

**‘Survival is Insufficient’: Imagining Utopia within Dystopia in *Station Eleven*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *Human Acts***

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March 2021

‘Survival is Insufficient’: Imagining Utopia within Dystopia in *Station Eleven, Do Androids  
Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *Human Acts*

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts in English

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## Declaration

I, hereby, declare that this dissertation is an original work of mine except for the references and quotations that I have acknowledged duly. I further declare that this piece of work has not been submitted to any other institution previously or currently. Additionally, I have followed all academic ethics and integrity while preparing it.

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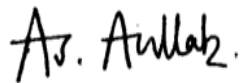
M.A. in English

Course: ENG 599

Course Title: Dissertation

## Approval of Supervisor

I certify that this dissertation has been approved and accepted for the fulfilment of the requirements of Masters of Arts in English.



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## Acknowledgements

First of all, I want to thank Autumn, my favorite non-human animal, for sitting on my desktop wallpaper, keeping me happy and motivated with her ethereal cuteness and judging my research progress when I felt too lazy to work. I would like to express my gratitude to my mother, Syeda Ferdous Mahal, for her endless love and care and for being an inspiration to me throughout my life. I would like to thank my friends and siblings, especially Nafisa, Roudro, Kanika, Busra, Noshin, Nandini and Momo among many others, without whose unending support and love I could not have coped with my episodes of severe depression and paranoia. I want to thank Shorna apu for suggesting me to read *Human Acts* a few years ago and for always fueling my curiosity about different literary theories and genres.

I am thankful to my supervisor, Dr. Md Abu Shahid Abdullah, who not only reviewed my drafts and tolerated my procrastination but also made me aware of different rules and regulations of formal academic writing; hence, gradually helping me to become a better writer. I want to express my profound gratitude to my teachers- Shafiq sir, Nadia ma'am, Israt ma'am, Nazua ma'am, Farzana ma'am, Shahriar sir, Rupok sir, Tanvir sir, Naushin ma'am and others- for exposing my mind to different literary genres and eras throughout the past five years and for increasing my thirst for knowledge, exploration and progression.

Last but not least, I wish to thank my grandmother, Rezia Khatun, for sowing the seed of kindness and compassion in my heart and my childhood best friend, Amrita Gada, for enriching my mind with her endless grace and love and for helping me comprehend and nurture a non-anthropocentric perspective of the universe.

Tanvir Mustafiz Khan

March 2021

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## Abstract

Dystopian fiction may portray destruction, decay and suffering within its narrative aura but it also makes room for utopian imagination to sprout and grow. Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* and Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* speculate a world ravaged by a deadly pandemic and a nuclear fallout respectively, while Han Kang's *Human Acts* depicts the historical events of the bloody and chaotic May 1980 uprising in Gwangju, South Korea. In the first chapter of this dissertation, Kermode's theoretical lens on apocalyptic fiction from *The Sense of an Ending* helps understand the existential dilemma of the characters in the aforementioned novels immediately after the crises, while the theory of state control from Louis Althusser's *On The Reproduction Of Capitalism* reveals the inherent binary conflicts within the narratives. In the second chapter, the theoretical perspectives of solastalgia, salvage and postmemory by Glenn Albrecht, Evan Calder Williams and Marianne Hirsch respectively shed light on the survival mechanisms that aid the characters to overcome their post-crisis distress, pick up the fragmented objects and ideas of value and transmit their knowledge, ideologies and sociocultural concepts to the next generation. Utilizing Fredric Jameson's theoretical framework on utopian fiction from *Archaeologies of the Future*, the final chapter of this paper analyzes the fragmented utopian impulses existent within the three novels to prove that these impulses within the characters' individual and collective psyches drive the dystopian narratives out of their initial chaotic backdrops towards a more positive and uplifting tone, hence breaking away from the constraints of their preconceived narrative genre. Overall, this dissertation aims to prove that dystopian fiction does not necessarily endorse meaningless suffering but aspires to find meaning within meaninglessness and purpose within chaos.

Keywords: Dystopia, imagining utopia, pandemic, post-apocalypse, survival, renewal

## Introduction

Dystopia, as a form of creative expression, emerged as a counterreaction to the popular concept of utopia which imagines a perfect society free of hardship. In 1984, a novel which is widely considered as an epitome of dystopian fiction, George Orwell wrote, “The past was erased, the erasure was forgotten, the lie became the truth” (11). In general, the term dystopia is associated with negative emotions and experiences such as ‘suffering’, ‘discomfort’, ‘chaos’, ‘despair’ and so on. The dystopian genre of literary fiction often tends to speculate these sufferings and disorders in a totalitarian or post-apocalyptic setting where the quality of living is disrupted and deteriorated through extreme natural or man-made calamities such as famine, climate change, war, racial violence etc. Additionally, fictions which do not directly fall under the dystopian genre may also portray characteristics of a dystopian plot where one or multiple crises brew to disrupt the normalcy of the characters’ everyday living. Although the key elements of a dystopian story, i.e., plot, setting, characters, tone and theme all supposedly portray these negative characteristics to represent an ‘end of the world’ scenario, through close reading of several works of the genre I discovered that these texts do not necessarily celebrate the meaninglessness of the chaotic topography and disrupted lifestyle of their respective narratives rather they strive to seek ways out of the struggles, hardships and conflict no matter how narrow the lifelines are. As a result, dystopian fictions essentially make room for fragments of utopian imaginations to form which, combinedly, shift the narratives from their initial dark and dystopic tones towards positive and progressive attributes such as hope, renewal and revival. In this dissertation, I will attempt to prove that, a dystopian fiction not only merely portrays a crisis or a series of catastrophic events within its narrative but also sheds light on the causants of such events, that they depict post-crisis survival where the characters try to find novel or revived meanings to their otherwise meaningless existences and that the characters’ experiences during the



survival phase as well as reflections and remembrance of their past lives eventually lead them to imagining their individual and collective utopias out of their dystopic conditions.

Throughout the analysis, I will also argue that a dystopian fiction does not stay fixated within a chaotic and disrupted narrative rather transforms and evolves through an interconnected relation with its characters' individual and collective wills to break free from their miseries.

As the primary texts for my research, I have selected three novels from three different authors- *Station Eleven* by the Canadian writer Emily St. John Mandel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by the American novelist Philip K. Dick and *Human Acts* by the South Korean author Han Kang. *Station Eleven* is a post-apocalyptic novel published in 2014 where a rapidly spreading global pandemic called 'Georgia Flu' wipes out the majority of the world population and leaves the surviving humans in a post-consumerist world with no modern facilities, no industrial production and no centralized governing bodies. Set around the Great Lakes region of North America, it tells the survival story of a wandering band of artists named 'The Travelling Symphony', a community rebuilding their lives in an airport where they curate a 'Museum of Civilization' and a fanatic cult led by a self-proclaimed 'prophet' who takes advantage of the anarchic world. Through flashbacks and flashforwards between its pre-apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic timelines, *Station Eleven* portrays both the blessings and the curses of modern living and imagines a demolished civilization from which the survivors may rebuild from scratch. In the 1968 sci-fi classic *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the majority of the human race migrates to Mars after a global nuclear fallout wipes out most of the flora and fauna from their home planet. The remaining human populace on earth resort to technological aids to deal with their alienation and moral decay while the Nexus-6 type androids, an intelligent synthetic species originally created as soldiers for the war and then subjugated by humans, infiltrate the human society and threaten both human dominance and identity. *Human Acts*, published in 2014, is a historical novel based on the

May 1980 citizens' uprising in Gwangju, South Korea. Utilizing a polyperspective stream of consciousness narrative technique, the author shows how the innocent people of Gwangju suffered from immense brutality and torture by the military junta during the uprising and years that followed yet did not stop struggling to earn their freedom. I have chosen these texts to conduct my research because of the diversity they offer regarding their sociocultural contexts, publication time and narrative style. However, despite these differences, the novels share the key attributes of a dystopian fiction since all three novels portray a catastrophic event in which the characters, against their will, are placed in and seek ways to survive through the chaos and find meaning to their apparently meaningless and purposeless existences.

I have outlined this dissertation into three chapters with specific theoretical framework(s) on each chapter to support my arguments. In the first chapter titled "Narrative Manifestation of Crises in *Station Eleven*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *Human Acts*: Pandemic, Nuclear Fallout and Authoritarian Regime", I will elaborate how the three dominant crises in the three texts, i.e., the Georgia-Flu pandemic of *Station Eleven*, the nuclear fallout caused by World War Terminus in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and the brutality and massacre during the Gwangju Uprising in *Human Acts* occur and try to analyze the causes behind these crises as well as any succeeding crisis that followed as a chain reaction. To interpret the causants behind the numerous calamities which disrupt the characters' everyday living, I will use the theoretical lens of apocalyptic fiction by Frank Kermode and the theory of state control by Louis Althusser. In *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, Kermode elaborates how human beings, through literary fiction, attempt to make sense of their lives within their mortal limits. In this chapter, I will use Kermode's theory to analyze the characters' existential dilemmas under the different threats and their will to break out of the confusions by trying to find meaning. Additionally, I

will utilize the theoretical framework that Althusser generated in his book *On The Reproduction Of Capitalism: Ideology And Ideological State Apparatuses* to analyze the conflict of interests between two or more groups in the narratives which either lead to the ultimate crisis or increase the complexities during their post-crisis living. My analysis in this chapter will elaborate the causes and effects of the crises in the three novels and set the foundation for my research in the succeeding chapters.

The second chapter, “Post-Apocalyptic Survival: Solastalgia, Salvage and Postmemory”, will focus on phases of the three narratives during which the characters struggle to survive after the initial catastrophes wreak havoc on their familiar lifestyles. In this chapter, I will identify the different techniques that aid the characters to survive in the dire conditions and inspect how these survival techniques eventually lead to the formation of utopian imaginations in their individual and collective psyche. To support my argument, I will categorize the survival mechanisms within the three novels under three theoretical lenses- Solastalgia by Glenn Albrecht, Salvage by Evan Calder Williams and Postmemory by Marianne Hirsch. Albrecht, in “‘Solastalgia’ A New Concept in Health and Identity”, explains how people suffer from existential discomfort through negatively perceived changes in their present living conditions. In my paper, I will utilize Albrecht’s findings to analyze similar existential dilemmas which the characters of the novels strive to overcome after their known habitats are devastated by the severe calamities. In “Salvage”, Evan Calder Williams elaborates how the term ‘Salvage’ has evolved over time from denoting a safeguard measure before a disaster may happen into retrieving valuable objects and ideas after a disaster itself takes place. I will use Williams’ theoretical lens to find instances of such retrievals and revivals in the novels and examine its impacts on the characters’ present and future livelihoods. Finally, I will argue that after the initial shocks of the crises are over and after the characters learn to cope with the draconian changes, they try to transmit the knowledge and

ideas which they deem as precious, such as their socio-cultural identities, to the next generation who are otherwise unaware of their roots. Marianne Hirsch, in “The Generation of Postmemory”, conducts research on the post-holocaust generation to find out how they learn about the intense and often distressing experiences of their ancestors through stories and images without being physically present in the past. In my paper, I will utilize Hirsch’s theoretical perspective to analyze the role that postmemory plays in the transition phase from mere survival to the formation of utopian imaginations. By the end of this chapter, I aim to discover whether the characters’ individual and collective struggles to survive lead them to defying their dystopic and debased living conditions and whether the narratives also shift towards an uplifting tone accordingly.

In “Imagining Utopia: Transformation, Exploration and Revival”, the last and final chapter of my thesis, I will wrap up my research by attempting to argue that the characters’ struggles through the survival phase not only enable them to imagine their individual and collective utopias but also to realize their impulses through their individual and collective choices. I will also try to critically examine whether dystopian literary fictions, as represented by the diverse novels that I chose to investigate, stay constricted within their specific genre or shift towards an uplifting tone in the end, hence allowing the narratives to evolve out of their initially dystopic attributes. To support my arguments, I will implement the theoretical framework on utopian fiction that Fredric Jameson constructed in *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. In the first chapter of his book, titled, “Varieties of the Utopian”, Jameson augments a holistic theoretical approach regarding the creation of utopian content, arguing that the formation of a utopian program- represented by the text- is interrelated with the individual utopian impulses which form within the narrative. In other words, the individual and collective drives of the characters in a literary fiction to overcome their obstacles and aspire for progressivity would affect the

theme, setting and tone of the narrative itself and vice-versa. Using Jameson's theoretical lens, I will investigate the fragmented utopian impulses in the three texts to determine whether the characters' survival strategies enable them to find resolutions to the complications which either lead to the ultimate crisis or arise after the crisis and whether the narratives also transform towards an uplifting tone in synchrony. Finally, I will round off my research by trying to answer whether dystopian fictions allow room for utopian imaginations to form within their respective narratives or whether they should be read and interpreted solely as an allegory to the chaotic and disrupted plots they portray.

