most important question they raise: how to reconcile the unpredictable possibility of extinction with the all-too-real experience of being temporarily alive. Deconstructing both the traditional anthropocentrism of Christianity and the secularized anthropocentrism of post-Enlightenment, they settle with asking the question alone and framing that question in such a way that it cannot be easily resolved by wishfully imagining blissful postfictions at the closing of the last page.

C. Apocalypticism in Lord Byron’s “Darkness” (1816/2006) and Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man* (1826/2004)

The two major works of early last-man fiction written in the English language did the most in expanding the criticism of the second stage of anthropocentrism by post-Enlightenment. Lord Byron’s poem “Darkness” (1816/2006) and Mary Shelley’s novel *The Last Man* (1826/2004) rendered void and ridiculed the self-designated values, virtues, and compliments attached to humanity by reversing them to portray their polar opposites as being characteristic of humanity in times of crisis. To this end,

they claim to expose these self-designations as mere pomp that only applies to times of peace and prosperity. It is when, at the slightest disturbance of that peace, the social order begins to malfunction that humanity shows its true colors and acts on its selfish instincts in hopes of ensuring self-preservation and, more often than not, fails miserably to do so. Lord Byron's "Darkness" eliminates "the image of humankind that Enlightenment anthropology had composed ... The eighteenth century had seen empathy, friendship, and rationality as the chief human virtues," but these are categorically refuted in the poem and humanity is shown to be in a condition worse than animals, let alone superior to them, "even more brutal, egoistic, and ruthless than the beasts" which were placed hierarchically lower than humankind (Horn, 2014: 66–67). Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* performs the exact same function of dethroning the idea of human exceptionalism: the plague disaster which the novel is centered on "figures as ... [a] grotesque enigma mocking all assumptions of order, meaning, purpose, and causality," and, with this approach, *The Last Man* counters the ethos and the founding principles of post-Enlightenment (Snyder, 1978: 436).

The opening line of Byron's poem (1816/2006), "I had a dream, which was not all a dream" (775) sets the stage for the reader in such a way that in the suspension of disbelief one is invited to read the following content of the poem realistically. Apart from being an attempt to intensify the narrative effect, this line calls up a very disquieting event that had begun earlier the same year as the poem's publication in 1816. This event, called the Year Without a Summer, was due to the volcanic eruption of Mount Tambora the year before which cataclysmically altered weather patterns in the Northern Hemisphere, especially in Europe:

To Europeans and North Americans, 1816 became known as "the year without a summer." Daily temperatures (especially the daily minimums) were in many cases abnormally low from late spring through early fall; frequent northwest winds brought snow and frost to northern New England and Canada, and heavy rains fell in Western Europe. Many crops failed to ripen, and the poor harvests led to famine, disease, and social distress, compounded by the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. (Stothers, 1984: 1196)

Only eleven years after the first literary instance of the paradigm of natural apocalypse had emerged with Grainville's *Le dernier homme* (1805/2003), the so-called Year Without a Summer was a chance source of further naturogenic anxiety. The event

caused several atmospheric anomalies and perhaps the most visually disturbing amongst them was the multiple occurrences of daylight dimming due to the suspended particles in the stratosphere blocking the sun (Stothers, 1984: 1194–1195). It was no surprise then, in light of both the rarity and the extremity of the Tambora eruption's effects, that the following “months and years ... have been remembered in the popular writings for the remarkable meteorological and optical phenomena” (1197). Of course, these events were not simply received as remarkable to behold but unnerved the many millions of people who had experienced nothing of the sort in their lifetime. The sudden unfamiliarization and hostility of nature in 1816 inspired the artists of the time who produced works reflecting both the physical gloom and the resulting sentiment of gloom. The dimming of the sun was therefore transformed in Byron's poem “Darkness” (1816/2006) as both “a dream” insofar as it casts in one's imagination scenes of apocalyptic darkness and “not all a dream” at the same time because it was an anxious reaction to the Year Without a Summer.

The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Morn came and went — and came, and brought no day (775)

The fictional intensification of the catastrophe depicted in the poem severs humanity's connection to the celestial bodies: the sun, the stars, and the moon are all in a process of irreparable decay. Their disappearance signifies a far worse case than the mere physiological implications of this event might suggest. Of course, humanity cannot hope to adapt to the abrupt cessation of natural light and warmth. However, beneath the surface the symbolic outcome emphasizes a deeper, more abstract crisis and this is a crisis not just of humanity but in humanness, too. The loss of all the celestial sources of light that used to give people a sense of direction and security is tantamount to an impending chaos in human idiosyncrasies. Hopelessly trying to ensure a modicum of the life before, people set on fire everything that is even remotely flammable for some light and warmth. Forests and cities are burned to the ground alike: the two competing realms of the former order are now evened out in the face of the cosmic catastrophe which favors none. Natural life and human civilization encounter the final realization of their impermanence.

And War, which for a moment was no more,
Did glut himself again: — a meal was bought
With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;
All earth was but one thought — and that was death
Immediate and inglorious ... (776)

Although there was a brief pause of all human belligerence resulting from the initial shock of the catastrophe, humanity did resume their warring ways some time later. As they notice more and more vehemently that they are to expire soon, they forsake every single rule which used to safeguard a relatively harmonious coexistence prior to the dawning of the darkness. Byron refutes “the anthropological assumptions of the Enlightenment” and offers instead a new mode of understanding humanity as “living beings subject to the same natural laws that govern any other living beings.” His poem is indeed one of the earliest and finest examples of the change in the paradigm of annihilation by overemphasizing the often-forgotten dependence on nature not only in terms of the satiation of physical wants and needs but also the sense of security enabled by the stability of nature. When that stability leaves its place for a drastically different environment to exist in, one that refuses to accommodate homo sapiens, the human idiosyncrasies associated with the prosperous and orderly civilization of yore are abandoned and transmuted into “violence, egoism, and social chaos” (Horn, 2014: 72). Byron’s poem presents the proper functioning of nature as the absolute principle for the proper functioning of human civilization in turn. Without the first guaranteeing a semblance of familiarity and normalcy in humanity’s surroundings, the latter necessarily disappears in the process.

Following Byron’s poem and drawing on the natural paradigm of annihilation, Mary Shelley’s novel *The Last Man* (1826/2004) “is also a secular eschatology. It expresses fears of the hostility of nature, the vulnerability of established social orders, and the uselessness of human effort against the tidal pull of history” (Wagar, 1982a: 251). The apocalyptic event in the novel is a pandemic which starts slowly at first sometime in the last decades of the twenty-first century but its spread exponentially increases over time. A general sense of indifference persists in most countries around the world, especially in England until the death toll begins to signify that the passage of time will only mean more and more people dying, not fewer. While that is the case,

no amount of collective endeavor to keep its spread or mortality rate under control seems to yield any satisfactory results and indifference slowly turns into panic.

The first time the pandemic is mentioned happens almost halfway through the novel. This does not mean that the apocalyptic event is not central to the plot. The delay of the disaster only enhances the stark contrast between the pre-apocalyptic reality and the post-apocalyptic one. By this point it is mentioned merely a few times in the passing as a mysterious outbreak affecting certain portions of the world. However, this is received as no major cause for concern by the characters and although they may pause in fear when they hear news of the pandemic, they return to their daily business after a brief moment. It takes a drastic turn during the Greco-Turkish War in which the central characters from England side with Greece and fight along with them. After the defeat of the Turkish army at Rodosto and the troops advance to claim Constantinople (Shelley, 1826/2004: 143), rumors begin to circulate that the pandemic is spreading in the city (149) as well as some parts of northern Greece, which leads the characters to ponder for the first time on the actual possibility of its reaching England and on how London would brace it given its population (176). From this point forward, everyone anxiously hopes that there will be no more waves of the pandemic and that it will taper off on its own.

The contrast achieved by the delay of the apocalyptic event owes its intensity to approximately the first half of the novel concentrating on distinctly human phenomena which will then be ridiculed altogether. The contents of the first half more or less revolve around romance, politics, and war in addition to lesser subjects that can be grouped under these three main areas of interest. The narration goes into great detail explaining the past, the present, and the future implications of the romantic, political, and military events and does it so meticulously to provide a snapshot of England in this imaginary period with various personal and socio-cultural perspectives from which all of these distinctly human circumstances and phenomena may be understood. The plot builds up this intricate structure of romance, politics, and war only for it to be made void and destructed once and for all by the pandemic. In one of the rare moments before the full force of the natural catastrophe becomes conspicuous, the protagonist Lionel Verney reflects in the aftermath of the battle at Rodosto on the latent pointlessness of war:

This hour, melancholy yet sweet, has always seemed to me the time when we are most naturally led to commune with higher powers; our mortal sternness departs, and gentle complacency invests the soul. But now, in the midst of the dying and the dead, how could a thought of heaven or a sensation of tranquility possess one of the murderers? During the busy day, my mind had yielded itself a willing slave to the state of things presented to it by its fellow-beings; historical association, hatred of the foe, and military enthusiasm had held dominion over me. Now, I looked on the evening star, as softly and calmly it hung pendulous in the orange hues of sunset. I turned to the corpse-strewn earth; and felt ashamed of my species. (143–144)

Lionel Verney finds himself for a moment disabused of the ordinary associations of war and victory and sees violence for what it is in its basal state. The fact that one can be “a willing slave to the state of things presented to it by its fellow-beings” accentuates the societal and cultural aspect of human violence. It suggests that dedication to fight and inflict harm on other people is both voluntary because there can only be so much pressure and societal for the generally accepted feeling of justification for violence to which one succumbs to. This moment of reflection by Lionel Verney follows a good many expressions of military valor, prowess, patriotism, and Orientalism in order to ultimately invalidate all such human inventions whose sole aim is to justify mass violence. Therefore, briefly rid of the usual illusions surrounding war, he is drenched in shame for the human inclination to harm each other and his involvement in it with a façade of self-attested righteousness.

As the pandemic’s reckoning closes in, the narrative voice of Lionel Verney becomes progressively critical of humanity. After pointing out the fundamental aimlessness of violence and the frustration he feels due to the wholesale adherence to it, he now expresses the Romantic disdain of the modern industrial society:

How unwise had the wanderers been, who had deserted its shelter, entangled themselves in the web of society, and entered on what men of the world call ‘life,’—that labyrinth of evil, that scheme of mutual torture. To live, according to this sense of the word, we must not only observe and learn, we must also feel; we must not be mere spectators of action, we must act; we must not describe, but be subjects of description ... Who that knows what ‘life’ is, would pine for this feverish species of existence? ... Let us live for each other and for

happiness; let us seek peace in our dear home, near the inland murmur of streams, and the gracious waving of trees, the beauteous vesture of earth, and sublime pageantry of the skies. Let us leave 'life,' that we may live. (174)

The criticism raised against civilization asserts three points, each of which problematizes a different characteristic of how humankind organizes itself into a society. The first critical point is the intricately-woven social organization that confines individuals in its midst while showing no signs of abatement in the intensity with which it imposes itself upon them. The fact that this particular way of social organization is not optimized for the ideal way of existence for humanity only adds to the injury inflicted by the strictness of that organization. A society that does not prioritize the emotional and the spiritual/psychological wellbeing of humanity may only give rise to evil multifariously manifesting itself. The evil mentioned in this quotation conveys not the religiosity that would have otherwise dominated such a rhetoric at the time of the novel's publication. This evil results statically from the way in which the modern industrial society operates: individual members of such a society need not start or stop doing certain actions for the evil to disappear; the group that constitutes the society needs to find a more life-affirming and less convoluted way to reorganize itself.