Alongside the aforementioned theoretical frameworks, I will use several secondary sources to support my arguments throughout the paper. In "Shakespeare, Survival, and the Seeds of Civilization in Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*", Philip Smith observes the presence of Shakespeare in *Station Eleven* as an allegorical revival of Elizabethan apocalyptic fiction in the modern context. In my paper, I would use his findings to analyze the role of Shakespeare's works in the formation of utopian impulse within the novel. Carmen M. Méndez-García, in his article "Postapocalyptic Curating: Cultural Crises and the Permanence of Art in Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*", observes how *Station Eleven* tends to preserve the marvels of human civilization through a museum which curates mementos from the collapsed world. García's observations would aid me to analyze how the curated objects and ideas transmit knowledge towards the novel's post-apocalyptic generation even after losing their original functions for lack of fuel, electricity, cellular networks and so on. In "Apocalypse Without Revelation?: Shakespeare, Salvagepunk and Station Eleven", Mark West argues that the characters of *Station Eleven* suffer from alienation and mental decay because of the global capitalist system long before the Georgia-Flu pandemic takes place. In my paper, I would utilize West's findings to examine how the several characters of *Station Eleven*, such as, Miranda, Jeevan and Clark try to break free from their bleak and

meaningless lifestyles by actively changing their mindsets, influencing their surroundings and resorting to positive coping mechanisms.

In “Entering the Posthuman Collective in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*”, Jill Galvan critically analyzes humankind's overdependence on technological aids to deal with their trauma and rekindle positive qualities such as empathy in the post-nuclear earth and emphasizes on the importance of experience to evoke genuine compassion within oneself. Galvan's findings would support my analysis of the characters' transformations in the novel from their conflicted and prejudiced selves into an altruistic and welcoming mindset. In “Posthuman Wounds: Trauma, Non-Anthropocentric Vulnerability, and the Human/Android/Animal Dynamic in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*”, Tony M. Vinci focuses on the binary conflicts between the human-android-animal triad in Dick's novel and the struggles of several characters to establish their self-identities. I will utilize Vinci's critical perspective to analyze the influence of the triangular interspecies relationship on the novel's narrative shift from its dystopic qualities. In “The Dangers of Individualism and the Human Relationship to Technology in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*”, Christopher A. Sims criticizes the anthropocentric treatment of technology in Dick's novel and argues that the humans are able to overcome their prejudices once they start accepting their technological inventions as unique and equal. Based on Sims' concept, I will analyze the negative impact of anthropocentrism in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and try to discover whether the major characters are able to overcome their preconceived prejudices by the end of the narrative.

In “Reading Han Kang's *Human Acts*: The Process of Remembering and Forgetting the Memory of the Past South Korea”, Erika Citra Sari Hartanto inspects the role of memory in the formation of collective consciousness of the witnesses and survivors of the Gwangju Uprising in Kang's novel. In my paper, I will refer to Hartanto's findings to analyze how

Kang's stream of consciousness narrative portrays its characters' suppression and recollection of memories both as a means to cope with their trauma and to redeem their identities. In "Collective Action and Organization in the Gwangju Uprising", Na Kahn-chaе provides historical evidence of how the citizens of Gwangju retaliated against the military oppressors in the May 1980 uprising. I will cross-match Kahn-chaе's findings with the series of events depicted in Kang's novel to argue that *Human Acts* blends historical realities with first person perspectives to draw the readers closer to the actual living experiences of the sufferers instead of providing factual depictions devoid of evoking intimate emotions. Hang Kim, in "The commemoration of the Gwangju Uprising: of the remnants in the nation states' historical memory", records interviews of the Gwangju survivors who withstood the brutality of the torture during and after the timeline of the uprising yet refused to give up fighting. I will compare and contrast these interviews with the characters' sufferings in *Human Acts* to analyze the manner of the crises portrayed in the novel and critically interpret the characters' individual and collective responses to the crises. Kim Yong Cheol, in "The Shadow of the Gwangju Uprising in the Democratization of Korean Politics" highlights how the Gwangju Uprising acted as an inspiration for the peace-loving citizens of South Korea and eventually led to their freedom despite being a momentary failure. In my paper, I will interpret *Human Acts* as an allegorical commemoration to the Gwangju Uprising and observe whether it takes a narrative shift to a utopian tone to remain true to the historical aftermath of the uprising. Additionally, I will utilize some interviews of the authors of the primary texts, such as, "Violence and Being Human: A Conversation with Han Kang" by Krees Lee, to gain insight to the authors' motive(s) behind composing their literary fictions. Doing so would enable me to generate a more transparent and well-informed interpretation of the narratives.

Although similar researches have previously been conducted on my chosen topic, I believe that mine would be distinctive from other works with an authentic outcome because

of the diversity of the primary texts and theoretical perspectives that I chose. As specimens of the dystopian genre of fictions, I selected *Station Eleven*, a speculative post-apocalyptic novel portraying an all-annihilating pandemic, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, a futuristic dystopian novel depicting human conflict against their own technological innovations and *Human Acts*, a historical novel telling the tale of the bloody struggle of a peace-loving people to obtain their freedom. To conduct my research, I have taken a unique approach consisting of a specific set of theoretical framework(s) in each chapter to prove the validity of my arguments. In the first chapter, the theoretical perspectives of Kermode and Althusser will allow me to compare and contrast the existential dilemmas and binary conflicts in all three novels and discover how the presence, absence or dissimilarity of a governing system affects the characters' fates. Next, I will categorize the post-apocalyptic survival phase of the three narratives under three distinctive theoretical lenses- solastalgia, salvage and postmemory- to show that the same survival mechanisms may either aid the characters out of their miseries or backfire, depending on their respective narrative context. Finally, Jameson's findings on utopian fiction will aid me to identify the fragmented utopian impulses in the novels and argue that these impulses play an interconnected role with their respective narratives regarding their transformation towards utopia. This holistic approach to analyze three diverse dystopian texts will distinguish my dissertation from all other researches on the novels and/or the dystopian genre in general. I also believe that my research would encourage readers and critics of dystopian literature to analyze its discourse from an open-ended perspective and explore all the possibilities that this exhaustive genre may offer.



## Chapter One

Narrative Manifestation of Crises in *Station Eleven*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *Human Acts*: Pandemic, Nuclear Fallout and Authoritarian Regime

In 1922, during the aftermath of World War 1, T.S. Eliot wrote his phenomenal poem *The Waste Land*. Lamenting on the absurdity of the postwar situation in the city of London, one among many fragmented voices of the poem narrates,

Unreal City,

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,

I had not thought death had undone so many. (Lines 60-63)

Like the two wars which devastated the world in the 20th century, humanity, whether at the individual level or the ‘human kind’ as whole, has faced numerous threats from different sources time and time again throughout its history. Regardless of whether the crises originate from a natural or man-made cause, they always have one dominant effect on human lives- the normalcy of everyday living is disrupted. In times of a crisis, people are thrown off-guard from their comfort zones into unknown and often fearsome horizons and are forced to struggle through the novel situations to keep on living. During the struggle, however, they lose the sense of being in the time they are living in, because, “a sense of time can only exist where there is submission to reality” (Kermode 57). Literature has portrayed, speculated and analyzed this struggle of humankind and other organic or constructed beings throughout its various forms, genres and narrative perspectives with one common goal- to make sense of the sufferings. In this chapter, I will interpret the narrative depiction of crisis in the three novels by Mandel, Dick, and Kang- which portray the characters’ struggle against a pandemic, a nuclear fallout, and a dictatorship respectively. Based on the theoretical frameworks of apocalyptic fiction by Frank Kermode and state control by Louis Althusser, I will also argue

that, after the initial apocalyptic scenario, consecutive crises in the narratives occur because of the binary conflict or contrasting ideas among individuals or groups. Furthermore, I will analyze the different forms of crises that formulate as each of the narrative progresses towards its climax. My aim in this chapter is to identify and interpret the dominant conflicts within the three narratives- such as consumerism vs. the individual, humans vs. androids, people vs. the state etc. to guide the reader towards the next chapter of the paper which will focus on the survival of the specific individuals or the societies as collective entities.

The three novels in discussion, as I mentioned earlier, consist of diverse plotlines. *Station Eleven* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* - both being dystopian science fictions- tell the post-apocalyptic story after a deadly pandemic and a nuclear fallout devastate their fictional worlds respectively while *Human Acts* is a historical fiction based on real events of the 1980 uprising in Gwangju, South Korea. Despite the differences, all three novels portray catastrophes which originate from several natural and man-made sources which in turn cast the characters away from their familiar lifestyles. To analyze the impacts of the adversities on the individuals or the collective communities in the texts, I will attempt to find answers to the following questions: What are the initial sources of the catastrophes in the narratives, and how did those emanate? Did the catastrophes originate arbitrarily, or were there inherent flaws and/or conflicts within the system(s) that the characters reside in which led towards the ultimate disaster? Additionally, what are the narrative and literary techniques that the three authors- Mandel, Dick and Kang, used to portray crises, and why? To find the answers, I will utilize excerpts from Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending* to analyze the narrative depiction of crisis in the three narratives. I will also resort to Althusser's theoretical framework of state control in forms of Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) and Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) from his book *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* to interpret the binary conflicts in the private and the public domains of the texts respectively.

The imminent crisis in *Station Eleven*'s narrative is foreshadowed by allegories to Shakespeare and other classical or popular literary pieces. In the epilogue- a poem from *The Separate Notebooks* by Czeslaw Milosz foreshadows the nature of crisis in *Station Eleven*'s consumerist world,

The bright side of the planet moves toward darkness

And the cities are falling asleep, each in its hour,

And for me, now as then, it is too much.

There is too much world. (qtd. in Mandel 1)

The modern world, backed by the marvels of technology and globalization, makes the individual socially isolated and lonely. Andrew Tate argues that, while globalization may be treated as a blessing in terms that we can go anywhere, communicate with anyone, and get any product or service delivered to our doorsteps, it is also the reason why the pandemic in *Station Eleven* wipes out the global population so quickly as the Georgia-flu rapidly spreads via the "ordinary miracle of air travel" (133). Throughout the novel, Mandel renders the message that the crisis in the narrative is not just the human conflict against a deadly virus, but also a crisis caused by isolation and loneliness, which in turn makes the human populace desensitized towards the threats posed by the modern society as well as the apparent 'gifts' that it offers. Mandel portrays this dual manifestation of crisis by breaking the time frame of the narrative into two parts- the "pre-collapse" world and the world "after the collapse" (37). Negativities of the consumerist society are often portrayed by first-person perspectives of several characters while the narrative goes back and forth between the pre-collapse and the post-collapse worlds through foreshadows and flashbacks as an omniscient narrator tells the tale of the collapse of civilization as we know it. The use of *King Lear* in the beginning of the narrative to portray Arthur's 'collapse' acts as a foreshadow for the events to come (Smith 289). In Act 4, Scene 6 of *King Lear*, Gloucester says to Lear, "O ruined piece of nature! This

great world / Shall so wear out to nought...” (Shakespeare 4.6.134-135). Likewise, the performance of *King Lear* in *Station Eleven* and the death of a major character at the very beginning indicates the end of the modern world in *Station Eleven*'s fictional universe (Smith 290). At the same time, however, *King Lear* “tends towards a conclusion that does not occur”, and life is carried on by the “exhausted survivors” even after the initial crisis (Kermode 82). Later in the novel, reference to another of Shakespeare's plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, reflects this renewal from destruction- a fact that I will elaborate in a succeeding chapter.

Arthur, Jeevan, Miranda and Clark's personal experiences in the pre-collapse world of *Station Eleven* gradually reveal why the modern world fails to react effectively to mitigate and/or contain the diverse crises that occur in the narrative, i.e., the deadly pandemic and alienation of individuals. Arthur, an apparently successful Hollywood actor, is depicted to live in a turmoil between a longing for human intimacy and a desire for personal fame throughout his entire life. On the other hand, Miranda, Arthur's first wife, struggles to cope with Arthur's glamorous lifestyle while simultaneously attempting to nurture her personal dreams. Arthur's loneliness is evident in the way he communicates with people and the way they treat him in return. Attracted to the glamorous life of Hollywood, Los Angeles during his initial rise to fame, Arthur says to his then girlfriend, “I love this place,” only to get a crude reply later on during their break-up, “You love this place but you'll never belong here and you'll never be cast as the lead in any of your stupid movies” (76). Although Arthur does become an accomplished and famous actor later in his life, he fails to assimilate with the glamorous Hollywood society. At the same time, he fails to retain Miranda's affection because of his small talks in private parties and his negligence towards her personal longings, requesting her to “[...] try a little harder [to assimilate]” (92). As a result, to cope with his loneliness, Arthur writes a series of letters titled “Dear V” to his childhood friend living in his

home island, only to be betrayed by her later in the form of a scandal (152). Arthur's utter loneliness is evident in his chain of thoughts in these letters, as he states, "I'm like a man in a wheelchair watching other people run" (155), or when he writes after divorcing his second wife, Elizabeth, that "Love is like the lion's tooth" (158). Arthur, through the decisions that he makes, attempts to fulfil the "basic human need" to "make sense [of one's life]" and to find "comfort" (Kermode 44), but he fails to achieve either because of his negligence towards the needs and desires of others.

Miranda, on the other hand, suffers from isolation throughout her life because of Arthur's negligence and the bleakness and inactivity of her former boyfriend, Pablo. She is introduced in the novel when she first meets Arthur at the age of 17. Arthur's mother convinces him to meet Miranda because they are from the same island, and perhaps because she thinks that Miranda would be a good match for her son (Mandel 77). During their initial conversation, Arthur asks Miranda if she likes Toronto. She replies that she loves it, while the omniscient narrator reflects on her emotions toward the city, "The revelation of privacy: she can walk down the street and absolutely no one knows who she is" (77-78). Although Arthur and Miranda both originated from the same island home, Arthur longs for fame, while Miranda longs for solace. However, neither of them is free from the isolation caused by the bleakness of society. Althusser terms the set of belief systems infused within an individual as "Ideological State Apparatus" which is formed by "a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions" (243). In *Station Eleven*, when Miranda gets her corporate job to get financial stability, Pablo reacts negatively, saying, "'My poor corporate baby,' [...] 'Lost in the machine'" (81). Here, Pablo is resorting to the Ideological State Apparatus of 'male supremacy' in the family domain, or the "family ISA" (Althusser 243), to demean Miranda's intention to achieve personal and financial freedom- an act which is later repeated by Arthur

during their married life. In a dinner party in Hollywood Hills, Arthur tells the ‘story’ of his and Miranda’s coming together in a melodramatic way, “‘There she is again, but this time? One small difference.’ He pauses for effect. [...] ‘This time, I’ll be damned if the girl hasn’t got her worldly belongings with her’” (Mandel 97). However, through Miranda’s chain of thoughts, we find out that Arthur is only telling the half-truth,

He doesn’t tell the whole story. He doesn’t tell the crowd assembled at the table that when she went back to the apartment the next morning for a painting she’d decided she wanted, a watercolor left behind on the drafting table, Pablo was awake and waiting for her, drunk and weeping, and she returned to the hotel with a bruise on her face. (97-98)

Althusser explains that the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) “functions massively and predominantly by *ideology*”, and “secondarily by repression” (244). Arthur conforms to the “cultural ISA” (243) of the Hollywood lifestyle by deciding to tell his friends and associates the half truth about his first marriage, while Pablo’s patriarchal mindset materializes in the form of violence- the secondary outcome of ISA- when he physically abuses Miranda. Unlike Arthur, Miranda, however, does not resort to another individual to deal with her personal crisis. Instead, she channels her loneliness into creativity through her Station Eleven comic book series where she blends details from her real experiences with the world of her imaginations. Despite her efforts to fill her life with creativity, Miranda, however, “almost always loves her life but is often lonely” (Mandel 107). In the same dinner party where Arthur deliberately conceals her traumatic past and cheats on her by flirting with an actor, Elizabeth, Miranda expresses her isolation to her dog Luli, saying, “‘This life was never ours’ [...] ‘We were only ever borrowing it’” (101).

While Miranda and Arthur’s character arcs depict crisis in the family domain, Jeevan and Clark’s pre-collapse and post-collapse experiences portray crisis in the modern

workplace. Unlike Arthur and Miranda who both die of the Georgia flu, both Jeevan and Clark survive the apocalypse, and the narrative draws a contrast between their experiences in their former and later lives to highlight the inherent flaws in both the pre-apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic worlds. Reference to the Georgia Flu pandemic first appears in *Station Eleven* in a conversation between Jeevan and his friend Hua, a doctor in Toronto, who informs Jeevan that the Georgia flu has the “fastest incubation period [he had] ever seen”, warning his friend that he will be “sick within hours” if he is infected (20). At this point, the narrative reveals that although Jeevan and Hua had graduated from the same university, Hua opted to study in a medical school while Jeevan’s career choice led him to being a paparazzi—a decision which he later regrets. In the night of the dinner party where Miranda is mistreated by Arthur, she goes out for a cigarette, comes across Jeevan, reveals her vulnerability during a casual conversation and suddenly gets photographed by him without her permission. The next day, a scandal appears on a celebrity gossip website, titled, “TROUBLE IN PARADISE? AMID RUMORS OF ARTHUR’S INFIDELITY, MIRANDA WANDERS THE STREETS OF HOLLYWOOD AT FOUR A.M. CRYING AND SMOKING” (103). At a later point in the narrative’s time frame, Arthur uses Jeevan’s role as a celebrity gossip magazine reporter to inform the world about his breakup with Elizabeth (172). In both of these incidents, Jeevan conforms to the tendency of the patriarchal society to find pleasure in scandals about a woman having relationship issues with a high-profile man, violating her privacy and making her social life miserable. While interviewing Arthur, Jeevan realizes that his job is parasitical, as he contemplates to himself, “[...] interviewing actors was better than stalking them, but what kind of a journalism career was this? What kind of life? Some people managed to do things that actually mattered” (168). Clark, on the other hand, terms young people walking on the streets as “iPhone zombies [...] who wandered in a dream with their eyes fixed on their screens” (160). Later on, he realizes that his career as a job training

executive is also part of the system which alienates people from the greater society. Clark's job responsibility is to "improve" the professional performance of an individual whom his client company marks as a "target" and to gather information about the individual he has to interview the subject's colleagues and associates (160). However, during an interview with a subordinate of Clark's 'target', Clark realizes that he has spent the last 21 years of his life as part of the corporate world which his interviewee ironically terms to be "full of ghosts" (160). He also realizes that, during the interview, he himself was the 'target', as the interviewee terms the people of the modern world as "high functioning sleepwalkers [whom] nothing ever jolts [...] awake" (163). Through Jeevan and Clark's professional lives, Mandel depicts the vagueness of modern living which both of the characters struggle to overcome in their 'next' lives after the collapse of civilization.

The patriarchal oppression and individual isolation in modern society as well as the toxicity of consumerist lifestyle extends and transforms later in *Station Eleven's* post-collapse world where the technological marvels turn into rubble, the abundance of choices turn into scarcity, and conflict of interests manifests itself in the forms of primitive survival and fanatic doomsday cults. In a world where there are no more "pharmaceuticals", "countries", "fire departments", "police" or "Internet" (31-32), the surviving population is forced to live without taken-for-granted miracles such as telecommunication or modern healthcare as well as various other luxuries and necessities such as air-conditioning or electricity. In the Severn City Airport where the passengers of Air Gradia Flight 452 take emergency shelter after the Georgia-flu pandemic "explode[s] like a neutron bomb over the surface of the earth" (37), a teenage girl who needs an antidepressant named "Effexor" for her special condition is unable to find it anywhere and walks "away into the trees" (245). During their never-ending wait for rescue to arrive, Tyler, Arthur's only son, reads both the New Testament and Station Eleven comic books and blends these narratives together into a twisted, fanatic ideology infused with



repeated jargons like “Everything happens for a reason” (96, 253) and “We are the light” (60, 291, 302). Later in the narrative, driven by the makeshift belief that his ideological fantasies are superior to the rest, Tyler becomes the leader of a religious cult and plans to take a 12-year-old child as “bride” to sate his pedophilic desires (65). Furthermore, he brainwashes his followers into believing that their mission is the “culling of the impure” (61), suggestively, eradicating anybody who does not conform to their beliefs. In contrast, even people who are not tainted by such ideological fanaticism are forced to make harsh decisions to survive in *Station Eleven*’s primitive post-pandemic world. Kirsten- the most talented performer in a band of artists called “The Travelling Symphony” is forced to kill her assaulters- one of whom is a rapist- to keep on living in the post-collapse world (295-296). West argues that the world before the collapse “was already apocalyptic” but not fully so, therefore the crisis of the former, ‘modern’ civilization was carried on to the later, ‘primitive’ one (1). The references from *Station Eleven*’s pre-collapse and post collapse worlds that I analyzed thus far reinforce this argument and it becomes evident that lack of compassion and egoistic barriers between individuals are the dominant reasons why the characters of the novel struggle to unite and react to the imminent threats quickly and efficiently.

The narrative of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* projects a post-nuclear earth where most of the animals become extinct and most of the surviving humans migrate to Mars after a global military conflict called World War Terminus (WWT). The nature of crisis caused by the extinction of living animals is foreshadowed in the novel by a real 1966 news clipping from Reuters which states that a turtle which is nearly 200 years old and symbolically respected by the people of Tonga as “chief” had recently passed away (qtd. in Prologue 1). In the dystopian world of Dick’s novel, a wave of destruction and decay after the nuclear fallout, referred to as the “dust”, sweeps away the majority of animals from earth and leaves the surviving humans in a traumatized state (12). To deal with the trauma, humans

start keeping the surviving animals as highly treasured pets while making near-perfect synthetic copies of the extinct and near extinct ones. This practice, in turn, creates a binary distinction between the humans and the animals, since humans value animals for their “ability to register human existence” but treats them as “objectified commodities” because of the non-convergent nature between human-animal interactions (Vinci 100). In the first chapter of *Do Androids Dream?*<sup>1</sup>, Rick Deckard, the protagonist of the narrative, tells his wife, Iran, of his desire to buy a real sheep to replace the “fake electric one” which they bought after their previous sheep died (2). Rick longs for another real animal because 'owning' an electric animal does not carry the same social status or mental satisfaction as owning a real one, as he expresses to his neighbor who owns a real horse, “‘It’s a premium job. And I’ve put as much time and attention into caring for it as I did when it was real. But—’ He shrugged. / ‘It’s not the same,’ Barbour finished” (9). As the narrative progresses, the human endeavor to ‘care’ for animals proves to be futile, because, unlike electric animals, organic animals must die of old age, disease, or accident. In contrast, the innate anthropocentrism prevents humans from being compassionate towards electric animals which, unlike humans, are not living ‘beings’. This creates complexities in the human psyche which is further intensified by the arrival of the androids. I will elaborate on this point further with the progression of this chapter.