This rudimentary criticism of the organization of society links to the second and third critical points. Due to the very nature of being embedded in the social "labyrinth of evil, that scheme of mutual torture," people find themselves in the impossible situation that demands an excess of agency and objectness for as long as they live. This means that they are required—on a constant daily basis—to act and be acted on as part of their embeddedness in that society. Likened to a fever, this mode of social existence that is built upon excessive agency and objectness is presented as possibly the least desirable way of life where one is never allowed to pause but continue relentlessly to repeat the cycle of acting and being acted on only for the sake of sustaining this social organization. The third and last critical point serves as a simple prescription for a better alternative to the modern industrial society. Reflecting the Romantic view of nature being a quintessential ingredient of ideal living, close proximity to "our dear home, near the inland murmur of streams, and the gracious waving of trees, the beauteous vesture of earth, and sublime pageantry of the skies" is conducive to a happier, more fulfilling life. Combined with this proximity to nature, a

sense of fellowship, solidarity, and love for one another are portrayed as the true terms for a life worth living instead of the modern industrial life entrapped within the anthropogenic artificial environment in urban spaces.

The pandemic continues to ravage more and more countries and Greece is next in line to fall victim to it. This country is unlike the rest that have previously been visited by the plague because of its first-degree relevance to the main characters. They have fought on the side of Greece, died and bled with them and killed with them, which inevitably formed a special bond, especially in consideration of Lionel Verney's earlier reflection on war and violence. Out of that bloodshed emerged an affinity of sorts. Athens, the presumed cradle of Western civilization, is summarily consumed in the "havoc and death ... on a scale of fearful magnitude" (178). America, too, gets its share of the plague's devastation and the mortalities are not limited to the densely populated cities but affects the countryside as well. The way the pandemic immobilizes and invalidates human activities is further demonstration of the pointlessness that lies in them in the wake of the plague's absolute prehension. "The hunter died in the woods, the peasant in the corn-fields, and the fisher on his native waters" (178), almost as though to be fossilized in the activities that used to give meaning to their existence, which are now, however, void of any.

The plague is indifferent to its victims as much as it is unfeeling about its decimation of humanity. It has no friends or foes, favors none, and kills all on equal terms (Weninger, 2017: 34–35). This equity in death is what characterizes the plague as a naturogenic disaster which is neither a remedy to rid itself of humanity nor a divine punishment for human evil. It has no agenda except for moving on its own trajectory. This characteristic of the plague levels humankind with every single individual made equally vulnerable to itself and equally prone to death (Girard, 1974: 833–834). Countries, continents, professions, religions, and the like have no sway over the course of the plague. Its levelling effect is paralleled in the novel with another natural phenomenon which poses no threats of destruction, but it evokes a sense of alarm all the same. This event is an allusion to the dimming of sunlight experienced in 1816 during the Year Without a Summer. Although the event described on pages 178–179 resembles more of a solar eclipse, the description of the event and of its effects closely follows Byron's poem to the extent that it paraphrases certain parts of the poem in prose form. However, what is more significant is the global reaction to the "black sun."

The plague is forgotten temporarily although the death toll is ever increasing, and everyone from every region and of every religion in the world is united in their anticipation of their respective version of the day of reckoning (Shelley, 1826/2004: 179–180). Although they are right in suspecting the approaching end of their species, this extermination event will neither unfold with a glorious and magnificent spectacle of the powers of deities nor confirm in any shape or form the convictions they seem to cling to so as to escape the reality of their situation. The end will come so mundanely, drearily, and banally to mock humanity for the last time on its way out.

What are we, the inhabitants of this globe, least among the many that people infinite space? Our minds embrace infinity; the visible mechanism of our being is subject to merest accident. Day by day we are forced to believe this. He whom a scratch has disorganized, he who disappears from apparent life under the influence of the hostile agency at work around us, had the same powers as I—I also am subject to the same laws. In the face of all this we call ourselves lords of the creation, wielders of the elements, masters of life and death... (184)

The novel's treatment of the coming end of humankind as an uninteresting and commonplace event is an attempt to controvert both the religious and secular notions of anthropocentrism. No matter how hard and sincerely people pray or how technologically advanced they become, when the natural circumstances are ripe for humanity's extinction, there can be no hopes for survival. The anticipation of nature going haywire in every way conceivable reflects the anthropocentric desire to relate human extinction to a total chaos in nature's mode of operation. If humanity is to expire, it must be positively spectacular. This desire for a spectacular end is dismissed in the novel as being unrealistically wishful and insufferably self-centered and, therefore, is ridiculed:

Hear you not the rushing sound of the coming tempest? Do you not behold the clouds open, and destruction lurid and dire pour down on the blasted earth? See you not the thunderbolt fall, and are deafened by the shout of heaven that follows its descent? Feel you not the earth quake and open with agonizing groans, while the air is pregnant with shrieks and wailings,—all announcing the last days of man? No! none of these things accompanied our fall! ... Where was pain and evil? Not in the calm air or weltering ocean; not in the woods or fertile fields, nor among the birds that made the woods resonant with song, nor

the animals that in the midst of plenty basked in the sunshine. Our enemy, like the Calamity of Homer, trod our hearts... (251)

The backdrop against which the pandemic is ravaging humanity is of a nature, detached from the consequences of this decimation, which unfolds on its own terms and according to its own laws. Hence, it is no longer an object that is used or abused or acted on by either humanity or divinity but its own entity possessing the ultimate means of facilitating life and death.

The pandemic in the novel is a simplified and encapsulating metaphor for nature's new position in the rising paradigm of natural annihilation. "The plague comes from nowhere, and for no man's fault" (Wagar, 1982a: 251) displacing the concepts of human culpability and divine retribution which were dominant in the previous supernatural paradigm. The disaster is not a result of human ontology or actions leading the divinity to attempt to remove the human contrast from the world, neither a punishment for the wayward and the wicked nor a chance for the righteous few to start anew and repopulate the world. Much as it criticizes the post-Enlightenment notions of progress and human exceptionalism, the novel adheres to the secular paradigm by dissociating the apocalypse from every possible supernatural connotation. It normalizes human extinction as an ordinary natural event due to circumstances being aligned to produce that effect. It mentions aspects of Christian belief that are then "cursed by a mad scientist and exploited by a false prophet" (Wagar, 1982a: 252). But, more significantly, the novel's main refutation is posed against the privileged status bestowed on humanity in the Book of Genesis:

Once man was a favourite of the Creator ... God made him to have dominion over the works of his hands, and put all things under his feet! Once it was so; now is man lord of the creation? Look at him—ha! I see plague! She has invested his form, is incarnate in his flesh, has entwined herself with his being, and blinds his heaven-seeking eyes. Lie down, O man, on the flower-strown earth; give up all claim to your inheritance, all you can ever possess of it is the small cell which the dead require. (Shelley, 1826/2004: 251–252)

The irony created by the pandemic in the novel is the utter negation of most of the ideas surrounding humankind and its place in nature and they are all diminished while the rest of fauna and all of flora continue to live on. The very humanness that was characteristic of the previous supernatural paradigm and partly inherited by the current

secular one is reduced to an ill organism; grotesque, weak, distorted, and unfavored. Its sickness is the only thing that defines its existence and gives it meaning: that humankind as both an abstract concept and a living, breathing species is nothing more than what the circumstances that surround it allow it to be in its relation to the environment. Nature was—for the longest time—agreeable to humanity's existence and gave it the leeway so that it populated the world, accumulated knowledge, and became more and more sophisticated and advanced in every imaginable way possible. Nevertheless, this is no longer the case. Humanity might have conveniently forgotten about nature's mode of operation when it was busy contriving more and better ways to conquer nature. To its final dismay, it is now time that humanity was awakened to that forgotten fact of life. With the pandemic, nature renders humankind a mere embodiment of sickness, serving to be a reminder of human mortality not only as individuals but as a species, too:

We first had bidden adieu to the state of things which having existed many thousand years, seemed eternal; such a state of government, obedience, traffic, and domestic intercourse ... Then to patriotic zeal, to the arts, to reputation, to enduring fame, to the name of country, we had bidden farewell. We saw depart all hope of retrieving our ancient state—all expectation, except the feeble one of saving our individual lives from the wreck of the past ... the game is up! We must all die; nor leave survivor nor heir to the wide inheritance of earth. We must all die! The species of man must perish; his frame of exquisite workmanship; the wondrous mechanism of his senses; the noble proportion of his godlike limbs; his mind, the throned king of these; must perish. (329)

Towards the end of the novel the narrative voice of the protagonist Lionel Verney becomes increasingly hopeless and cynical. He enumerates the destruction of every grandiose idea, accomplishment, and system that used to glorify humanity. The pandemic has killed off everyone else but him and “a solitary being is by instinct a wanderer” (373). In his hopeless quest to happen upon a fellow person he travelled far and wide until he arrived at Rome. His solitude is so absolute that even the term loses all its significance. Solitude, ennobled by Romantics as a virtuous and essential aspect of the ideal human character, ceases to make any sense whatsoever when there is nobody else left to be away from. By reframing the concept of solitude into the inescapable state of being of the last person on Earth, the novel deprecates “the

Romantics' myth of the sublimity of solitude" by emphasizing how essential it is for a human being to be part of a group and to have at its disposal the assurances and comforts provided by that group (Weninger, 2017: 351).

Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* epitomizes both the apocalyptic subgenre of last-man fiction it subscribes to and the paradigm of natural apocalypse that enables it to imagine a world after the human (Wagar, 1982b: 5). It is a novel axiomatically dedicated to criticizing, problematizing, and re-imagining some of the most preponderant and grandest ideas available in its time and place. It is a thought experiment hypothesizing in its futuristic fictionality humanity's finitude (Alkon, 1987: 190) with the help of "the limitless opportunities of the future" (Clarke, 2000: 19–20). Nostalgia plays a pivotal role in its plot as it helps demarcate the point after which the collective past of the entire human existence on Earth is reduced to the disturbed memories of one man who, in his desolate solitude, signifies the ineluctable extinction of his species. So, at last, Lionel Verney, the only surviving human being, sets sail from Rome on a tiny boat loaded with some supplies and some works by Homer and Shakespeare, towards the humanless future of the world (Shelley, 1826/2004: 375).

IV. THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY POST-WAR APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

A. The Re-Problematization of Human Potentiality: Anthropogenic Crises and the Abandonment of Anthropodicy

The essential role of Mary Shelley in the history of European apocalyptic literature cannot solely be explained with her *The Last Man* (1826/2004) which is widely regarded as the first true example of last-man fiction due to its full secularization of the apocalypse. Another of her works, and interestingly enough one that had preceded *The Last Man* by eight years, nonchalantly laid the foundation for the modern anthropogenic apocalypticism that would gradually gain impetus three times in a matter of roughly fifty years until it reached its final critical stage: the first time towards the end of the nineteenth century thanks to H. G. Well's writings, the second time after the First World War, and ultimately the third time after the Second World War and the detonation of the first atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Before these three alarming points in time, however, *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818/1831) provided the generic recipe for a kind of depicting the demise of humanity not as a result of random and unpredictable natural catastrophes but as a result of those actions that pertain to human potentiality towards self-destruction. Thus, Mary Shelley is not only the progenitor of the Romantic last-man fiction but also that of the modern apocalyptic fiction that lays the blame on humanity alone (Weninger, 2017: 3). These two strands of apocalyptic writing are, at their core, founded upon two related modes of anxiety: while one derives from naturogenic disasters that threaten to annihilate humankind like an ordinary animal species whose time is accidentally up in the grand scheme of things, the other adds to this de-divinized paradigm the potential destruction which human technologies imply. Both initiated by Mary Shelley, these two strands of apocalyptic genre overlapped for the most part of the nineteenth century in Europe until the last-man fiction eventually decayed in popularity and relevance since humankind's self-infliction of disasters increasingly generated an overpowering amount of anxiety.

Despite both the emergence of last-man fiction and the Romantic mistrust of industrialization—which is the first indicator of large-scale human impact on the environment, “nineteenth-century attitudes to technology were overwhelmingly optimistic.” Quite a lot of people, especially those who lived in or regularly visited urbanized areas could not help but notice the unpleasant consequences of industrialization and “abhorred the growth of filthy cities and the creation of the new urban poor.” They nonetheless were willing to find fault with the social system that failed to reap the most good from industrialization and failed to unleash its full potential rather than with the mechanization of labor itself. To reflect this general attitude, for most writers who were “concerned with anticipating future technological developments,” industrialization was the stepping stone that would lead to a utopian paradise (Stableford, 1983: 103). A considerable part of the nineteenth century was a period of a renewal of confidence “in the powers of reason and science and technology.” Likewise, there existed a wide-spread faith “in capitalism, nationalism, and the whole fabric of Western civilization” which steered people onto imagining future possibilities that were almost exclusively optimistic in essence. “Yet almost suddenly, in the depressed and anxious 1880s ... [eschatological themes] returned, and inspired far more fictions than in the heyday of Romanticism” (Wagar, 1982a: 252).

A new wave of apocalyptic writing began to appear towards the end of the century led by the massively influential works of H. G. Wells “that gave notice of the immense, ever-growing destructive capabilities of the new technologies.” The Wellsian imaginings of a future filled with so much death, devastation, and chaos due purely to a human factor heralded the definitive end of “the old-style conjectural fiction of the Last Day” of the Christian paradigm and by the first decade of the twentieth century a chapter of apocalyptic fiction that had persisted for a very long time in the European history of literature would come to a close (Clarke, 2000: 21). The idea of war before the First World War was still seen as a somewhat adventurous endeavor because Europe had not yet witnessed firsthand the full implications of a large-scale war fought with new technologies (Stableford, 1983: 105). But the destructive potential Wells cautioned against in his works would finally dawn on European societies in 1914 when the First World War broke out and soon enough consumed most of Europe in a magnitude and prevalence of destruction that had yet to be experienced before.

One of the many reactions to that conflict was the sudden shotgun wedding between the fiction of future-warfare and the tales of an end to civilization or to all life on earth ... The heart of darkness was found to lie in the new-found human capacity for creating the most genocidal instruments conceivable. That realization immediately transformed the tale of the Last Days into a most admonitory form of fiction that centres on the dangerous pursuit of super-weapons; and ever since the 1920s, often in most original and compelling ways, writers everywhere have continued to cite *Homo sapiens* as the great enemy of human survival. (Clarke, 2000: 21)

The favorable view of humanity's role and place in the way of things suffered its first major setback as the possibility of a devastation of horrendous proportions became a reality that would last long after the end of the war and would arguably never really abate but, on the contrary, worsen even further in time. It did not come as a surprise that during and especially in the aftermath of the Great War, many literary examples that drew on the anti-war sentiment began to proliferate with memoirs and poetry depicting revolting scenes of carnage (Leed, 1979: 191–192). This new genre which arose from the apocalyptic events of the Great War accordingly had an apocalyptic tone and vision. The war itself and humanity's improved capacity for extermination were offered no excuses and no justification; only the horror induced was described in the anti-war literature of this period. The dehumanizing effect on the sense of embodiment of the soldiers participating in the war was so much so that—according to William Beach Thomas writing in his memoir in 1917 during the infamous Battle of the Somme, “everything visible or audible or tangible to the sense—to touch, smell and perception—is ugly beyond imagination” (275). The war propaganda did not allow such accounts to circulate easily during the war and continued to portray the war as a patriotic adventure and tried to suppress the letters coming from the frontlines for fear of these realistic accounts bringing down the morale in the country (Demm, 2019: 13–15). One such letter by Wilfred Owen containing his poem “Dulce Et Decorum Est” that he sent to his mother on August 1917, not only transmitted the grim experience of the battle but also the use of one of the first weapons of mass destruction, the mustard gas. The poem ends with a stark criticism of the war propaganda and points out that there is no glory to be found on the battlefield except only what humanity ought never to be:

If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori. (Owen, 1920/1965: 55)

Owen's morbidly realistic account links to not just the physically grotesque aspect of war but the psychological as well. Some soldiers who survived the Great War and managed to return home in one piece did not do so psychologically intact. One of the first consequences ever experienced because of the First World War was what was "known at the time as 'shell shock' or war neurosis" and veterans suffered many trauma-related disorders long after the war and some never really recovered for the rest of their lives (Tate, 2009: 167–168). But these veterans returned to a country that was neither aware of the actual extent of the atrocities they went through nor was equipped by any means to deal with the epidemic of PTSD. As more and more soldiers came back from the frontlines, they only found estrangement, frustration, and loneliness in their home countries. As one veteran noted in his autobiography, "England looked strange to us returned soldiers. We could not understand the war-madness that ran wild everywhere, looking for a pseudo-military outlet. The civilians talked a foreign language, and it was newspaper language" (Graves, 1929/1958, 201). The morbid reality that the veterans brought back home clashed with the fabricated and propagated alternate reality of the propaganda machine, and soon the civilians began to take cognizance of what it was actually like to be on the battlefield and to get a glimpse of the veterans' perspective of the war. What the general populace also had to deal with now was the "damaged man," who were suffering from mental illness and failing to readapt to the civilian society and for whom the scenes of carnage he witnessed during the war were a dismal part of their daily waking experience, too (Hynes, 1990: 303–305).

The cultural reception of the outpouring of war writing published in the decades after the Great War and of these damaged men walking amongst society as constant reminders of what humankind did and can—again—do to one another was

apocalyptic in the highest order and anticipated for good reason what was to follow. Only twenty-one years after the Great War, Europe would fail the historic test of its sincerity about peace a second time, and this time the failure would be final. When it was almost inconceivable in the immediate aftermath of the First World War that there would be another so soon and one even greater than the Great War in all statistics across the board: the number of casualties, the cost of all military expenditure and the cost of the destruction received. The same generation who was alive during the First World War and who still remembered the horrors now had to go through an even worse ordeal with the second one. Of course, the reasoning was different this time around. Nobody in 1918 could have predicted that National Socialism would sweep over Germany and all the national humiliation and hurt pride of the country would be personified in Adolf Hitler who wished to undo the damage and shame that the German defeat in the First World War brought on his country. However, the agenda of a tyrant that left the Allies no choice but to declare war after the invasion of Poland did not help ease the apocalyptic anxieties at all; if anything, it exacerbated them because it demonstrated, once and for all, that peace and security were always hanging by a thread and they were fragile enough to disintegrate on the whims of a handful of people with the means to cause unprecedented amounts of destruction. Whatever anxiety had been felt previously as part of the natural catastrophism of the last-man fiction where humanity “was at the mercy of Nature” was in no way comparable to the even more horrendous reality of “being at one another’s mercy” (Stableford, 1983: 102). Fearing the random and unpredictable caprices of natural disasters that could wipe out humanity was one thing; fearing oneself and each other for the expectable human proclivity for destruction was another.

After the world wars the new age of anxiety was due to the human technological potential that always seeks advantages (118). These advantages were meant to trump fellow human beings, other companies, other interest groups, and nature—which has been one of the ultimate ‘others’ in the history of apocalyptic thought and literature, whether it was a punitive tool of the divine or an autonomous supreme entity in its own right or the catastrophic signification of human-induced entropy. The twentieth century was thus marked by an ever-escalating sense of fear of human actions and technologies bringing along one disaster after another. The matter of culpability in the context of apocalyptic literature had never seen a previous phase of this much clarity:

there was no suspecting who or what was most likely to cause destruction on Earth. Accordingly, the sense of autophobia reached such an alarming intensity that there hardly remained any belief in the so-called human goodness that had been held before.

The trajectory of apocalypticism from the eighteenth century onwards has been one uninterrupted sequence of the underlying mistrust of the idea of modernity and everything associable with it. “[F]rom its origins as the story of the annihilation of a sinful human world to become, in novel form, the story of the collapse of modernity itself,” both the last-man fiction and the post-war apocalypticism perpetuated an antihumanist attitude (Hicks, 2016: 2). The natural catastrophism of the last-man fiction started this sequence by ridiculing every modern achievement and showing the futility of human progress if and when forces of nature are aligned to destroy humankind. But the second blow dealt by the post-war apocalypticism was of a more unsettling and a more immediately direful nature. People came to realize that there would seemingly never be a time for enough people to change their attitudes and begin to care enough to somehow attain a more peaceful kind of being human and establish a less violent kind of civilization that requires direct or collateral undoing to maintain itself (Stableford, 1983: 125).

The grave memory of the Black Death and the artistic expression of its aftermath known as the *danse macabre* had deeply religious undertones during the Late Medieval Period. But with the beginning and rise of the secular thought throughout the Early Modern Period and the impact of the Lisbon Earthquake, Europe went through a substantial change in its retrospection. Every past calamity known to them and the fresh memory of the earthquake contributed to the Christian paradigm’s falling out of vogue in literature and to the increased suspicion of a good god eroding the long-held beliefs concerning theodicy. Similarly, the many anthropogenic horrors which the twentieth century was infamous for ultimately shattered all preconceived notions of anthropodicy, thus resulting in a generalized antihumanist stance that rejects any and all attempts at showing inherent human goodness or justifying human evil on those grounds. “[T]he structure of responses to the slaughters of the twentieth century seems uncannily to replicate that of the eighteenth-century responses to the Lisbon earthquake (Weninger, 2017: 369), with refutations being now levelled against human capacity for lasting good.

B. Post-Nuclear Ecodystopian Visions: The New Nihilism and Apocalyptic Nostra Culpa

The conventional means of destruction, which was first warned against by H. G. Wells in the late 1800s under the gloomy atmosphere of the Second Boer War and which became realities twice in a matter of only twenty-five years in 1914 and 1939, gained an unconventional companion. At a time when Europe had consistently suffered the most fatal blows to its self-conceptual references to hold on to the last remains of optimism—more often than not to no avail, “the weapon too dreadful to use made its debut on the stage of history in August 1945.” The Allies justified the use of such a formidable and equally abominable weapon on the grounds that only it could stop the Second World War without having to go through a more extended warfare and suffering an astronomical amount of avoidable casualties and expenses. The atomic bombs deployed over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki indeed brought the Second World War to a sudden halt with the Japanese emperor issuing a declaration of surrender soon afterwards. Especially for the societies of Allied nations who construed the use of this weapon initially in a positive light, “[t]he relief brought by the atom bomb was, short-lived, for it endorsed in no uncertain terms all the apocalyptic anxieties which had built up in the twenties and thirties.” What became clear when people finally recovered from the relief and excitement over the end of the worst war ever in history was that “a third world war,” and humankind’s track record necessitated one in the future, “would be quite capable of destroying the world.” The apocalyptic vision of a war to put an end to the entire human civilization speculated that the outcome of the Second World War would be overshadowed by that of a third one (Stableford, 1983: 123).