Although the colonization program to Mars or other colony planets saves the humans from extinction after WWT, the remaining human population on earth suffers from alienation and class conflict in the aftermath of the nuclear fallout. On the one hand, the colonization program classifies the humans clinging on to earth to be “biologically unacceptable, a menace to the pristine heredity of the race”, and on the other hand, the earth’s populace who are physiologically and psychologically affected by the “dust” are termed as “special[s]”,

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<sup>1</sup> From this point onward, I will use the shortened form, *Do Androids Dream?*, to refer to the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

rejected from the “regular” society, and effectively denied to be a “part of mankind” (Dick 13). As a result, the ideologically divided humans scattered all over the scorched earth are haunted by silence and antiquated objects- “pudding-like kipple piled to the ceiling of each apartment” (17). The traumatizing effect of silence and kipple in the human psyche is reflected in the narrative through the experience of J.R. Isidore, a ‘special’ who lives alone in a suburban residential building,

Silence. It flashed from the woodwork and the walls; it smote him with an awful, total power, as if generated by a vast mill. [...] It unleashed itself from the broken and semi broken appliances in the kitchen, the dead machines which hadn't worked in all the time Isidore had lived here. [...] It managed in fact to emerge from every object within his range of vision, as if it-the silence-meant to supplant all things tangible. (20)

In the dystopian world of *Do Androids Dream?*, both the silence and the piles of objects act as catalysts to increase human suffering. The silence is amplified because it “acts to undo human achievements” (Sims 77), and there is nowhere on earth the surviving humankind can go to escape it; while the ‘kipple’ is a constant reminder for them of all that has been lost.

To cope with the loneliness and silence, humans resort to technological aids and entertainment devices such as the television, mood organ and empathy box. However, technology addiction and media manipulation ultimately make them even more isolated from each-other and tend to infuse them with certain egocentric ideologies which increase their sufferings. Galvan explains the media manipulation in *Do Androids Dream?* with Jean Baudrillard’s media theory which states that mainstream media transmission is “unilateral” and lacks “reciprocity”, hence the receiver cannot communicate a message to the sender and is hegemonized by the “totalitarian” entity holding power (qtd. in Galvan 421-423). When Isidore turns on the television in the second chapter of the novel, he is ‘greeted’ with an advertisement by the government’s Mars colonization program,

The TV set shouted, “—duplicates the halcyon days of the pre-Civil War Southern states! Either as body servants or tireless field hands, the custom-tailored humanoid robot—designed specifically for YOUR UNIQUE NEEDS, FOR YOU AND YOU ALONE—given to you on your arrival absolutely free, equipped fully, as specified by you before your departure from Earth; this loyal, trouble-free companion in the greatest, boldest adventure contrived by man in modern history will provide—” It continued on and on. (14)

Although the advertisement states that the program will provide androids- human like companions- free of cost to those who willfully migrate to Mars, it hides the hidden agenda of depopulating earth of the remaining humans and strengthening the colonized planets while at the same time falsely marketing their merchandise- the androids- which are proven to be neither “loyal [to humans]” nor “trouble free” throughout the narrative (14). Likewise, both the mood organ and the empathy box, two innovative devices in Dick’s fictional world, fail to do what they are designed for- to reduce human loneliness in the collapsed earth by positively altering one’s mood and by nurturing compassion for all sentient beings respectively. The negative impact of the mood organ is evident in Rick and Iran’s conversation in the first chapter. While Rick prefers to set his organ to an uplifting setting, soon he and Iran gets into an argument about Rick’s profession as a bounty hunter, and Iran threatens him that if he sets the organ to a “thalamic stimulant” to help him win the argument, she will also do the same but in maximum setting (2). To resolve the argument, Rick proposes that they dial the same schedule for the day, to which Iran replies, “My schedule for today lists a six-hour self-accusatory depression” (2). This shows that the characters in the novel often abuse the mood organ- a technological aid- to cause further complexities in their mental wellbeing and interpersonal relationships than they are already in. Similarly, the empathy box, a virtual reality environment revolving around the messiah-like figure, Wilbur Mercer, who goes

through an endless cycle of stoical suffering to preach empathy to all living beings essentially detaches the narrative's characters from reality and isolates them from their physical surroundings (18). Galvan notices how Iran's over dependence on the empathy box essentially diverts her from a healthy relationship with Rick (416). After Rick buys a real goat and shows Iran, she instantly wishes to 'share' the joy with everyone inside the empathy box instead of cherishing it with Rick, "Going over to the empathy box, she quickly seated herself and once more gripped the twin handles. [...] Rick stood holding the phone receiver, conscious of her mental departure. Conscious of his own aloneness" (Dick 153). Iran's indifference to Rick, in turn, causes him to lose his attraction towards her, as he laments, "No support, he informed himself. Most androids I've known have more vitality and desire to live than my wife. She has nothing to give me" (82). These references from the novel about human interaction with technology show that, although technology itself is a neutral medium, it can negatively impact the quality of living for the humans through excessive use or abuse by its users as well as selfish motifs of the designers.

The lives of the humans on earth in *Do Androids Dream?*, already battered by the adversities caused by nuclear fallout, animal extinction and overdependence on technology, come under an even direr threat when android escapees from the Mars colonization program successfully land on earth and blend in with the human community, ultimately threatening the very notion of human identity. Originally designed to be a "Synthetic Freedom Fighter" for the WWT, the androids are later repurposed to serve as "mobile donkey engine[s]" to the humans willingly migrating to Mars and be treated as their mere "possession[s]" (13). However, unlike the animal 'possessions' which cannot react to anthropocentrism, the androids are infused with artificial intelligence which evolves with every new version, surpassing human intelligence itself with the invention of the Nexus-6 brain unit, as Rick reflects,

The Nexus-6 android types, [...] surpassed several classes of human specials in terms of intelligence. In other words, androids equipped with the new Nexus-6 brain unit had from a sort of rough, pragmatic, no-nonsense standpoint evolved beyond a major—but inferior—segment of mankind. (25-26)

This excerpt describes how the androids equipped with Nexus-6 brain units infiltrate the human ranks of anthropocentrism and hierarchy. The humans begin to feel threatened because the Nexus-6 androids challenge their binary construction by surpassing the intellectual capabilities of a specific category of humans called ‘specials’ who supposedly have lesser intelligence than an ‘ordinary’ human person. Furthermore, the “Voigt-Kampff Empathy Test” invented by the humans to re-establish their apparent authority over the androids by detecting the presence of ‘empathy’ in the subject also proves to be problematic because it falsely detects “schizophrenic human patients” as androids (32). Along with this loophole in the Voigt-Kampff test, the bounty hunters’ license to ‘kill’ the androids also questions the notion of empathy and Mercer’s teaching in the empathy box (Vinci 108). To justify the killing of the androids, Mercer- the preacher of compassion- tells Rick that he (Rick) is “required to do wrong”, breaking his [Mercer’s] own ethical conduct (Dick 155). Therefore, the presence of synthetic intelligence in the novel sets long-nurtured human prejudices into uncertainty, forcing humans to re-evaluate their identity and the implication of ‘empathy’.

The manifold crisis in *Do Androids Dream?*’s post-nuclear earth, henceforth, is primarily caused by a false sense of supremacy among the two intelligent entities- the synthetic androids and the organic humans- a conflict within which technology acts as a catalyst by complicating the adversities. Sims argues that the reason behind this conflict is not the “dehumanization of technology” but the humans’ profound submersion into their own selves which blinds them from recognizing other entities as equal (71). In contrast, the

desperation of the androids, especially of the comic TV personality Buster Friendly, to prove the human notion of empathy as a baseless abstraction provokes them to torture an organic spider and kill an organic goat (Dick 180, 198), ironically confirming the lack of compassion that they are accused with. According to Vinci, androids nurture such behavior because they are “not allowed to be traumatized, and this prohibition is itself traumatic to the android[s]” (97). In turn, both the humans and the androids use animals as a scapegoat to “quarantine trauma” and continue the vicious cycles of conflict- on the one hand, between the organic and the synthetic, and on the other hand, between the powerful and the powerless (99). The ultimate conflict in the narrative occurs when the ideological values which the humans conform to turn into repression in their treatment of the androids. In turn, the androids mimic the same form of repression to defy human supremacy and brutalize organic animals.

The setting and plot of Han Kang's *Human Acts*, unlike the speculative fictions of *Station Eleven* and *Do Androids Dream?*, are based on real events in South Korea in 1980, hence the crises that occur in the narrative are also based on historical events and experiences of real people. Even so, Kang does not resort to mere historical facts or a third person narrative to portray the massacre and the trauma which the innocent citizens went through during the Gwangju Uprising. Rather, she constructs the entire narrative from first person perspectives of the sufferers utilizing the stream of consciousness technique, with flashbacks and flash-forwards to depict the characters' thoughts, experiences, memories and feelings. In an interview with Krys Lee, Kang expresses that her narrative technique makes the readers “experience [and] feel [the] suffering [of the characters]”, so that they can truly immerse themselves into the intensity of the “tragedy” (65). In accordance with this attribute of Kang's narrative, I will identify and analyze the crises in *Human Acts* by dividing them into three stages- the initial crisis that leads to the uprising against the authoritarian regime and the repression that follows; the post-uprising massacre and brutal torture on the detained

protesters by the military; and finally, the sufferings of the survivors and the bereaved families in the aftermath of the brutality.

The backdrop of Gwangju Uprising is portrayed in *Human Acts* through the stream of consciousness of several characters and the ‘in medias res’<sup>2</sup> narrative technique which immediately takes the readers in the middle of the turmoil. In the first chapter titled “The Boy”, the narrative voice depicts a series of events happening around the Provincial Office of Gwangju city- the center of the uprising- to a character addressed as “you” (7). This character is later revealed to be Dong-ho, a boy who is killed by the military and who acts as a symbol of the characters’ desire to be free throughout the entire novel. From the reader’s perspective, this narrative technique simulates a sensation of being an eyewitness to the events, as the narrator speaks to Dong-ho,

This morning, when you asked how many dead were being transferred from the Red Cross hospital today, Jin-su’s reply was no more elaborate than it needed to be: thirty. While the leaden mass of the anthem’s refrain rises and falls, rises and falls, thirty coffins will be lifted down from the truck, one by one. (8)

Although the above excerpt does not reveal what caused so many deaths, it carries the undertone that something gruesome had taken place near the Provincial Office. As the story progresses, the narrative voices of several characters- Jeong-dae, Kim Jin-su, Eun-sook, Seon-ju and Dong-ho’s mother respectively- give fragmented portrayals of the series of events surrounding the uprising which gradually formulate the entire story. Jeong-dae’s initial experience of the brutality shows how the regime abuses their military power on the unarmed citizens of Gwangju, disrupting their ordinary living,

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<sup>2</sup> “In medias res”, coined by the Roman poet Horace in *Ars Poetica* in 13 BC, is a narrative technique of beginning a story in the middle of an action then revealing the background of the plot gradually. (“In medias res”)



It happened last Sunday [...] A couple were walking opposite you [...] A thin scream rang out several times from the top of the road, and three soldiers carrying guns and clubs raced down over the hilltop, surrounding the young couple. They looked to have been pursuing someone, and to have turned down this alley by mistake. / “What’s the matter? We’re just on our way to church ...” / Before the man in the suit had finished speaking, you saw a person’s arm – what? Something you wouldn’t have thought it capable of. Too much to process – what you saw happen to that hand, that back, that leg. A human being. “Help me!” the man shouted, his voice ragged. They kept on clubbing him until his twitching feet finally grew still. (26)

Through numerous excerpts like the one above, the narrative depicts how the regime uses the “last resort” of “Repressive State Apparatus (RSA)”- the army- to fabricate binary conflict between the people and the state instead of paying heed to the people’s demands (Althusser 108). In response, all sects of Gwangju citizens- elderlies, children, factory workers, office goers and so on- retaliate by gathering on the streets chanting slogans, such as, “We are fighters for justice, we are, we are [...] We would rather die on our feet than live on our knees” (166). This tendency of the narrative to move back and forth between the courageous uprising and the bloody consequences creates a contrasting aura of hope and hopelessness to imitate the real experiences of courage and uncertainties that the participants of the uprising experienced firsthand. Additionally, the first-person narrative perspective of not just the living sufferers but also the dead bodies generates a gothic, surreal atmosphere to portray the depth of the suffering- the functionality of which I will analyze in the next chapter(s) of this dissertation.

The beatings and the massacre were not the end of suffering for the Gwangju citizens, as many of the participants of the uprising, especially those carrying guns, were imprisoned in military concentration centers to be brutally tortured, sexually abused, raped and

dehumanized, making them lose sense of time and identity and enchaining them into a cycle of never-ending trauma. Hang Kim's interview of actual sufferers of the uprising in Sangmudae Joint Investigation Headquarters reveals the intensity of the torture. One of the interviewees, Chun Sun Nam, recollects the torture as "an everlasting nightmare", while another person, Wi Jong Hwi, describes the insufferable nature of the experience, "A glob of mucus has been flooded from my ears since then. If it be cloudy, the pain shoots up my whole body" (Kim 620). In *Human Acts*, the cruelty of the post-uprising torture is portrayed through the experiences of Kim Jin-su and Seon-ju in the chapters titled "The Prisoner" and "The Factory Girl" respectively. Kim Jin-su's experience in the prison cell is so brutal that he loses his sense of identity, as he narrates, "Given that I was partnered with Kim Jin-su and ate the exact same meals as him every single day, how come he died and I'm still living?" (114). A few paragraphs later, the readers are made aware of the manner of sexual torture that made Kim Jin-su wish that his psyche was separate from his physical body,

What I heard was that the soldiers made him get his penis out and rest it on the table, threatening to cane it with a wooden ruler. Apparently, they made him strip and took him out to the patch of grass in front of the guardhouse, where they tied his arms behind his back and made him lie down on his stomach. The ants nibbled at his genitals for three hours. (115)

Here, the person that the narrator- Kim Jin-su- addresses as 'him' is he himself. However, the moment of torture was so traumatizing that he does not want to acknowledge the fact that he- as an individual- went through that traumatic experience. Seon-ju's consciousness, on the other hand, swings between the present and the past when she is asked to give an interview about her prison cell experiences, which eventually leads her to remembering the most gruesome sexual abuse that she endured,

Yoon has asked you to remember. To ‘face up to those memories’, to ‘bear witness to them’. But how can such a thing be possible? / Is it possible to bear witness to the fact of a thirty-centimetre wooden ruler being repeatedly thrust into my vagina, all the way up to the back wall of my uterus? To a rifle butt bludgeoning my cervix? [...] Is it possible to face up to my continuing to bleed for the next two years, to a blood clot forming in my Fallopian tubes and leaving me permanently unable to bear children? [...] Is it possible to bear witness to the fact that I ended up despising my own body, the very physical stuff of my self? That I wilfully destroyed any warmth, any affection whose intensity was more than I could bear, and ran away? To somewhere colder, somewhere safer. Purely to stay alive. (174)

Seon-ju’s frightful memory of the torture shatters her perception of self, terrifying her psyche against natural human intimacy and eventually blurring her perceptions of time and reality (176). In contrast, the authoritarian regime’s motif behind the cruelty was to silence the sufferers and strip them off of their identity by inflicting extreme pain so that they would lose the incentive to retaliate against the oppression.

Years after the Gwangju massacre and the prison cell tortures, the survivors of the atrocity and the families of the martyrs are left to pick up the fragments of their lost ones’ memories and fractured self-identities while the regime continues to abuse its power to conceal their past deeds. After Eun-sook edits a drama written to commemorate Dong-ho’s memories, a male representative of the state detains her, humiliates her with ‘slaps’ that she struggles to forget and crosses out most of the paragraphs from the confiscated manuscript. According to Erika Hartanto, the regime censored contents which may expose their atrocities in the public sphere to render a positive impression about themselves in people’s mindset (269). When Eun-sook finds out that the director is still carrying out the play despite the censorship, her fear of the cruelty resurfaces, “When those men hear the lines that the censors

scored through coming out of the mouths of these actors, will they jump up from their seats and rush onto the stage?” (Kang 104-105). Dong-ho’s mother, on the other hand, longs for her lost son everywhere she goes and often mistakes strangers on the roads as Dong-ho. Ever since Dong-ho’s death, she always feels cold inside and often stands on fresh hot tarmac just to feel the warmth while she longs to physically see Dong-ho once more,

*After all, I thought, it might still be just that bit warmer than other places. And if I stood there and kept a good look out, who’s to say I wouldn’t spot you again, striding by like the last time? [...] If I call your name next time, will you please just turn around? You don’t need to say ‘yes, Mum?’ or anything like that. Just turn round so I can see you. (188)*

The damage that was done to the ordinary people’s everyday lives and mental well-being during and after the Gwangju Uprising, therefore, was irreparable. The ultimate tragedy for the sufferers is that, no matter how much loss and how many deaths they had to endure, these measurable facts “do not stop time” (Kermode 89). As a result, they are left alone with their miserable existence(s) trying to find meaning to the irrational cruelty and killings.

Overall, in this chapter of the dissertation, my interpretation of the three novels- *Station Eleven*, *Do Androids Dream?* and *Human Acts*- under the theoretical lenses of Kermode, Althusser and others reveals that each of the narratives depicts how binary opposition is intentionally generated by specific individuals or groups to oppress others and achieve selfish agendas, which, in turn, causes the collapse of their respective systems and creates turmoils. Had the consumerist, pleasure-driven, pre-collapse society of *Station Eleven* been free of patriarchal prejudices and practiced compassion instead of competition among individuals, possibly it could have dealt with the Georgia-flu pandemic with unity and prevented fanaticism and cruelty in the post-collapse world. The androids and the humans in *Do Androids Dream?* could have been more sympathetic and understanding towards each-

other and utilized technological advancements to rebuild the war-ravaged world and make room for both organic and synthetic 'life' to grow instead of fighting for a feigned notion of 'supremacy'. The Gwangju Uprising could lead to a different outcome if the authoritarian regime listened to people's demands and made room for democracy to thrive instead of suppressing their voices and instilling fear with the acts of torture and massacre. With these possibilities in mind, I will now move on to the next chapter of my research where my focus will be on the survival mechanisms of the characters and the communities in the post-apocalyptic scenarios.

## Chapter Two

## Post-Apocalyptic Survival: Solastalgia, Salvage and Postmemory

*After you died I could not hold a funeral,*

*And so my life became a funeral. (105)*

The lines above in *Human Acts*, from the stage play commemorating the Gwangju Uprising which Eun-sook attends years after the rebellion, brings back in her mind her memories of Dong-ho, the boy whom she loved but whom she was powerless to save during the massacre. After an event of great distress, the survivors suffer from loss of mental tranquility, fueled by unending grievances for their loved ones and their desecrated homes. In order to survive and reclaim their shattered identities, they pick up and try to mend the fragments of ideas and objects which they consider as indispensable to their existences. Additionally, they tend to transmit their memories, ideas and experiences to the next generation to ensure that the things they believe in and fight for would survive even after their physical demise. The speculative fictions of Mandel and Dick and the historical fiction of Kang portray the characters' struggles to be free from their shackles through the "fictive powers" of imagination, because "[...]imagination -is a function of man's inescapable freedom" (Kermode 64, 135). In this chapter, I will utilize the theoretical lenses of Solastalgia, Salvage and Postmemory constructed by Glenn Albrecht, Evan Calder Williams and Marianne Hirsch respectively to argue that the characters in *Station Eleven*, *Do Androids Dream?* and *Human Acts* resort to the aforementioned survival techniques to deal with their individual and collective existential crises which, in turn, reshapes and redefines their identities and livelihoods. Through the analysis in this chapter, I aim to argue that the individual and collective struggles after the catastrophes lead some of the characters, if not all, to redefine their identities and reshape their lives and sow the seeds of a secure and prosperous future in their mindsets.

In the previous chapter, I examined how the pandemic, nuclear fallout and dictatorship disrupt the everyday living of the characters in the novels by bringing drastic changes to their surrounding environments and how they long to return to their lost homes and loved ones during the initial aftermath of the crises. The popular term to explain the longing for one's home is 'nostalgia' which originated from the Greek words 'nostos' (returning home) and 'algos' (suffering). Therefore, nostalgia means the suffering that one goes through when one is away from one's home. However, in the three novels, the characters are not always displaced from their homes. Rather, the calamities and violence infiltrate their domestic lives within their own habitats for the most part. Realizing the limitation of nostalgia to describe such a condition, Albrecht coined the term 'solastalgia' to explain "the pain or sickness caused by the loss or lack of solace and the sense of isolation connected to the present state of one's home and territory" (45). He also states that solastalgia shares a "ghost reference or structural similarity with *nostalgia*, [therefore] a place reference is imbedded [between them]" (45). Furthermore, he adds that solastalgia refers neither to "looking back to some golden past" nor "seeking another place as 'home'", rather it deals with the "'lived experience' of the loss of the present" which results in the feeling of displacement while "one is still at 'home'" (45). In *Station Eleven, Do Androids Dream?* and *Human Acts*, the characters' struggles to survive portray characteristics of both nostalgia and solastalgia which leads them to either more despair and desolation or willingness to overcome the dire conditions based on their distinctive narrative contexts.

My earlier discussion revealed how Arthur, Miranda, Jeevan and Clark were already suffering from discomfort and isolation because of unfavorable conditions at their homes before the ultimate crisis of *Station Eleven's* Georgia Flu pandemic. While Arthur wrote to his childhood friend 'Dear V' to deal with his isolation, Miranda resorted to her creativity in the form of Station Eleven comic books to channel the detachment she felt in her surrounding

environment into the fictional world of Dr Eleven, his associates and the people of the Undersea. However, unlike Miranda's solastalgia, i.e., the isolation she faces throughout her life, the characters of Miranda's fictional world suffer from nostalgia for a home that they were forced to leave behind,

Dr. Eleven, the landscape, the dog, a text box for Dr. Eleven's interior monologue across the bottom: *After Lonagan's death, all of life seemed awkward to me. I'd become a stranger to myself. [...] A new image to go before this one, a close-up of a note left on Captain Lonagan's body by an Undersea assassin [...] The first sentence of the assassin's note rang true: we were not meant for this world. I returned to my city, to my shattered life and damaged home, to my loneliness, and tried to forget the sweetness of life on Earth.* (104-105)

In the above excerpt, Miranda portrays how Dr. Eleven laments in nostalgia for the loss of his close friend, Captain Lonagan, while the undersea assassin suffers from solastalgia after returning to his "shattered life" (105). Throughout the narrative of *Station Eleven*, the imaginary world of Station Eleven comic books, on the one hand, acts as a foil to the actual events of the novel which causes distress and isolation among its characters, and on the other hand, creates a juxtaposition between nostalgia and solastalgia and their effects on the characters' psyche. To understand how this resonates the characters' survival in the main narrative's post-collapse world, two facts need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, while nostalgia refers to the longing for a "positively perceived period in the past" (Albrecht 43), solastalgia is not necessarily connected to the past but focuses more on present conditions and actions leading to a future which must be "designed and created" (45). Secondly, both solastalgia and nostalgia can co-exist within an individual's mindset and influence his/her thought process and lifestyle (54). In chapter 10, after a rehearsal with *The Travelling Symphony*, Kirsten takes a lone walk in the post-collapse world and muses,



The pleasure of being alone for once, away from the clamor of the Symphony. It was possible to look up at the McDonald's sign and fleetingly imagine, by keeping her gaze directed upward so that there was only the sign and the sky, that this was still the former world and she could stop in for a burger. (49)

Despite personally witnessing the peak of human civilization with all its advancements, Kirsten does not necessarily believe that all is dystopic in the new, 'collapsed' world. Yet, she does feel nostalgic for the small pleasures, such as going for a burger in McDonald's. Later in the narrative, when Kirsten and August are unable to find the Symphony's caravans after being hunted by the prophet's assailants, she suffers from solastalgia for the band of artists whom she considers family and around whom she feels at home,

They slept under a tree near the overpass, side by side on top of August's plastic sheet. Kirsten slept fitfully, aware each time she woke of the emptiness of the landscape, the lack of people and animals and caravans around her. Hell is the absence of the people you long for. (144)

The key difference between these two separate moments in Kirsten's experience is that, unlike the nostalgia that she feels for the former world- a nostalgia that is invoked by the McDonald's sign against the sky and can only refer to a past memory but not her present condition- Kirsten has the ability to look for the symphony and find them, and she chooses her actions accordingly. Therefore, solastalgia, or the distress that one feels for one's present discomfort, is portrayed as a positive force throughout the novel while absolute nostalgia is depicted as a regressive attribute. The negative impact of nostalgia is further portrayed in the narrative through the characters Tyler and his mother Elizabeth whose post-collapse ideologies and lifestyles are antagonistic to that of Kirsten and The Travelling Symphony. Elizabeth's denial of the severity of the Georgia Flu apocalypse is evident in her conversation with Clark in the Severn City Airport in chapter 43,