From this day on Hamlet’s question was no longer one of a riven lone individual mulling pathologically over his existential quandary; it had become instead the existential question of the whole human race. With this day a new uncertainty arose, one that would be predestined to remain suspended above each and every one of us as long as humankind exists: it is the question whether the human species will survive on planet Earth or annihilate itself through technologies of its own contriving. (Weninger, 2017: 1)

The individualization catalyzed by centuries of secularization, private personhood, and de-Christianization was given a unique exception in that now people were united in

the belief that humanity was capable not only of harming each other in unspeakable ways but also of annihilating itself altogether. What was required was some more time and some more technological advancement: the trajectory of history—if it was indeed linear as had been historically assumed—was necessarily leading up to that moment when life would finally be extinguished at the hands of humanity’s death-affirming ways and means. The ramifications of the atomic bombs were not limited to their explosive power and the devastation they can consummate in their impact zone. The possibility of a nuclear winter upon the explosion of an enough number of bombs was just as terrifying and could easily remove all signs of life from the face of the earth (Sagan, 1986: 16–18). But the scenes of the immediate impact of a nuclear explosion provided the formative stuff for the worst nightmares. Writers were united, too, “in telling the one tale of the Last Day. There would be no sound, nothing so archaic as the *Tuba mirum spargens sonum*, nothing more than a flash in the sky,” which would be followed by “the mushroom cloud that signals the sudden end for entire nations or—in the worst scenario—for all living things” (Clarke, 2000: 22).

The detonation of the atomic bombs served to finalize the process of arriving at a consciousness of a different kind of human vulnerability. This process had the worst impact on humanity seeing as the speed with which it initiated in the late 1800s and matured in the middle of the twentieth century was too abrupt and acute. We were once vulnerable to the whims of the divine when catastrophes came in the form of forces of nature being used as a tool to punish us and this literary imagination persisted for a very long time. We then found ourselves vulnerable to a de-divinized nature “operating according to her own inexorable laws” (Wagar, 1982a: 253) which could wipe us out simply because it was our time. And finally, the third kind of vulnerability emerged and gained momentum too fast in too little time. The myriad of competingly terrible scenarios unleashed by the atomic bombs and the threat of a nuclear winter left us “existing in a state of perpetual anxiety and apprehension, awaiting our possible terminal extinction without knowing when ... This is the world we live in today, this is our current *conditio humana*” (Weninger, 2017: 1).

The decades following the end of the Second World War and the deployment of the atomic bombs were marred by the relentless apocalyptic suspense of the Cold War. Each side armed with thousands of nuclear heads, the USA and the USSR were locked in a perpetual nuclear draw and the only way out would mean both parties

unleashing their nuclear arsenals in a mutually agreed-upon suicide act. While the nuclear threat was looming in the background, 1960s and 1970s saw another source of unprecedented concern. Since the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth century, most people had little reservations about the growing use of fossil fuels, rising pollution, and the industrial impact on faunal and floral eco-systems apart from the Romantics who voiced their discontentment with industrialization and the resulting urbanization. By the 1960s and 1970s industry and its consequences had been taken for granted and become an intrinsic part of the human way of existence. It was essential for most people in Europe to support themselves and for the countries to maintain a ‘civilized’ society with their infrastructure and services relying on diverse aspects of industrial production and consumption. The sheer number of people that were to be sustained and the rate of population growth contributed to more and more expansion of industry with no regard for possible long-term effects.

As time has gone by we have become more and more concerned about the side-effects of technology—the unintended consequences of discovery. Industrial waste has been with us for a long time, but it is only recently that we have begun to fear that the negative effects of industry upon the environment may outweigh the positive effects of its products on the quality of our lives. (Stableford, 1983: 117)

Concentrating only on the near-future and the coveted gains to be reaped quickly and cost-effectively seems to have prepared a new breaking point in the apocalyptic thought of the second half of the twentieth century. Expanding on Carl Sagan (1986)’s criticism of this civilized myopia, industrialized societies traditionally lacked mechanisms to calculate and predict the human impact on the environment. Even when a clear enough causation or correlation was found between a particular environmental deterioration and human activity, the response was either too ineffective or too delayed or—in the oft-repeated worst case—both. The human lethargy towards adopting sustainable systems at the expense of the irresponsibly straightforward use of resources and mode of production has incrementally culminated in the first perceivable signs of changes in nature. The realization, despite being in its infancy at the time, was that humankind was both capable of effectively exterminating each other and—through its industry—altering the ordinary operation of natural processes for the worse. The human impact on global meteorological patterns “would not be the existential crisis

that it is were it not for” the concerted insistence on short-term gains and the willful disregard for its consequences that are embodied in “neoliberalism and the long downturn, which accelerate global warming while preemptively eliminating solutions (Sinykin, 2020: 150).

The fear of increasing human population forcing nature out of balance that was fictionalized in ancient Near Eastern myths of deluge has resurfaced in the post-war period. What was inferred speculation and subtle suspicion in *Atrahasis* has turned into a reality that humankind has to live with. The global human population was growing at alarming rates and industry, with a view to keeping up with that exponential increase, was expanding and diversifying to ensure the way of life people were accustomed to.

We have rediscovered the Malthusian logic of population explosion; we have become painfully aware of the extent to which the wastes of industrial society are poisoning the environment; we have realised how rapidly we are consuming non-renewable resources. In brief, we have begun to come to terms with the built-in obsolescence of the way of life which is followed in the ‘developed’ countries. (Stableford, 1983: 127)

Although it slowly but surely began to occur to more and more people that the twentieth-century *modus vivendi* was the driving force for the disruption of ecosystems and the warming of the planet, the human-induced crises that were appearing one after the other were simply not immediately severe and extreme enough to produce a wide-spread willingness for people to reconsider their ways. Even if the threat is quite severe and extreme, it has the unfortunate potential of being too much to deal with. Examples of apocalyptic literature that deal with environmental concerns exemplify this paralyzing shock: “When the literary apocalypse is severe enough, humanity’s ability to take significant ecological action is further reduced ... the ecological destruction is so devastating, so all-encompassing, that human survivors can neither mitigate that destruction nor really make it any worse,” and as a result any hope for a constructive course of action is consumed in that shock and summarily disabled (Cade & Stenhouse, 2020: 49).

The previously-intimated human lethargy towards change may also be further reinforced when people come to assume that the point of no return has been reached, in which case a generalized sense of indifference may take over them and make it

impossible to achieve any improvements, however little they may be. “Catastrophist fantasies associated with these anxieties generally promote the allegation that we are downright irresponsible” for causing disruption and devastation in the first place and then failing to learn from our mistakes and to take the necessary measures to offset them. In a hypothetical setting a sentient species that had the same proclivity for advancement as humanity does but could only advance in a life-affirming manner would rightly be proud of itself on the account of its linear progress towards uncontested betterment. Nevertheless, for humanity the concept of advancement since the First World War has consistently been the unenviable kind and pandora in finding only ills out of curiosity for new and more effective ways of gaining mastery over nature. Thus, the twentieth century has witnessed the unwelcome truth “that science, which destroyed the moral order implicit in our traditional frames of reference, should also have given us the power to bring destruction upon ourselves on such a vast scale” (Stableford, 1983: 99). Pointing out the paradox of human advancement, some post-war apocalyptic works of literature have “put the argument that knowledge and wisdom are not identical, and that we have far more of the former than the latter” (117).

The constant experience of human actions leading to wide-spread disasters has resulted in a sense of fatalism that has fueled the twentieth-century apocalyptic anxieties. The ability to cause disasters and the simultaneous inability to predict them in advance and to alleviate them afterwards have made people acutely aware of the apparent futility of trying to take preventive measures before it is too late to act. This fatalism rests in the escapist belief that anthropogenic disasters “are inevitable, unalterable, and determined by external forces beyond human control” (Wojcik, 1997: 3–4). Another paradox of human potentiality in this instance is the helplessness felt by people against the consequences of their own actions, which is reminiscent of the ontological assumption proffered in *Atrahasis* that humankind knows no better than to be anything other than the way it is: they are inevitably what they are and do inevitably what they do and they can, at no point, bring themselves to change their ways drastically enough to achieve sufficient harmony with each other and the environment. Thus, every constituent of the twentieth-century apocalyptic thought and literature reiterates the archaic self-image that presupposes a “predilection for degeneracy ... We see no other alternatives because the ideative seed from which these images grow

is so deeply implanted; it is the notion that human beings are, in their fundamental psychological nature, fatally flawed” (Stableford, 1983: 113).

Apocalyptic works of literature of this period, particularly those produced after the Second World War express a much heightened “sense of pessimism, absurdity, and nihilism” so much so that disasters caused by human actions and impact are viewed as “meaningless” and impossible to make sense of for many millions of people who are confused and perplexed (Wojcik, 1997: 97). They are born into and raised in a relatively globalized system that shows no willingness for evading crises. For them personal responsibility only adds to the sense of futility and nihilism as they are convinced that their individual contribution will amount to nothing because it will be quickly negated by all the rest of humanity that has proven time and again that they cannot be trusted to care enough. Their frustration with the systemic problems of the human way of existence results in them being accomplices and accessories due to their indifference and they are conscious of their role in helping to perpetuate those systemic problems as long as they remain indifferent. Apocalyptic fiction before the Second World War was selective in its distribution of blame, generally presenting “middle-class intelligentsia” innocent and only holding “the power groups above them or the lower orders below whose greedy short-sightedness precipitates disaster.” Nevertheless, after the Second World War “attitudes changed markedly” and everyone began to find varying amounts of culpability with themselves (Stableford, 1983: 132).

It seems significant that in the late twentieth century we have had the opportunity, previously enjoyed only by means of theology and fiction, to see after the end of our civilization—to see in a strange prospective retrospect what the end would actually look like: it would look like a Nazi death camp, or an atomic explosion, or an ecological or urban wasteland. We have been able to see these things because they actually occurred. The most dystopic visions ... can do no more than replicate the actual historical catastrophes of the twentieth century. (Berger, 1999: xiii)

The sentiment that dominates the apocalyptic thought and literature of the post-war period is that any individual living in the industrial and civilized societies of the world is at fault in one way or another. With the ecodystopianism emerging in the 1960s and 1970s, the process of apocalyptic self-deprecation and autophobia has reached its final stage, heralding the new twentieth-century age of anxiety in which being human is re-

problematized with the combined sense of unparalleled alarmism and nihilism. This is a uniquely pessimistic age of *nostra culpa* in that people are fearfully and fretfully aware of the centrality of each other's and their own actions and inaction in bringing closer to annihilation their own species and the rest of life alike.

C. Apocalypticism in John Brunner's *The Sheep Look Up* (1972)

The 1960s and 1970s were the second phase of the twentieth-century age of anthropogenic anxiety. The selfward culpability and autophobia that were exacerbated by the wide-spread military calamities, the atomic bombs, and the Holocaust in the first half of the century gained a new ecological facet in correlation with the increasing awareness of the multifarious human impact on the environment. The flood myths' subtle, abstract, and rather nondescript incrimination of humanity for defying the cosmic balance now transformed into perceivable and classifiable human offenses against nature. As the sheer multiplicity and diversity of these offenses were better understood due to emerging scholarship that focused on the human impact on the environment, the manner in which apocalyptic literature was produced could not remain unchanged (Stableford, 1983: 117). John Brunner's novel *The Sheep Look Up* (1972), one of the first ecodystopian works of literature in the English language, necessarily adopted a new mode of apocalyptic narration because the catastrophes of the second half of the century were not only indubitably and exclusively human-induced but also appeared in too many forms. As a result of the overwhelming sense of culpability of the 1960s and 1970s, the apocalyptic genre reconfigured its template by diversifying the apocalyptic events and intensifying the pessimism in its narration. *The Sheep Look Up* "does not present just one small town afflicted with one significant symptom" of the environmental crises but instead presents the whole wide world, especially the USA "poisoned and degraded everywhere with sheer excessiveness" which results from the equally excessive character of industry, economy, and the anthropogenic injury to nature (Buell, 2003: 233).

The novel is set in the USA and spans precisely the length of a year with each chapter dedicated to a month, beginning in December through to November the next year. With complex references backwards and forwards that tie together the disasters in its plot, the novel showcases a world that is irrevocably disarrayed by the chronic harm of human actions. Almost every imaginable aspect of human potentiality is

problematized and every one of them is exemplified with an ontic flaw that corresponds to some of the disasters depicted. These ontic flaws can be identified as follows: greed, violence and belligerence, folly, irresponsibility, short-sightedness, power-mongering, organizational dysfunction and corruption, and finally apathy. The novel does not suggest that most people most of the time display the aforementioned flaws but it takes enough people with enough power who live by some of these flaws to set in motion the course of events that will lead to a point of no return. What is required of the majority, on the other hand, is an adherence to none other than apathy because as long as the majority remains unresponsive or if they fail to respond effectively when it is absolutely essential to do so, everyone's individual and collective fate will be determined by the self-serving decisions of the powers that be.

Circumstances are significantly bleaker in the USA but it is certainly not alone in causing the ecological deterioration. Nearly all bodies of water including the natural fresh water supplies have been polluted beyond any remediation. There are signs in the vicinity of every water source warning people not to drink due to potentially lethal concentrations of chemicals present. Swimming and fishing are, accordingly, a thing of the past, so is vacationing in any of the coastal areas. The damage done to the planet's waters is so final that it is not even plausible to suggest cleaning them. No amount of funds and global initiative can suffice to reverse the water pollution.

In Europe, as you know, they've killed the Mediterranean, just as we killed the Great Lakes. They're in a fair way to killing the Baltic, with help from the Russians who have already killed the Caspian. Well, this living organism we call Mother Earth can't stand that treatment for long—her bowels tormented, her arteries clogged, her lungs choked... (Brunner, 1972: 415)

Air quality, too, has worsened to such a degree that one cannot last long before succumbing to a fit of heavy cough if unmasked even briefly. Especially in urban areas, the smog suspended in the air hardly ever clears away. "The calendar said there should be a full moon tonight. Perhaps there was. One couldn't see it; one almost never could—or the sun, either" (143–144). Like the fish that has mostly disappeared in the liquid filth of the oceans, seas, lakes, and rivers, birds have reduced in numbers so much so that it is a rare event to spot one at all, let alone one that is not dead yet. The decimation of fish and birds are coupled with the soil deterioration to bring about a

serious shortage in food supply. The amount of arable land has declined drastically both because of the water and air pollution and the use of chemicals to defoliate crops.

In its treatment of the subject of soil deterioration, the novel offers a metafictional criticism of the Vietnam War and, more precisely, a particular method the USA resorted to during the war. The infamous deployment of Agent Orange, an environmentally hazardous defoliant and herbicide, in Vietnam caused wide-spread health problems, birth defects, deforestation, contamination of water supplies, decline in biodiversity, and food shortages. The controversy surrounding Agent Orange and its atrocious impact on all faunal and floral life were the latest contribution to the collective anxiety of the 1960s and 1970s. Although the USA was not the first to deploy this bioweapon, its magnitude in the case of Vietnam was unmatched (Zierler, 2011). The possibility of rendering barren large swathes of land with the spraying of a chemical incited a fierce reaction which called for an end to its use. Arthur W. Galston, a plant physiologist and bioethicist from Yale University coined the term *ecocide* in 1970 only two years before the publication of *The Sheep Look Up* within the direct context of the use of Agent Orange:

It seems to me that the willful and permanent destruction of environment in which a people can live in a manner of their own choosing ought similarly to be considered as a crime against humanity, to be designated by the term *ecocide* ... At the present time, the United States stands alone as possibly having committed ecocide against another country, Vietnam, through its massive use of chemical defoliants and herbicides. (Galston, 1970, as cited in Knoll & McFadden, 1970: 71)

Echoing Galston's criticism, the novel begins in the aftermath of the end of the Vietnam War with a far more cataclysmic impact on the environment. and, unlike the real-life version, the impact is not limited to Vietnam. By replicating the same catastrophic consequences of the use of defoliants and herbicides in Vietnam which now affect the USA as well, the novel serves the States a talionic punishment in its fictional timeline.

Galston's description of "the willful and permanent destruction of environment" is paralleled in the novel in which humanity in its advanced industrial stage of development ironically leads a counter-productive mode of existence. The complete disregard for consequences for the sake of short-term convenience and

prosperity has conversely culminated in the dreary state of the environment. Masks, oxygen tanks, and water filters are a necessity of the novel's post-industrial life. Even so, these half-measures are barely reliable because the manufacturing capabilities around the world are equally hampered by the ecocide. Therefore, access to these dismal necessities of life is limited and those who can afford them or who are fortunate enough to obtain them before they are out of stock in no time again cannot reap the full benefits and have to make do with sub-par functionality since most of these items are faulty to begin with.

These days it is convenient for man to consider himself as master of all he surveys. His ability to reach the bottom of the sea or the surface of the moon, to fly at supersonic speeds, to split the atom, and to construct sophisticated computers makes him feel that there is no problem requiring scientific or technological expertise that he cannot overcome ... But the attitude that I describe I consider a dangerous fallacy which could lead man to overlook his own Achilles' heel. (Galston, 1971, as cited in Zierler, 2013: 104)

The problematization of technological advancement steers the plot towards one instance of gradual collapse to another. The novel's central objection to human potentiality is especially targeted against developed nations which cause the most harm. The ultimate embodiment of the counter-productive advancement is the USA and, as a result, people there suffer the worst.

[T]he most apocalyptic version of the "subject matter," the relations of the US to the rest of the earth's societies, takes the form of a total but undeclared ecological war—the export of pollution (and the way of life that produces it) which may have irreparably poisoned the biosphere—as well as massive armed intervention in Asia and Latin America. (Stern, 1976: 116)

Of course, it is not a coincidence that the most technologically superior and the richest country is, at the same time, the most affected by the global ecocide. This intentional relationship between advanced violence and collapse results from one of the novel's main ideas that the style of political organization, economic motivation, and foreign affairs epitomized by the USA can only be tantamount to ruin in all strata of civilization. Staying true to the apocalyptic paradigm of its age and the ecodystopian fiction it is a part of, *The Sheep Look Up* subverts what Lasch (1985) calls "the working faith of our civilization" (43), that is, the overconfidence in human progress. The

novel's depiction of the world struggling in an irreparable state of ecocide and blaming for it the developed countries led by the USA are aimed at invalidating

the common assumption of the modern world, that history only runs in one direction, and that the future must inevitably be better than the past; that humankind has discovered the key to taking control of its fate, and that we will inevitably enjoy an ever-increasing sense of material wealth and power. (Douglas, 2010: 206)

This assumption that is criticized in the novel partly holds in that there do exist material wealth and power but those who are in possession of them are still the same handful of politicians and moguls as they were before things took an apocalyptic turn. As long as wealth is not ethically generated and fairly distributed and power remains undiluted and unsupervised, the very notions of wealth and power cannot sustain themselves. When generation of wealth in any global economic system, not the least in the gravely worsening one in the novel, relies on the blatant and flagrant disregard for the well-being of people and the environment, it becomes confined in a vicious cycle where such disregard is a condition for continuance until an inevitable tipping point is reached and the system itself completely breaks down (Sinykin, 2020).

The novel likewise illustrates one such systemic breakdown. The long-term reckless overuse of antibiotics, for instance, has allowed most bacterial strains ample opportunity to develop resistance. As a result, minor ailments as well as the more serious ones that could be cured with medication persist longer and may potentially become life-threatening because most people's immune systems are already compromised by the pollution of water, air, and food. "Riot gases, tear smoke, sleep gas, defoliants, nerve gas, all the armory of chemicals used in modern war, had saturated the tissues of these people as they had the ground" (Brunner, 1972: 55). The overuse of pesticides has similarly made them ineffective. This had the dual effect of proliferating vectors like rats and fleas which so much as "thrived on insecticide, even the illegal kinds" (87)—and they could now transmit diseases with more ease—and also of proliferating herbivorous pests. The best known and the most feared of such pests is an insect called jigra that devastates plants with unparalleled viciousness.

Who do you think this ground belongs to, anyway? We're on the private estate of some high government muckamuck who can bend the law as much as he likes! This area's been sprayed and soaked and *saturated* with insecticides! ...

The idiot's made the *jigras* resistant to DDT, heptachlor, dieldrin, pyrethrum, the bloody lot! (29)

Jigras have always been part of the Central American ecosystems. Confined in the forested areas, "living off the underbrush" (28), these worms began to infest all vegetation indiscriminately after too many forests have been disturbed and more and more land has been cleared for agricultural use, mainly for cash crops that benefit only the richest and most powerful and does not help the starving population of the region at all. Additionally, because Americans have the habit of reflexively trying to eliminate any threat with weapons of one sort or the other, jigras are now completely invulnerable "to just about every known insecticide, banned or legal." As an expression of poetic justice, jigras eventually end up in the USA because

Apparently one of the big insect importers sub-contracted his worm business to a guy who was supposed to supply Argentine worms, but he didn't give a hoot, cheated them right and left, palmed off thousands of gallons of these damned pests ... they were mixed in with ordinary worms." (242)

American exploitation of foreign countries, as exemplified in the Honduran province of Guanagua where the jigras first began to encroach beyond their natural habitat in the secluded forests of Central America, repeats the way in which the novel reimagines the outcome of the Vietnam War. The novel, yet again, serves the USA another talionic punishment by making it suffer the same catastrophic consequences of deforestation and extensive use of pesticides that it inflicts on poor countries which are unable to fend for themselves. The already fragile condition of food supply in the USA is toppled as a result.

Dysfunction and corruption are endemic to every organization depicted in the novel from the top down. Institutions with the unmistakable *raison d'être* to further the collective interests of the people have instead turned into caricatures of their intended selves. Barely making any effort to mask their actual agendas, these institutions give the impression that they are only there as placeholders to give society a false sense of the order, security, relief, and welfare that they used to provide. Law enforcement is hardly capable of enforcing the laws. The federal government led by president Prexy neither acts federally nor does any governing to have the smallest positive effect on the country. The president is a caricature, too; by resorting to every available rhetorical fallacy, he scapegoats, diverts blame, denies accountability, generously delivers

accusations of treason but not once as a rule utters a single line of words that would imply a scintilla of statesmanship—or humanity for that matter.

Following the shock resignation of the former president of the “Save the Med” Fund, Dottore Giovanni Crespino, the Italian government has flatly denied his charge that the vast sums donated by corporations and individuals in forty-eight countries in the hope of saving the doomed landlocked sea have been embezzled. (70–71)

Self-absorption and selfishness amongst politicians and NGO magnates have reached such heights that the minimal trust that could be spoken of previously has vanished as well. When there is no sense of governance or community which people can find some solace in, the vacuum is inevitably filled with informal organizations that presume to know and act on everyone’s best interests. This organization in the USA is made up of ambitious and driven individuals who call themselves Trainites. They “did their best not to contribute to pollution” (85), threatened “to attack planes carrying further relief consignments” of the poisonous Nutripon (107), and “bombed the White House with paper sacks of flea” to protest the Prexy government (215). If anything, Trainities are the cultural manifestation of whatever minute defiance is left intact among people but are in no position to revolutionize the society so that lasting change for the better may be possible.