“I don’t think this is a quarantine,” Clark said. “I think there’s actually really nothing out there, or at least nothing good.” [...] But Elizabeth was unshakable in her convictions. “Everything happens for a reason,” she said. “This will pass. Everything passes.” Clark couldn’t bring himself to argue with her. (248-249)

Elizabeth’s staunch disbelief in the severity of the distress despite rational evidences in her surrounding environment and mainstream media not only makes her disinterested to actively deal with her present situation but also leads her to supporting and promoting fanatic, counter-productive sentiments, causing her and Tyler to eventually leave the airport with a group of religious wanderers which acts as the stepping stone to Tyler’s becoming a self-declared ‘prophet’ and unleashing a spree of terror and oppression with his doomsday cult (261). In contrast, West notes how another character, Jeevan, actively deals with the solastalgia he feels for his lost home and familiar lifestyle as he walks through the barren, post-collapse landscape (4). After leaving his disabled brother, Frank, alone in Toronto, Jeevan fights his utter isolation and finds his inner strength by muttering to himself,

My name is Jeevan Chaudhary. I was a photographer and then I was going to be a paramedic. [...] I had a house on Winchester Street. But these thoughts broke apart in his head and were replaced by strange fragments: This is my soul and the world unwinding. Finally whispering the same two words over and over: “Keeping walking. Keep walking. Keep walking”. (194)

Jeevan’s dynamic character transformation in the narrative, from a paparazzi to an entertainment journalist to a paramedic trainee and ultimately a doctor in the post-collapse world proves that the narrative of *Station Eleven* rewards those characters who actively labor to improve their present living conditions while penalizing those who succumb to idleness and despair. This tendency of the narrative to deplore passive nostalgia in favor of active living is further evident, I believe, in Miranda’s remark about her fictional creation, “They

are always waiting, the people of the Undersea. They spend all their lives waiting for their lives to begin” (86).

Solastalgia, in *Do Androids Dream?*, can be observed from the perspectives of the two intelligent species of the story- the organic humans and the synthetic Nexus-6 type androids. Although the humans in the narrative are biologically ‘born’ and live a ‘full life’ while the androids are manufactured in factories, the root cause of their solastalgia is the same- the destruction during World War Terminus and the Mars colonization program that follows. In “‘Solastalgia’ A New Concept in Health and Identity”, Albrecht describes how the people of Hunter Valley region in Australia suffer from distress caused by “a wave of aggressive colonization by large scale, extractive and power-generating industries owned by State, national and multinational corporations” (54). A similar manner of large-scale colonial aggression is observed in the post-nuclear landscape of *Do Androids Dream?* where multiplanetary corporations such as the Rosen Association and Sidney’s Animals And Fowl dictate how the humans should seek comfort in their post-war distress through the android and animal ‘subjects’ and how the intelligent androids should be ‘repurposed’ after the war to serve an anthropocentric agenda. This authoritarian tendency of the conglomerates, in turn, fabricates existential dilemmas within the psyche of both the humans and the androids while altering their desires of overcoming individual solastalgia into interspecies conflicts. In their drive to find solace in the entropy of Dick’s dystopian landscape, the humans long to be united, while the androids struggle to be identified as individuals instead of manufactured commodities (Vinci 98). As the novel’s human protagonist, Rick Deckard, sets himself on a mission to identify Nexus-6 androids with the Voigt-Kampff empathy test and “retire” them in exchange of “bounty” money from the San Francisco Police department, the irony of his situation and the existential turmoil of all the other humans become apparent (11). The only thing that Rick wishes to do with his earnings is to buy a highly expensive organic animal

and share the joy with the human community through the “empathy box” (27). Ironically, he overlooks the fact that, through his former act, he is conveying absolute apathy to the synthetic yet sentient androids who are similarly treated as mere “servant[s]” by Mars emigrants (Sims 73). In addition, the futility of the empathy box as a medium to provide solace in human distress becomes more obvious when Isidore, despite owning an empathy box, exclaims to himself,

It’s someone else in this building, he thought wildly, unable to believe it. Not my TV; that’s off, and I can feel the floor resonance. It’s below, on another level entirely! / *I’m not alone here any more*, he realized. Another resident has moved in, taken one of the abandoned apartments, and close enough for me to hear him. (21)

Isidore’s reaction here proves that the technological aids- TV, mood organ or empathy box- are not adequate enough to soothe human solastalgia in the post-nuclear world. As a result, Isidore is unwilling to give away Pris and her associates to the bounty hunter Rick later in the narrative despite knowing that they are androids, because by then he treats them not as mere machines but downtrodden individuals just like him (191-192). On the contrary, in their desperation for recognition as individuals in the anthropocentric social structure, the androids show clear signs of compassion among themselves but ironically oppose the very idea of ‘empathy’ itself, hence conforming to the hegemonic role enforced upon them by their human ‘makers’ in the Rosen Association. In chapter 9, the android Luba Luft seeks the help of an android masquerading as a human police officer to detain Rick in a fake police department (96), while the androids Pris, Roy and Irmgard work together and ‘vote’ for their plan of action before they are cornered by Rick in the novel’s climax (143). Yet, when Pris sees the spider which Isidore discovers, she ‘curiously’ cuts off its legs to see if it needs all eight legs (179-180). In a similar manner, Rachel takes revenge on Rick by throwing his newly bought goat off of the roof (198). These self-contradictory actions by both the humans and the

androids in specific scenarios prove that the distress that they face in their present condition is reinforced when they conform to their expected social roles and reduced only when they are able to think and act out of the 'box'.

The solastalgia which the characters of *Human Acts* feel under the military brutality in their own homes leads them into re-evaluating their identities as individuals and as citizens of South Korea. In the novel, Kang's stream of consciousness technique shows how the characters' minds, under grave distress, fight not only against external oppression but also against internal dilemmas such as remembering vs. forgetting and optimism vs. fear. In the inaugurating chapter, the narrative consciousness, through the voice of Dong-ho, questions the political authenticity of the symbols of one's nationality in a time when countless people are massacred in the name of the nation,

It was also strange to see the Taegukgi, the national flag, being spread over each coffin and tied tightly in place. Why would you sing the national anthem for people who'd been killed by soldiers? Why cover the coffin with the Taegukgi? As though it wasn't the nation itself that had murdered them. (17-18)

Albrecht states that "country is not [merely] a generalized or undifferentiated type of place", rather it is a "living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life" (47). Therefore, in the mind of Dong-ho and the other characters in *Human Acts*, symbols like the national anthem and the national flag do not represent the brutality of the authoritarian regime but resonate their own freedom, the evidence of which is again discovered in a later part of the narrative when Yeong-chae and other prisoners start to sing the national anthem in unison when the chief justice visits the prison (122, 126). This behavioral pattern of the oppressed during and after the uprising shows the internal resistance they had built against the violence and injustice. Furthermore, this sentiment is reinforced by the collective identity formed by slogans, leaflets and magazines such as the "Fighters'

Bulletin” which raised the citizens’ morale with phrases like “It doesn’t matter whether I die while struggling” (Young-khee and Sun 218). At the same time, however, the survivors of the Uprising suffer from immense guilt and trauma because of their powerlessness to save their loved ones from brutality and massacre and save themselves from extreme desecration and/or torture. As a result, they often attempt to cling on to positive, uplifting memories from the past while forcing the undesirable memories into their subconscious. In the first chapter, when Dong-ho is looking for the corpse of his friend Jeong-dae, his consciousness drifts back to the intimate memories of his deceased friend as he imagines that “[t]here will be no forgiveness” for him for being unable to rescue his friend (49). In chapter 3, the narrative shows Eun-sook’s desperate attempts to “forget” the seven slaps by the government’s interrogator even though her physical wound had already healed (103). Later in the narrative, while Kim Jin-su is detained in his prison cell, he recollects how his leader increased the morale of the rebels by imagining that “[...] hundreds of thousands of Gwangju’s citizens would stream out into the streets and mass around the fountain” (119). Therefore, the solastalgia that the Gwangju survivors face during and after the uprising disrupts their livelihood and fragments their thoughts but at the same time gives them the courage to stand united and retaliate against the oppression and injustice, leading them into the collective imagination of a better future.

Another survival technique which dominates the transition phase between the initial catastrophe and utopian imagination of the survivors in the narratives is the repurpose and reuse of ideas and objects from their pre-crisis lives. Evan Calder Williams defines this practice, salvage, as “[...] the discovery of hidden value or use in what appears beyond repair or sale – or, at the least, a wager that the already ruined might still have some element worth saving, provided one knows where and how to look” (845). Salvage is a crucial theme in understanding the transformation of the characters’ lives in the novels from the initial

meaninglessness to finding new meaning because it allows them to pick up fragments from their pre-pandemic, pre-nuclear and pre-uprising lives respectively in forms of words and ideas they can re-utilize or objects and places they can repurpose. In doing so, they empower themselves to face their existential challenges, like Salman Rushdie states in “Imaginary Homelands” while talking about his childhood home Bombay, “[a] broken glass is not merely a mirror of nostalgia. It is also [...] a useful tool with which to work in the present” (429). With the above concepts in mind, I will now interpret instances of salvage in the three novels with relevance to my research.

After the Georgia Flu pandemic in *Station Eleven*, the survivors struggle to find food, shelter, medicine and other commodities associated with modern consumerist living, since both the industrial production and supply chains of goods cease to function in the post-collapse world. The instances of salvage in the text can be divided into two categories: firstly, reusing or repurposing objects and ideas out of sheer necessity and secondly, collecting and/or remodeling the same out of individual interests or subjective values. Both of the two major communities depicted in the narrative- members of The Travelling Symphony and the residents of Severn City Airport- show instances of these practices throughout their years of survival in the post-collapse landscape. In the early days after the collapse, the survivors residing at Severn City Airport ransack the airport gift shops for food and clothing (244). Similarly, The Travelling Symphony members, such as Kirsten, August and Jackson, volunteer to search for valuable items such as canned food, clothing etc. in an empty school (128). As years pass by and the post-collapse life becomes more permanent, the characters’ focus shifts from day-to-day survival to restoration, repurpose and exploration. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I focused on how Shakespeare’s *King Lear* acts as an allegory to the crisis in the narrative as it marks Arthur’s ‘collapse’ on stage as a foreshadow of the imminent collapse of modern civilization. Although the familiar world ends after the

pandemic, Shakespeare and his aesthetic prominence continues through *The Travelling Symphony* as they continue to circle the Great Lakes region and perform his plays (35). West notes that the performance of Shakespeare in a pandemic-ravaged world serves a “mimetic function” to the audience, as they can relate to the plague-ridden situation that the playwright himself faced in his lifetime (8). In contrast, the Severn City Airport becomes a safe haven for its residents as well as outcomers while Clark’s Museum of Civilization becomes a renowned sanctuary for “artifacts from the old world” nineteen years after the apocalypse (Mandel 276, 146). Although neither Shakespeare nor the objects in the museum such as a cell phone, an iPad or a motorcycle serve any objective function in post-collapse survival, yet they act as symbols of what the human civilization had achieved at its peak and inspire the survivors as well as newborns to thrive for revived technological advancements.

Despite the positive impacts of salvage in the characters’ lives, the *Station Eleven* narrative marks the negativity of clinging on to past objects and ideas without a valid reason like it condemns fruitless nostalgia. It does so by showing how the same objects, ideas or symbols, such as the airplane, a paperweight, and even Shakespeare can project either positive or negative meanings based on differing individual perceptions and/or situational changes. Although Dieter, Kirsten and other characters of *Station Eleven* think of the airplane as a symbol of technological advancements and freedom (133), Tyler abuses the same symbol as a ‘logo’ for his religious cult and even marks it on people’s faces to exhibit his dominance (204). A paperweight from the pre-collapse world which shifts hands from Clark to Miranda to Arthur to Tanya to Kirsten is termed by Kirsten as “nothing but dead weight”, although she still admires its aesthetic value (216, 66). The clarinet of *The Travelling Symphony* does not agree with Dieter’s bias towards Shakespeare’s ‘universalism’ even in a post-technology, post-pandemic world and comments, “Survival might be insufficient [...] but on the other hand, so was Shakespeare” (288). These references prove that in *Station Eleven*, salvage acts



as a catalyst to fulfil the survivors' dire necessities and aesthetic needs in a world where industrial production has stopped, but the antiquated and inanimate ideas and objects do not enable them to be innovative unless they use their own imaginative faculties to build prosperous communities and create new things.

In *Do Androids Dream?*, salvage in the post-fallout earth is heavily influenced by human exceptionalism, with anthropocentric views dictating which objects and ideas to uphold and which to reject. In "Salvage", Williams shows how the "wreckers-salvagers", a fictional group in Peter Weir's *The Cars That Ate Paris*, intentionally destroy and salvage objects because they "appeared to delight in the ruin" (848). A similar tendency is found within both the androids and humans in Dick's novel. In chapter 7, Isidore mistakes a real cat for an electric one because the latest models of electric animals are built with "disease circuits" which make them appear as lifelike as possible (67). Despite this stunning resemblance which is often extremely difficult to differentiate, humans keep prioritizing organic animals over synthetic ones and use electric animals only as a proxy to fill up the void of not owning a real animal, as I showed in my analysis in the previous chapter of this paper. Similarly, humans build androids to be as human-like as possible yet treat them as mere disposable and/or salvageable utilities to suit their imminent needs of a fighter, a companion or a domestic help while refusing to accept them as equals. Sims finds this anthropocentric treatment of androids ironic, stating, "If they are manufactured to be servants, what is the need to invest resources into the refinement of their brains so that they convincingly perform 'human-ness'?" (73). The treatment of androids, despite their simulacral resemblance with organic human beings, as salvageable 'commodities' instead of living, feeling individuals becomes more evident when Rachel contemplates the four years lifespan of all androids (Dick 170-171). Because of the androids' short lifespan, their physical "brain units" can be salvaged from their torso and infused with "false memories" of

the humans' desire (51), a fate that the humans would not consider for themselves. Similarly, the theology called "Mercerism" which is salvaged and repurposed from old world religions to preach empathy for all living beings terms androids as "killers" with "no regard for animals, which possessed no ability to feel empathic joy for another life form's success or grief at its defeat" (27). This anthropocentric loathing towards synthetic intelligence is self-contradictory and ironical, as androids are the most technologically advanced synthetic intelligence and Mercerism itself is dependent on the technological advancement of virtual reality, the "empathy box" (27), to collaborate with its followers. In retaliation to all the mistreatment and marginalization, the rebel androids from the Mars colonization program infiltrate the human-made hierarchy in their attempt to survive and make the bildungsroman protagonist of *Do Androids Dream?*, Rick Deckard, realize the flaws in the system, enabling the imagination of an earth where both the androids and humans can live in harmony. I will focus more on this point on the next and final chapter of this paper.

Salvage, as a survival mechanism, sets the gothic dystopian mood of *Human Acts* as the narrative depicts, in medias res, the piles of bodies being carried in front of the Provincial Office from the Red Cross hospital of Gwangju city to prepare them for their funeral (8). However, these bodies are not merely 'dead flesh', since Kang's narrative does not merely resort to a factual description of the events. Rather, the narrative voice enters the consciousness of the dead and speaks from the voice of Jeong-dae, a boy who was killed during the massacre and whom Dong-ho looks for among the pile of corpses,

My body continued to putrefy. More and more mayflies crowded inside my open wounds. [...] Around the time when the day grew dark, and beams of orange light strafed down through the crowns of the oaks, exhausted with wondering where my sister might be, my thoughts turned instead to them. [...] I wanted to be free to fly to

wherever they were, and to demand of them: why did you kill me? Why did you kill my sister, what did you do to her? (55-56)

In its lifeless, motionless state, the dead body of a person is not naturally supposed to have thoughts, feelings or novel experiences after its demise. However, Kang utilizes magical realism<sup>3</sup> as an art form to give voice to the dead, and their thoughts and experiences, like the excerpt above, reconstructs the perspective of a sufferer who would otherwise be generalized as a mere ‘victim’. Furthermore, the narrative depicts how the characters, in the process of dealing with their trauma, utilize “people, places, and object[s]” either to “remember [or] forget [certain memories]” (Hartanto 267). The fountain near the Provincial Office where a massacre took place, for example, haunts Eun-sook’s memories years after the uprising. While being interrogated and abused by the authoritarian government official, she recollects, from her memory, her personal emotions when she felt a strong sensation of injustice,

She had no idea what made her think of the fountain at just that moment. [...] ‘The Provincial Office complaints department, please.’ [...] ‘I’ve just seen water coming out of the fountain, and I don’t think it should be allowed.’ [...] It’s been dry ever since the uprising began and now it’s back on again, as though everything’s back to normal. How can that be possible? (73-74)

Later in her character timeline, when Eun-sook witnesses the live performance of the play about Dong-ho which she helped publish, her recollection of the ‘fountain’ symbolism resurfaces as intense grief mingled with the previous feeling of injustice which the running water of fountain invoked in her psyche during the time of the uprising,

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<sup>3</sup> Although initially coined to describe a tendency in German Paintings demonstrating altered reality, magical realism is now used as a literary device and/or an artistic genre where magical or supernatural events are placed in a realistic setting or narrative in order to have a deeper understanding of reality. Magical realism has also become a common narrative style for novels written from the point-of-view of the politically, socially or culturally marginalized such as the native people living under colonial system, women writing from a feminist viewpoint, or those who live with different cultural and religious beliefs and customs in another country where they are the minority, e.g., Muslims in England (Abdullah 115).

*After you died I couldn't hold a funeral, so my life became a funeral.*

*After you were wrapped in a tarpaulin and carted away in a garbage truck.*

*After sparkling jets of water sprayed unforgivably from the fountain.*

*Everywhere the lights of the temple shrines are burning. (108)*

The lines above show how Eun-sook imagines in her mind that the “sparkling jets of water sprayed unforgivably” to wash Dong-ho’s fresh blood off of the ground near the Provincial Office where he and the other schoolboys were carnaged, and it causes “scalding tears [to] burn from Eun-sook’s open eyes” (109). Likewise, another apparently mundane object which haunts the mind of another character, Kim Jin-su, is a Monami biro ballpoint pen. Apparently an ordinary and ‘innocent’ writing device, a unit of this popular ballpoint model was used to torture Kim while he was in prison, as he describes in the narrative, “They spread my fingers, twisted them one over the other, and jammed the pen between them. [...] Later on it got bad enough that you could actually see the bone, a gleam of white amid the filth” (110). This torture method was repeated multiple times throughout Kim’s captivity in the prison and it ended up leaving a permanent scar both on his body and in his mind,

Every day I examine the scar on my hand. This place where the bone was once exposed, where a milky discharge seeped from a festering wound. Every time I come across an ordinary Monami biro, the breath catches in my throat. I wait for time to wash me away like muddy water. I wait for death to come and wash me clean, to release me from the memory of those other, squalid deaths, which haunt my days and nights. (141)

The above analysis of different characters’ psyche in Kang’s novel proves that salvage acts as a crucial element to realize individual trauma during the post-uprising survival of the sufferers, as well as an important tool for the narrative itself to criticize the brutality from the magic realist perspective of the dead. According to Williams, salvage helps construct “a

crucial shape of thought that underwrites our imagination of crisis” (852). *Human Acts* reflects this notion of salvage through its use of objects and ideas imprinted in the characters’ memories. Through this reminiscence, the readers are made aware of the sheer brutality that the Gwangju survivors, as well as the deceased, underwent.

Finally, after the initial phase of survival following the pandemic, the nuclear fallout and the massacre in the three narratives, the survivors get more accustomed to their new ways of living while still trying to make sense of their present and/or former sufferings. In “The Generation of Postmemory”, Marianne Hirsch, the coiner of the term ‘postmemory’, states,

Postmemory describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. (106)

A close analysis of *Station Eleven*, *Do Androids Dream?* and *Human Acts* reveals the transmission of experiences of trauma, or a life before the traumatic event(s), from the witnessing generation to the next one. Activities of The Travelling Symphony and the Museum of Civilization act as mediums of transmission in *Station Eleven*’s post-collapse world, as well as oral transmission of words and ideas by the older generation to the younger. In *Do Androids Dream?*, old world ethics and religious values are transmitted through the teachings of Mercerism, while false memories are imprinted into androids’ brain units to emulate a sensation of having a past without actually experiencing it. *Human Acts*, as a historical fiction, reimagines the incidents and aftermath of the Gwangju Uprising from eye-witness perspectives instead of resorting to factual and/or objective depictions. In this section, I will analyze the several instances of postmemorial transmission in the three novels to discover how they aid the formation of utopian imaginations within the characters’ minds and in the narratives as a whole.

In *Station Eleven*, the two major communities—members of The Travelling Symphony and residents of the Severn City Airport—transmit their pre-collapse ideas and experiences to the post-collapse generation in distinctive ways. On the one hand, the Symphony chooses art in the forms of “music—classical, jazz, orchestral arrangements of pre-collapse pop songs—and Shakespeare” as mediums to render the aesthetic values which several Symphony members, such as Dieter, consider to be the “best about the [pre-collapse] world” (37-38). On the other hand, Clark establishes and curates the Museum of Civilization in Severn City Airport because the post-collapse generation are eager to know about various advancements of human civilization and “It’s hard to explain” is not adequate to sate their curiosity (232). Referring to the knowledge gap between *Station Eleven*’s pre-collapse and post-collapse generation, García states, “To a child who has grown up in a world without electricity, a smartphone, even with a thorough explanation of what could be done with it, is little more than a plastic brick, an empty signifier” (121). This knowledge gap can be observed in a conversation between the Symphony members who were born before the Georgia-flu pandemic and those who were born after,

“Oh,” August said, “thou side-piercing sight!” / “You know what’s side-piercing?”  
the third trumpet muttered. “Listening to King Lear three times in a row in a heat wave.” [...] “What does side-piercing mean?” Olivia asked. She was six years old, the daughter of the tuba and an actress named Lin, and she was riding in the back of the second caravan with Gil and a teddy bear. (36-37)

In the post-apocalyptic world of *Station Eleven*, words that were commonly used in the past lose their meanings and become archaic. Similarly, young people, such as Alexandra, who do not have clear memories of the former world do not remember specific details about technological marvels of the collapsed human civilization, such as, whether air conditioners operated using electricity or gas (122). Yet, when they learn about the past through oral

transmission or know about the original function of an apparently antiquated object, the post-collapse generation are able to imagine these inventions and their impacts on human living. Therefore, postmemory aids in the continuation of civilization even decades after the collapse, as those who remember the past resort to various methods of their preferences to retain and transmit the 'old world' knowledge to those who come after.