Religion has a very limited coverage in the novel; however, what is present suffices to reveal the light in which it is viewed. Apart from a simple exclamatory function in the daily vernacular when people use the name of god to express surprise or horror, the juxtaposition of two prayers said by two different people in two entirely different contexts suggests that religiosity and more importantly its profession and performance are not to be trusted and can be easily exploited by the self-serving charismatic leaders in the novel. The owner of an American mega-corporation that single-handedly causes a considerable portion of the catastrophes depicted in the novel professes to be a staunch believer and never refrains from announcing it particularly dubiously at times when there is a new allegation against himself or his corporation. For example, after the relief food called Nutripon produced at his factories is sent to impoverished regions in Africa and Central America, people who consume them either die or become mentally deranged. Challenged by a TV show host about the allegations of deliberately poisoning these regions to weaken the governments there, the owner of

the responsible corporation Mr. Bamberley declares his Christianity which he hopes will equate to innocence on all accounts. Mr. Bamberley is the main antagonist and simultaneously one of the most religious characters in the novel.

“O Lord!” Mr. Bamberley said, head bowed at the head of his fine long table of seasoned oak, “enter our hearts, we pray, and as this food nourishes our bodies so may our souls be nourished by Thy word, amen.” (126)

He can pray in peace before eating and then eat in peace the finest and the least contaminated foods that are impossible to come by for the rest of humanity while the many thousands in Africa and Central America who eat his Nutripon die or develop incurable psychosis. The sheer callousness that is representative of his lifestyle is made even more absurd than it is by his constant assurances of his piety and his so-called zealous desire to help other, less fortunate human beings. In his defense and in his own words, even after so many people have suffered enormously because of Nutripon, he says on that same TV show that Nutripon is “a practical way of helping people with my—uh—my good fortune” (98). Because of its tendency to be exploited as such, the novel is deeply suspicious of the idea of religiosity and—when considered in light of the on-going apocalyptic turn of events—denounces whatever function is believed to rest with it.

Unto the third and fourth generation. General Motors, you have visited your greed on the children. Unto the twentieth, AEC, you have twisted their limbs and closed their eyes. Unto the last dawn of man you have cursed us, O Father. Our Father. Our Father Which art in Washington, give us this day our daily calcium propionate, sodium diacetate monoglyceride, potassium bromate, calcium phosphate, monobasic chloramine T, aluminum potassium sulphate, sodium benzoate, butylated hydroxyanisole, mono-iso-propyl citrate, axerophthol and calciferol. Include with it a little flour and salt. Amen. (90)

The treatment of religion as exemplified in the mockingly interpolated prayer above is not necessarily a direct criticism of religion per se but of the human agency that assumes the ownership of that religion. Religion, therefore, is problematized for the same reason why the particular implementation of industry, civilization, and progress is and only so far as its human element is concerned. This treatment of religion is also an extension of the general mood of cynicism and sarcasm in the novel, which does not intend to undermine the gravity of the apocalyptic events but, rather, to accentuate

the sense of futility and surrender which dominates the general populace. The rampant apathy becomes particularly noticeable when characters engage in dialogues, and most of the time as people discuss the current crises, that discussion is either abandoned for a markedly trivial subject or interrupted by someone who appears out of nowhere with the news of an even graver problem. This structuring of dialogues so that they are either dropped on an unserious note or disrupted by a more serious problem points to an impracticality in the discourse. People are already suffering in ways too numerous to mention in the same breath; for them it is a luxury to take the apocalypse seriously enough to speculate on possible solutions. Dumbfounded and overwhelmed by the extent and scope of the immense hardship that pervades almost every waking moment of their lives, they can only afford to be determined to do whatever is absolutely necessary to survive another day. Pondering on the polymorphous apocalypse is not one of them.

While the last-man fiction of the 1800s contested anthropocentrism by the mere negation of human existence through an extinction event, the ecodystopian fiction of the 1970s such as *The Sheep Look Up* did the same through unequivocal denunciation of anthropocentrism and the circumstances that led to the informal classification of the Anthropocene. Never before had human activity altered the environment as perceivably and diversely as in the second half of the twentieth century. The novel follows the same intrinsic anxiety embedded in the increasing realization that humankind is capable of *killing nature* as effectively as—if not more—killing one another. “In dramatizing the hysterical eco-logic of proliferation and acceleration,” what Brunner (1972) achieves in *The Sheep Look Up* is the demonstration of “the sickening degradation of organic life with claustrophobic naturalism” (Buell, 2003: 233). There is no single definitive apocalyptic event in the novel unlike the previous literary selections that have been analyzed so far in the thesis. Instead, there is a series of apocalyptic events, none of which is potent enough to bring humanity to an end. So, the apocalypse is not as a moment of reckoning that marks an apocalyptic end and a postapocalyptic beginning but as an anticlimactic and lasting process that involves multiple disasters and never concludes in one way or another. The process of deterioration seems to relentlessly continue and there is never any sign of a due apocalyptic termination of humanity on the horizon. The disasters of varying intensities and causalities depicted in the novel are designed to demonstrate the sheer

diversity of the ways in which human impact on the environment performs an excruciatingly slow act of suicide. This unique narrativization, then, reveals a meta-apocalypse which surpasses the normalized disasters in the novel and gathers them under the same category of inescapable human causation. It is the humanity itself that constitutes the meta-apocalypse and—with its unending greed, folly, apathy, and malice and without ever meaning to do so—remains fastened on a course of gradual self-annihilation.

V. CONCLUSION

Narratives of the end have been a cultural staple in the entire history of literature, from the clay tablets in Sumerian and Akkadian in the ancient Near East all the way through the ages to the present day. The end which these stories speak of, written in a plethora of languages, periods, and loci, stems from and reflects the most relevant and urgent questions that predominate the particular culture within which that end is imagined. These are the deeply ontological questions left forever in suspense. They pose such daedal challenges that in their labyrinthine modes of operation ground us in pondering and ruminating over how to either evade them so that we can move away or answer them so that we can move on. The end in question as well as the questions in perpetual suspense that give rise to it serves to problematize some key aspect of our relationing to each other who make or break us, to our environment that sustains or threatens us, or to the future that invigorates or enervates us. The end we compulsively concern ourselves with always seems to signify a crisis in our accustomed ways of sense-making and forces us to reconsider them so that we can adapt to the perceived change that is occurring against our wishes and despite our best efforts to stop it. In this regard, the apocalypse that presents itself in the form of an end of something we have taken for granted is never revolutionary for it lacks human agency and goes against our express consent. Instead, our literature that springs from our perception of a crisis in *the way things are* which we have only come to notice to our dismay is our cultural response to the evolutionary transition from one way of being human at a time and place to an inconvenient other. As its semantics suggests, the cardinal function of the apocalypse in its literary form is to reveal our collective anxiety upon having noticed an undesirable change in or around us and then having found ourselves failing to keep up or cope with it. The fictionalized expression of our anxiety over the crises that surround us and of our insecurity in finding effectual means of addressing them constitute the crux of apocalyptic literature.

The mythology recounted and analyzed in the second chapter was the literary representation of a collective cognitive attempt as people needed to make the most

sense of what transpired around them. To this end, *things as they were* needed to be fictionalized or—in other words—rendered estranged enough to leave their originally incomprehensible state. This attempt was thus geared towards modifying the raw physicality of key aspects of the environment and human existence so that they transcended the bounds of human knowledge and cognitive capacity. Their mythology, as a result, was the assemblage of doctored versions of what they perceived that now inspired intrigue and awe, were anthropomorphic enough to relate to, and lastly, were presented in such a way that the core elements of their mythology were readily consumable.

Ancient Mesopotamian worldview was not purely built upon the supernaturalized transfiguration of physical phenomena that challenged human cognitive capabilities. The myths did not simply stop at addressing why and how nature operated the way it did and humanity was the way it was but went beyond that to include a definitive anxiety that dominated the mythological rhetoric with the emergence of the flood myth. Even then in the third millennium BCE ancient Mesopotamians had grave suspicions directed at themselves with regard to being the potential cause of catastrophes that could devastate their societies. Therefore, the first such anxiety ever expressed in literature and simultaneously the first literary instance of self-deprecation, profession of culpability, and the cathartic attempt at releasing the resulting autophobia were all integral parts of these oldest works of fiction. This anxiety was, on all accounts, markedly critical of humanity. Ancient Mesopotamians had reached such a point by the third millennium BCE that they began to problematize overpopulation, waywardness, and incongruity with the cosmic order and took the literary route of exemplifying this anxiety by referring to the human way of existence as the singular cause of all disasters that they came to know of—be it epidemics, slaughters, droughts, famine, or—more famously—floods.

When Sumerians, Akkadians, and Jews wrote and rewrote the myths and the flood apocalypse of the ancient Near East in their supernatural paradigm, the ontological question that steered their imagination was how to organize a system of shared beliefs to make sense of the nonhuman environment and of the human element in its midst. The perceived crisis for them was the problem of reconciling human existence with its limited, inauspicious, and unforgiving environment. Where the Sumero-Akkadian tradition saw a profoundly ecological problem and tried to come to

terms with humanity's excessive existence in that context, the Judeo-Christian tradition saw a social one and accordingly tried to conceive of a relatively uniform code of conduct in hopes of organizing human societies in a less problematic fashion. The Judeo-Christian tradition also expanded on the Sumero-Akkadian tempered excusal of the problem of the human way and inaugurated a heightened sense of self-importance and confidence in humankind's primal and enduring pursuit of gaining mastery over nature, which in effect gave rise to the anthropocentrism that is recognizable even today.

The apocalypticism of approximately the five millennia from the invention of writing to the secularization of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were governed by the ethos of an age of supernatural anxiety. The principal apocalyptic belief of this period was founded on humanity's uneasy existence under the supervision of the divine and its vulnerability to the supernatural manipulation of natural phenomena through either acts of magic or those of the gods. The cosmic order laid down by the Sumero-Akkadian tradition was relatively instable in that their gods did not particularly embody a common-sense form of consistency and justice. The prime example is how the great flood is decreed. Humankind was accused of being too numerous and too noisy but it was only because they had been created this way, which meant that they could not have chosen to be otherwise even if they had striven towards such a goal. The reasoning for the flood apocalypse was also conducive to a sense of anxiety because it was redemptive rather than punitive: Enlil's motivation was simply to restore the natural balance to a time before the creation of humankind when equilibrium prevailed. This necessarily suggested that humankind did not matter enough for the reigning deity Enlil to bother to punish or correct the problematic ways of humanity's anatomy and ontology. It was only after a great deal of scheming by a sympathetic god Ea that Enlil caved in and permitted humanity to continue to exist following a series of diminutive measures.

The Judeo-Christian tradition retained nearly the same structure of the flood apocalypse but changed the reasoning from human overpopulation and noise to wickedness and evil, which were just as ambiguous at that stage because the terms for righteousness and unrighteousness had not yet been defined. Therefore, humanity that suffered the cataclysmic devastation of the flood—as it was depicted in Genesis—was just as clueless and aghast as the humanity in *Atrahasis*. However, the Judeo-Christian

tradition took a rather different approach after the narration of the flood apocalypse and systematized a much less capricious and more stable divinity by delineating the concept of sin, which enabled better reliability, estimability, and intelligibility of which human actions were likely to provoke wrath and retribution and which to promote grace and rewards in return. To what extent this change eased the general anxiousness is disputable because in the supernatural paradigm ill-intentioned manipulation of nature and god's punishment of erring individuals or communities carried almost the same weight as it had done before. Furthermore, the Judeo-Christian conception of hell was not altogether a better alternative to the previously more instable cosmic order as people struggled on a daily basis to conform to the religious codices at the expense of their epicurean predisposition.

Beginning subtly with the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment, Europe moved gradually away from the supernatural paradigm and closer to a way of understanding the world in terms of objective and repeatable findings. The growing emphasis on detaching nature as a field of study from its traditionally supernatural connotations ushered in the natural paradigm in which nature existed in its own right and for its own sake without being referred to deities that manipulated it according to their wishes, oftentimes in order to punish humankind and correct their awry and untoward ways. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw heated debates over the justification of evil and destruction in an otherwise good cosmic system created and presided over by a good god. The rising secularism and scientism in this period gave way to refutations to theodicies that proclaimed this justification. Whether one held that the god was indifferent in one's Deistic systems of belief or simply nonexistent in an atheistic worldview, the repercussions of the changing perception of the divine sowed the seeds of an age of natural anxiety whereby disasters were no longer supernaturalized and were, instead, consistent with the customary and scientifically explicable *modus operandi* of nature.

The Romantic last-man narratives of the 1800s grew out of the natural paradigm and emphasized a treatment of humankind as an animal species no less or no greater in significance than the rest of fauna. This levelling and equity of all existence before nature offered a unique way of imagining the end which neither pointed out any kind of culpability for the catastrophes depicted nor enabled a spatio-temporal subsequence in which humankind could start anew. In addition to being the

first subgenre of apocalyptic literature to approach the end times firmly on secular grounds, Romantic last-man fiction signified a radical turn in Western European literature in its dismissal of human exceptionalism. Hence, last-man narratives subverted the idea that humankind was an indispensable component of world ecology. The belief in progress of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries promulgated the assumption that humankind would either unapocalyptically advance through time in a linear movement and always for the better or would end up overcoming whatever threats might be posed to its existence. European societies were in the process of transitioning from the sanctified superiority of humankind in the supernatural paradigm to the sense of essentialized grandeur as a result of presumably having mastered nature through science. At this junction of the paradigmatic shift that reiterated anthropocentrism, last-man fiction negated all the cultural bombast and ostentation around human exceptionalism and progress by bringing humankind to extinction as a casual natural phenomenon and served the counter-argument that the world could inconsequentially do without humanity.

The strand of anxious anticipation of humanity's accumulated knowledge being conducive to its own demise was first proposed in Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818/1831) albeit at a time when this particular vision of apocalypse was far from being popular in the near future. The 1800s was marked by the overlapping and contrasting paradigms of the supernatural and natural catastrophes. In such an atmosphere, Shelley's prototypical literary apocalypticism would need actual catastrophic events caused by humanity in order to live up to its potential and dominate the genre only after the breakout of the First World War. The Early Modern Period saw the gradual amplification of both secularism and unorthodox interpretations of religion and their acceleration through the nineteenth century onwards. The insurances previously enjoyed in the supernatural paradigm were no longer available. However, the visions of a detached natural extinction were on the way out as well towards the end of the nineteenth century. Humanity moved towards the new paradigm wherein destructive human technicity would begin to pose threats to humankind and nature, the likes of which to a similar extent would have only been inconceivable by the time the First World War broke out.

The trajectory of apocalypticism throughout the twentieth century has involved one instance of destruction after another caused by human actions on a near-consistent

basis. This new age of anthropogenic, selfward anxiety accordingly revolved around the idea that humankind was not only able to but was bound to bring about destruction—of their own and of world ecology. The disillusionment with human perfectibility caused by the armed conflicts of the century had an immensely traumatizing impact on most people in the world, especially those in Europe. To their further consternation, they were not allowed a chance to properly recover from the horrors of the both world wars as the Cold War soon ensued with the USA and USSR emerging as the two opposing superpowers vying to gain the upper hand in international politics. The nuclear capabilities of these two countries initiated a new chapter in the apocalyptic thought of the period. The possibility that entire cities—if not the entire humanity—could be annihilated at a moment's notice of a rising mushroom cloud greatly exacerbated the anxieties over human potentiality.

To make matters even worse, humanity's test with itself did not stop at nuclear weapons. Beginning with the 1960s, the world entered a new stage of anthropogenic threat. Corroborating in retrospect the Romantic distrust of the industrialization of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some two hundred years of fossil fuel consumption incrementally reached such a point that global climates began to undergo increases in average temperatures. This new threat was of an altogether different phenomenological nature, not as immediately threatening as a deluge or an earthquake that prompts a state of hyperarousal with their spells of acute manifestation. The problems caused by human impact on the environment were too abstract, too spaced-out, and too piecemeal to spur an emotive response. With increased reporting on the effects of climate change—images of icebergs collapsing, coastal or riparian areas devastated with torrential rainfall and floods, people gradually grew aware of this new anthropogenic threat. It soon turned out that climate change did indeed have grave implications, far worse than anyone had initially thought.

The proto-autophobia expressed in the first apocalyptic instances in literature was now replaced with an even more distressing and deepened sense of autophobia. With no divinized characters like Ea or Yahweh or God in sight and the glorious human progress that moves ever forward towards greatness no longer intact, humanity was now all alone and only had itself to both blame and turn to. But this complicated matters even further because while the majority knew we were the cause of our own problems, too few believed we could be the remedy, too. Never before in history has

a sense of *nostra culpa* been more frequently and diversely employed as a literary theme than in the second half of the twentieth century. Authors of this period wrote extensively on anthropogenic apocalypses, whose texts were premised on the maladaptive guilt of humanity amid much belated remorse and rampant struggle for survival. The sheer pessimism saturated in these end-time narratives was but the inevitable culmination of the dismal succession of events throughout the century, each of which only added to the general disgruntlement with the state of affairs concerning the environment, the human contribution to its gradual collapse, and the lack of action to slow it down, let alone reverse its course. To explore this period-specific heightened sense of apocalyptic *nostra culpa*, this thesis analyzed John Brunner's *The Sheep Look Up* (1972) in which the environment is devastated due to prolonged human impact, and people—devoid of any amenities and scant of even their basic needs—try to survive in the most abysmal of conditions only to watch the world collapse around them.

It is this thesis' argument, in light of its coverage of multiple forms of narrating the end throughout the entire human history, that the literature that deals with the concept of finitude is an unbroken chain of apocalyptic intertextuality. Every apocalyptic text—whether it dates back to the third millennium BCE or second millennium CE—originates from the same hypostatic engagement with the question of coming to terms with humanity's co-existential crisis that is embedded in its relationship with the environment and in its social animality. This underlying concern has not only survived temporal and spatial variations but also adapted to them, retaining its core composition and *raison d'être* to persist as a principle that governs most apocalyptic thought. This stemmatic recurrence allows for meta-associations to be formed between every period-specific apocalyptic literature contextualized and analyzed in this thesis.

To this end, the ancient Near Eastern flood myth offers two readings that can be respectively related to the age of natural anxiety during the Romantic period and the age of anthropogenic anxiety that began in the early twentieth century. Certain aspects of the formulation of the Sumero-Akkadian and Judeo-Christian accounts of the great flood inform and anticipate—in no uncertain terms—the apocalyptic thought that follows. What both branches of the ancient Near Eastern mytho-literature do in their supernatural paradigm is essentially to problematize human existence within the

particular locality of their environment. Both accounts are concerned with cleansing the world of the human contaminant, which in *Atrahasis* is the destabilization of the cosmic order by way of human overpopulation and noise and in Genesis humanity's wickedness and evil that are incompatible with the good creation of a good god.

The flood serves the purpose of restoring nature to its pre-human balance and functionality and it unfolds—despite the spectacles of graphic devastation—not as a moral reckoning for human deeds but as an inevitable and commonplace part of the natural course of events in a detached and unfeeling manner. The Romantic last-man narratives borrow from this tradition some central ingredients to use in their own apocalyptic formula. Humanity's extinction can simply be attributed, in a manner of natural selection, to being selected against during a cataclysmic event that is simply too abrupt to adapt to. Likewise, both versions of extinction due to forces of nature—disregarding whether these forces are elicited by the divine—refrain from laying out an active culpability and, instead, only point to humankind's unsuitability with its environment. The human extinction events depicted in these works put forth the idea that homo sapiens can and will cease to exist when the cosmic circumstances necessitate it.

The twentieth-century age of anthropogenic anxiety, too, utilizes what is already available to it from previous paradigms and adapts certain aspects in the formation of its own. Although humanity is, in effect, acquitted of any culpability in the end, the subtle, qualified blame placed on the antediluvian humankind in the flood myths lends itself to the uniquely pessimistic mood of the twentieth century. The age of anthropogenic anxiety expands on this rather precarious sense of culpability and intensifies it with the selfward fears resulting from all the human-induced catastrophes of the century. Active culpability that is lacking in the flood myths is introduced and what was once postulated as a muted and simplified unsuitability is now transformed into an all-out human belligerence against itself and nature alike in equal measure. Nature, on the other hand, unconditionally maintains its position as the absolute provenance of destruction, whether it is instrumentalized by the divine or runs its own course or is agitated by human impact. Humanity's excessive consciousness, excessive autophobia, and excessive techno-potentiality, either singularly or in combination, make it compulsively revisit the idea that it is incongruous with and detrimental to itself, to each other, and/or to its environment in one way or another.

The twenty-first century has certainly not been kinder. Countries go through devastating economic crises, often in sizable clusters due to neoliberal globalization. The myriad of negative consequences of human impact on the environment, especially climate change, pose even greater and more immediate risks than they ever did. The 2019 coronavirus pandemic that engulfed the entire world in a matter of mere months has exposed structural flaws in the way we organize ourselves into societies. And last but not least, the 2022 escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War has made us question whether the Cold War truly ended and rekindled fears of a nuclear apocalypse after a relative pause of roughly three decades. Feeling ever on the edge of the next disaster, humanity has been on a steady course through uninterrupted ages of anxiety towards the unknown. By default, we suspect things will not get better. Our fears and the urgency they incite remain constant; they simply vary over time but never deviate from our core apocalyptic belief that the end is nigher rather than later. The apocalyptic fascination with finitude accompanies human existence and faithfully shadows it lest we forget even briefly our part in all the deterioration and defamiliarization that environ us.

The fateful question for the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent their cultural development will succeed in mastering the disturbance of their communal life by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction. It may be that in this respect precisely the present time deserves a special interest. Men have gained control over the forces of nature to such an extent that with their help they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man. They know this, and hence comes a large part of their current unrest, their unhappiness and their mood of anxiety. (Freud, 1930/1961: 145)

Drawing on the existential paradox of our potentiality, apocalyptic literature supplies us with a cathartic release from the innate vulnerability to the changes of our doing but not of our choosing and—with its unique alarmism—serves as an iterative reminder of human finitude with the hope that enough of us eventually get it one of these times, become determined to act, and choose to affirm life over death for a change.

VI. REFERENCES

BOOKS

- ALKON, P. K. (1987). **Origins of Futuristic Fiction**. The University of Georgia Press.
- BANDSTRA, B. L. (2009). **Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible**. Cengage Learning.
- BERGER, J. (1999). **After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse**. University of Minnesota Press.
- BROOKE, J. H. (2010). "Science and Secularization." In P. Harrison (Ed.), **The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion** (pp. 103–123). Cambridge University Press.
- BRUNNER, J. (1972). **The Sheep Look Up**. Harper & Row.
- BUELL, F. (2003). **From Apocalypse to Way of Life: Environmental Crisis in the American Century**. Routledge.
- BYRON, L. (2006). **Selected Poems of Lord Byron Including Don Juan & Other Poems**. Wordsworth Editions. (Original work published 1816)
- CLARKE, I. F. (2000). "The Tales of the Last Days, 1805-3794." In D. Seed (Ed.), **Imagining Apocalypse: Studies in Cultural Crisis** (pp. 15–26). Macmillan Press.
- COHN, N. (2001). **Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith**. Yale University Press.
- COOGAN, M. D. (Ed.), BRETTTLER, M. Z., NEWSOM, C. A., & PERKINS, P. (Assoc. Eds.). (2018). **The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version: An Ecumenical Study Bible** (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

- DALLEY, S. (Ed. & Trans.). (2000). **Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others**. Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1989)
- DEMM, E. (2019). **Censorship and Propaganda in World War I: A Comprehensive History**. Bloomsbury Academic.
- DITOMMASO, L. (2014). "Apocalypticism and Popular Culture." In J. J. Collins (Ed.), **The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature** (pp. 473–509). Oxford University Press.
- DOUGLAS, R. M. (2010). "The Ultimate Paradigm Shift: Environmentalism as Antithesis to the Modern Paradigm of Progress." In S. Skrimshire (Ed.), **Future Ethics: Climate Change and Apocalyptic Imagination** (pp. 197–215). Continuum International.
- ENNS, P. (2012). **The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say about Human Origins**. Brazos Press.
- FOSTER, B. R. (2002). "Mesopotamia and the End of Time." In A. Amanat, & M. Bernhardsson (Eds.), **Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America** (pp. 23–32). I. B. Taurus Publishers.
- FREUD, S. (1961). **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents and Other Works** (J. Strachey, Ed. & Trans.). The Hogarth Press. (Original work published 1930)
- GEORGE, A. (2000). "Introduction." In A. George (Trans.), **The Epic of Gilgamesh: The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian** (pp. xiii–lii). Penguin Books.
- GMIRKIN, R. (2006). **Berosus and Genesis, Manetho and Exodus: Hellenistic Stories and the Date of the Pentateuch**. T&T Clark International.
- GOETHE, J. W. (2008). **Autobiography of Goethe: Truth and Poetry Relating to My Life** (J. Oxenford, Trans.). The Floating Press. (Original work published 1848)

- GRAINVILLE, J. F. X. C. (2003). **The Last Man** (I. F. Clarke, & M. Clarke, Trans.). Wesleyan University Press. (Original work published 1805)
- GRAVES, R. (1958). **Goodbye to All That** (2nd ed.). Cassell & Company Ltd. (Original work published 1929)
- GREIFENHAGEN, F. V. (2002). **Egypt on the Pentateuch's Ideological Map: Constructing Biblical Israel's Identity**. Sheffield Academic Press.
- HENRY, J. (2010). "Religion and the Scientific Revolution." In P. Harrison (Ed.), **The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion** (pp. 39–58). Cambridge University Press.
- HICKS, H. J. (2016). **The Post-Apocalyptic Novel in the Twenty-First Century: Modernity Beyond Salvage**. Palgrave Macmillan.
- HORN, E. (2014). "The Last Man: The Birth of Modern Apocalypse in Jean Paul, John Martin, and Lord Byron." In N. Lebovic, & A. Killen (Eds.), **Catastrophes: A History and Theory of an Operative Concept** (pp. 55–74). De Gruyter Oldenbourg.
- HYNES, S. (1990). **A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture**. Bodley Head.
- KANT, I. (2012). **Kant: Natural Science** (E. Watkins, Ed.). Cambridge University Press. (Original works published 1756)
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139014380>
- KERMODE, F. (2000). **The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction**. Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1966)
- KNOLL, E., & MCFADDEN, J. N. (Eds.). (1970). **War Crimes and the American Conscience**. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- LASCH, C. (1985). **The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times**. W. W. Norton & Company.
- LEED, E. J. (1979). **No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I**. Cambridge University Press.
- LISBOA, M. M. (2011). **The End of the World: Apocalypse and its Aftermath in Western Culture**. Open Book Publishers.

- LIVERANI, M. (2005). "Historical Overview." In D. Snell (Ed.), **A Companion to the Ancient Near East** (pp. 3–19). Blackwell Publishing.
- MORAN, W. L. (1987). "Some Considerations of Form and Interpretation in Atrahasis." In E. Reiner, & F. Rochberg (Eds.), **Language, Literature, and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner** (pp. 245–256). American Oriental Society.
- MURPHY, N. (2010). "Divine Action, Emergence and Scientific Explanation." In P. Harrison (Ed.), **The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion** (pp. 244–259). Cambridge University Press.
- OLIVER, S. (2017). **Creation: A Guide for the Perplexed**. Bloomsbury T&T Clark.
- OWEN, W. (1965). **The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen** (C. D. Lewis, Ed.). New Directions. (Original work published 1920)
- ROUSSEAU, J. J. (2007). **On Philosophy, Morality, and Religion** (C. Kelly, Ed.). University Press of New England. (Original work published 1756)
- SAGAN, C. (1986). "Nuclear Winter." In D. U. Gregory (Ed.), **The Nuclear Predicament: A Sourcebook** (pp. 13–18). St. Martin's Press.
- SANDERS, J. A. (1992). "Canon: Hebrew Bible." In D. N. Freedman (Ed.), **The Anchor Bible Dictionary (Vol. 1)** (pp. 837–852). Doubleday.
- SEED, D. (2000). "Introduction: Aspects of Apocalypse." In D. Seed (Ed.), **Imagining Apocalypse: Studies in Cultural Crisis** (pp. 1–14). Macmillan Press.
- SHELLEY, M. (2004). **The Last Man**. Wordsworth Editions. (Original work published 1826)
- SHELLEY, M. W. (1831). **Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus**. Colburn and Bentley. (Original work published 1818)
<https://archive.org/details/ghostseer01schiuoft>
- SINYKIN, D. (2020). **American Literature and the Long Downturn: Neoliberal Apocalypse**. Oxford University Press.

- SKULT, P. (2019). **The End of the World as We Know It: Theoretical Perspectives on Apocalyptic Science Fiction**. Åbo Akademi University Press.
- SPEISER, E. A. (Trans.). (1992). "Akkadian Myths and Epics." In J. B. Pritchard (Ed.), **Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament** (pp. 60–119). Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1950)
- STABLEFORD, B. (1983). "Man-Made Catastrophes." In E. S. Rabkin, M. H. Greenberg, & J. D. Olander (Eds.), **The End of the World** (pp. 97–138). Southern Illinois University Press.
- TATE, T. (2009). "The First World War: British writing." In K. McLoughlin (Ed.), **The Cambridge Companion to War Writing** (pp. 160–174). Cambridge University Press.
- TAYLOR, C. (2007). **A Secular Age**. Harvard University Press.
- THOMAS, W. B. (1917). **With the British on the Somme**. Methuen.
- TOPHAM, J. R. (2010). "Natural Theology and the Sciences." In P. Harrison (Ed.), **The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion** (pp. 59–79). Cambridge University Press.
- ULRICH, E. (1996). "Multiple Literary Editions: Reflections Toward a Theory of the History of the Biblical Text." In D. W. Parry, & S. D. Ricks (Eds.), **Current Research and Technological Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls** (pp. 78–105). Brill.
- VOLTAIRE. (2009). "From Voltaire, Poem upon the Destruction of Lisbon: Or, An Inquiry into the Maxim, Whatever is, is Right." In E. Palmer (Ed.), **Candide, or All for the Best** (pp. 157–165). Broadview Press. (Original work published 1756)
- WAGAR, W. W. (1982a). "World's End: Secular Eschatologies in Modern Fiction." In W. W. Wagar (Ed.), **The Secular Mind: Transformations of Faith in Modern Europe** (pp. 239–264). Holmes & Meier Publishers.
- WAGAR, W. W. (1982b). **Terminal Visions: The Literature of Last Things**. Indiana University Press.

- WALTON, J. H. (1989). **Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context: A Survey of Parallels Between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts**. Zondervan Publishing House.
- WENINGER, R. K. (2017). **Sublime Conclusions: Last Man Narratives from Apocalypse to Death of God**. Legenda.
- WOJCIK, D. (1997). **The End of the World as We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America**. New York University Press.
- ZIERLER, D. (2011). **The Invention of Ecocide: Agent Orange, Vietnam, and the Scientists who Changed the Way We Think about the Environment**. The University of Georgia Press.
- ZIERLER, D. (2013). "Going Global after Vietnam: The End of Agent Orange and the Rise of an International Environmental Regime." In E. M. Bsumek, D. Kinkela, & M. A. Lawrence (Eds.), **Nation-States and the Global Environment: New Approaches to International Environmental History** (pp. 97–114). Oxford University Press.

ARTICLES

- CADE, O., & STENHOUSE, M. (2020). "Humans as Ecological Actors in Post-Apocalyptic Literature." **Journal of Science Fiction**, 4(1), 47–59.
<https://publish.lib.umd.edu/?journal=scifi&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=514>
- GIRARD, R. (1974). "The Plague in Literature and Myth." **Texas Studies in Literature and Language**, 15(5), 833–850.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40754299>
- LARSEN, S. E. (2006). "The Lisbon Earthquake and the Scientific Turn in Kant's Philosophy." **European Review**, 14(3), 359–367.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798706000366>
- MUSSGNUG, F. (2012). "Naturalizing Apocalypse: Last Men and Other Animals." **Comparative Critical Studies**, 9(3), 333–347.
<https://doi.org/10.3366/ccs.2012.0067>

- PITETTI, C. (2017). "Uses of the End of the World: Apocalypse and Postapocalypse as Narrative Modes." **Science Fiction Studies**, 44(3), 437–454.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5621/sciefictstud.44.3.0437>
- SALVADOR, M., & NORTON, T. (2011). "The Flood Myth in the Age of Global Climate Change." **Environmental Communication**, 5(1), 45–61.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2010.544749>
- SNYDER, R. L. (1978). "Apocalypse and Indeterminacy in Mary Shelley's 'The Last Man.'" **Studies in Romanticism**, 17(4), 435–452.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25600151>
- STERN, M. (1976). "From Technique to Critique: Knowledge and Human Interests in John Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar*, *The Jagged Orbit*, and *The Sheep Look Up*." **Science Fiction Studies**, 3(2), 112–130.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4239015>
- STOTHERS, R. B. (1984). "The Great Tambora Eruption in 1815 and its Aftermath." **Science**, 224(4654), 1191–1198.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1692039>

RESUME

Name and surname: Furkan Tozan

EDUCATION

2022

Istanbul Aydın University, Institute of Graduate Studies
Master of Arts in English Language and Literature

2016

Istanbul University, Faculty of Letters
Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Apr 2021 – Present

Research Assistant

İstanbul Topkapı University; Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social
Sciences; Department of English Language and Literature
Kazlıçeşme / Zeytinburnu / İstanbul

2019 – 2021

Director of Education

British Culture Language Schools

Erenköy / İstanbul

2015 – 2019

Director of Education

American Culture Language Schools

Üsküdar / İstanbul

2012 – 2015

English Teacher

American Culture Language Schools

Üsküdar / İstanbul

2008 – 2012

English Teacher

World Languages Center

Mecidiyeköy / Istanbul

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Radicalized Beat Flânerie: The Politics of Embodiment, Movement, and Sight in Allen Ginsberg’s ‘Howl’ and ‘A Supermarket in California,’” *15th International Idea Conference: Studies in English*. Hatay Mustafa Kemal University, Hatay, Turkey, 11–13 May 2022.

“Post-Truth and the Ideology of Knowledge in Postmodernity and Peter Ackroyd’s *The Fall of Troy*,” *4th International Congress of Human Studies*. Online, 10–11 December 2021.

LANGUAGES

English (C2)

Classical Latin (A1)