Although there is no direct example of intergenerational transmission of experience or trauma in *Do Androids Dream?*, the absence of postmemory itself may explain some of the loopholes in the story which turn the androids and humans against each other. For example, Mercerism is widely regarded as a theology which preaches compassion to living beings, yet there is no trace of where it originated from. Sims notices that words like "God" or "Jesus" are simply used as manners of expression by the characters in the novel, lacking any "spiritual significance" (78). However, similar to the egocentric biases and ambiguities of conventional religions, Mercerism, on the one hand, preaches empathy and on the other hand, Wilbur Mercer justifies Rick's killing of the androids by saying that he [Rick] is "required to do wrong" (155). Therefore, the notion of empathy that Mercerism preaches resonates anthropogenic values and does not take synthetic intelligence into consideration, perhaps because such intelligence had no place in the scriptures that the theology possibly originates from. The absence of postmemorial transmission and its consequence is further noticed in the notion of false memory in the androids when Rick tests Rachel Rosen and Phil Resch with the Voigt-Kampff Empathy Test in two points of the narrative respectively. In Chapter 5, after being tricked into believing that Rachel Rosen is not an android, Rick finally notices how Rachel addresses an owl as "it" instead of "her", and asks one more question from the Voigt-Kampff Test to confirm that she indeed is an android (50). Afterwards, he asks Eldon Rosen, the owner of Rosen Corporation, if she [Rachel] knows that she's an android, to which he answers, "Sometimes they didn't; false memories had been tried various times,

generally in the mistaken idea that through them, reactions to testing would be altered” (51). In contrast, when Phil Resch, another bounty hunter like Rick, suspects himself as an android, he expresses his despair to Rick,

“I own an animal; not a false one but the real thing. A squirrel. I love the squirrel, Deckard; every goddamn morning I feed it and change its papers—you know, clean up its cage—and then in the evening when I get off work I let it loose in my apt and it runs all over the place. (111)

The examples above make it evident that false memory cannot be a substitute either for the real experiences of an individual or experiences that are transmitted from one generation to another because it lacks the emotional depth associated with those experiences. For this reason, Rachel is tested as an android despite being unaware of her identity, while Phil Resch’s test comes negative because his emotional reactions are indeed based on real experiences. (122)

*Human Acts*, as a historical fiction narrated in stream of consciousness technique, generates an aura of postmemorial transmission from the survivors of the Gwangju Uprising to its readers, including the younger generation of South Korea and the present-day citizens of Gwangju itself who did not personally witness the actual events of the 1980 movement. Hirsch states in “The Generation of Postmemory” that the post-crisis generation’s works of literature and art are formed by a “desire to repair” the “massive historical trauma” of the past generation (112), and a similar tendency can be found when the events depicted in *Human Acts* are cross-checked with actual historical references of the uprising. In “Collective Action and Organization in the Gwangju Uprising”, Na Kahn-chaе notes how the Citizens Struggle Committee (CSC2) organized an unarmed “March of Death” in front of the Provincial Office to stop the authoritarian army from recapturing the “liberated zone” from the Gwangju



citizens (186). Similarly, in the third chapter of *Human Acts*, the character Jin-su addresses a number of citizens, saying,

You need to get as many people as you can to come out of their homes. As soon as the sun's up, the whole square in front of the Provincial Office has to be packed with demonstrators. We'll hold out until then, somehow or other, but by morning we'll need the support. (93)

In the same chapter, the narrative depicts how the Citizens' Militia broadcasts, till the last moment, a call-to-arms message to the Gwangju Citizens to stand against the military oppression, "[...] the street broadcast could be heard once more. It cut through the silence muffling the heart of the city, faintly audible even from several blocks' distance. 'Citizens of Gwangju, please join us in the streets. The army is coming'" (96-97). This is also an actual event from the uprising, as Kahn-chae records,

All the forces of the Citizens' Militia were positioned at important points of the Provincial Municipal Building and throughout the city, while loudspeakers began to inform the citizens that the Martial Law Army was coming and appealed for the citizens' participation. Around 2 a.m. when this announcement was broadcast, the gunshots were heard. [...] At around 4 a.m. the Provincial Municipal Building was littered with dead members of the Citizens' Militia. (190)

This recorded historical event of the massacre in front of the Provincial Office is the same massacre depicted in Kang's narrative where Dong-ho and other boys were brutally killed, as depicted from the deceased Jeong-dae's stream of consciousness perspective,

The young soldiers were kneeling in the dirt, propping each other up shoulder to shoulder, sleeping like the dead. / It was then that I heard it: an almighty thunderclap, like thousands of fireworks going off at once. A distant scream. Living breaths

snapped like a neck. Souls shocked from their bodies. [...] That was when you died,  
Dong-ho. (67-68)

In the above excerpt from *Human Acts*, the “almighty thunderclap” refers to the same gunshots heard from Provincial Office on the eleventh hour of the uprising, but here it is depicted in a poetic language instead of a factual one to appeal to the reader’s imagination (67). Another historical similarity between the events of the Gwangju Uprising depicted in *Human Acts* and the historical records of the same are the slogans that the Gwangju citizens hurled at the military junta. For example, while having lunch at the university cafeteria during the dawn of the uprising, Eun-sook witnesses a riot where the people protest against the brutality of the regime, “The thick font swam in front of her eyes. DOWN WITH THE BUTCHER CHUN DOO-HWAN. Just then, a rough hand grabbed hold of her long hair. It tore the paper from her grasp and dragged her off her chair” (81). The slogan that Eun-sook, in *Human Acts*, reads on the flyer was an actual slogan from the uprising, as Kim notes, “[...]at 16:00 on 20 May, the citizens gathered again at Gumnamro. The main slogan until then had been ‘Withdraw the Martial Law,’ but this was replaced by ‘Damn the Slaughter Chun Doo Hwan’, after the government officially defined the citizens as rioters” (611). By comparing these references from *Human Acts* with the historical documentation of the 1980 Gwangju Uprising, it becomes evident that the novel’s ultimate intention is indeed transmission of trauma to the postmemory generation of Gwangju and South Korea, but it does so not merely by telling what happened during the uprising. Rather, it shows what the characters felt, thought and experienced during the turmoil. In doing so, it attempts to re-humanize the dehumanized sufferers of the military brutality and presents the series of events from a new light which makes room to find silver linings amidst the apparently endless trauma and despair of the survivors and the bereaved.

Through my research in this chapter, I have attempted to discover that during the survival phase, the characters' mental and physical wellbeing as individuals and as collective communities depend on their existential choices, even if the choices are limited by dire conditions. Additionally, the theoretical lenses that I used- solastalgia, salvage and postmemory- make the polarities and impacts of these choices intelligible. For example, in the collapsed world of *Station Eleven* where consumerism is extinct and no central governing system exists, solastalgia acts as a positive force in improving the characters' present living conditions, while the consumerist, entropic world of *Do Androids Dream?* makes the same mechanism backfire and sets the humans and androids into an endless loop of egocentrism and intolerance. Salvage acts as a utility to give voice to the sufferers of the Gwangju uprising in *Human Acts*, while recovered religious scripture is abused by the 'prophet' in *Station Eleven* to preach his fabricated fanatic ideologies. Android's fake memories caused by an absence of adequate postmemorial transmission makes them apathetic and hostile to organic entities in *Do Androids Dream?*, while the post-collapse generation of *Station Eleven* learns about the marvels of the former civilization through postmemory. The sheer diversity of the characters' survival experiences in the novels, therefore, proves that there is no single utopian 'magic solution' to all their problems, yet it is the very same diversity which indicates some of the common causes of their sufferings, e.g., intolerance, egocentrism, inflexibility and so on. In the next and final chapter of my dissertation, I will focus on the role of such existential choices in the formation of individual and collective utopian imagination with an aim to find out whether such utopia merely exists in one's imagination or whether it can be made real.

## Chapter Three

### Imagining Utopia: Transformation, Exploration and Revival

In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer. (121)

In “Return to Tipasa”, Albert Camus, the famous French existentialist philosopher, describes the transcendence of his emotions that he feels upon returning to his World War II devastated home in Algeria, at a point of which he expresses his inner strength through the line quoted above. In the same essay, Camus expresses that he could re-experience the “former beauty, a young sky” of his old home, since he realized that “in the worst years of... [his nation’s] madness the memory of that sky had never left... [him]” (121). In the initial chapter of this dissertation, I have analyzed the causes and effects of the manifold crises that the characters of *Station Eleven*, *Do Androids Dream?* and *Human Acts* were forced to go through in the fictional and historical dystopias and discovered that the dominant reasons behind their sufferings before and after the catastrophic events are binary conflicts and selfish motifs of certain individuals, groups of individuals or a governing body as whole. In the second chapter, I have utilized the theoretical lenses of solastalgia, salvage and postmemory to analyze how the individuals and collective groups survive under the threats and came to a conclusion that although there is no unified solution to all the different problems, making unbiased, innovative and contextually rational choices could lead the survivors to more favorable living conditions. In this chapter, based on my earlier findings, I will utilize the theoretical framework on utopian fiction compiled by Fredric Jameson in *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* to argue that, within the existential struggles of their respective dystopias, the characters of the three novels are able not only to imagine their individual and collective utopias but also to realize them through a combination of actions and decisions including, but not limited to, overcoming their binary conflicts, intolerances and egocentric attitudes; accepting the losses while being open to new

possibilities; and using present experiences to rebuild the future. I will also argue that, despite the apparently despondent narrative moods, the dystopian novels by the three different authors written in distinctive times and socio-cultural backgrounds all represent an inherent desire, of the characters and the plots as whole, to find new meanings within the meaninglessness and seek hope within despair. Before I enter the main discussion of the third and final chapter of this dissertation to prove the validity of these claims, I will briefly elaborate the theoretical framework that I will use to identify and interpret the several occurrences of utopian imagination which I discovered in the novels.

My research on the previous chapter revealed that there is no unified notion of ‘utopia’ within the mindset of all characters or groups of characters in each unique scenario. For example, the ‘repurposed’ androids of *Do Androids Dream?* manage to escape their enslaved state in Mars and blend in with the human society on earth with hope to find individual freedom while the very same act is treated by a threat which requires to be eliminated by the humans (24). Similarly, when the underage, ‘chosen’ bride of Tyler, the self-proclaimed prophet, of *Station Eleven* flees from her confinement to join The Travelling Symphony, it may improve her own living condition but it poses a new threat for the symphony as it makes them a target of the prophet’s cult (122-124). Jameson describes the fragmented occurrences such as the above as “utopian impulse”, which refers to the individual, distinctive formation of utopian imagination, distinguishing it from “utopian program” which is the written text or the genre of utopia itself. Based on the ideas of the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch in *The Principle of Hope*<sup>4</sup>, Jameson elaborates that utopian impulse, within a text, can be comprehended through a “hermeneutic” approach encompassing “body, time and collectivity” where the individual utopian impulses would

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<sup>4</sup>*The Principle of Hope* is a phenomenal, three-volume work published in 1954, 1955 and 1959 respectively by Ernst Bloch where he provides an elaborate depiction of utopianism and the inherent human tendency to look for “hope” (Brown).

have a give-and-take relationship to the utopian text as whole. Jameson further states, “[...] the properly Utopian program or realization will involve a commitment to closure (and thereby to totality)” (4). He uses the diagram below to elaborate this distinction:

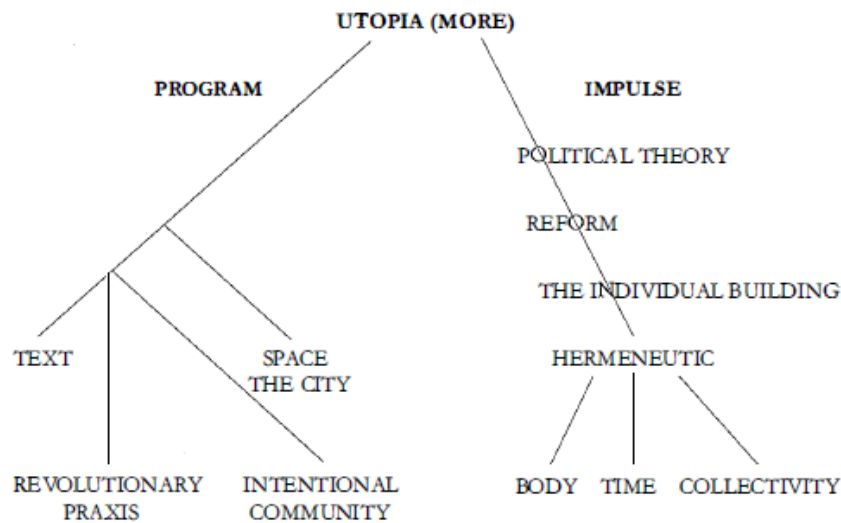


Fig. 1. Utopian Program and Utopian Impulse; Jameson, Fredric. "Varieties of the Utopian." *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, Verso, 2005, p. 4.

The above figure demonstrates that Jameson’s notion of the “utopian program” is realized by the text, i.e., the narrative itself where the space or setting is the broader area, i.e., the city or where the entire narrative takes place. The utopian program is driven by “revolutionary praxis” or the drive to bring large scale changes in the society, and it gives birth to the “intentional community” which acts in communion to achieve a common goal (4). Within the utopian text, however, exists individual utopian impulses where the setting is the narrower space of “the individual building” (4). The utopian impulses are driven by the ideologies in one’s mindset and the formation of these impulses take shape through the interconnectedness of the individual bodies, their past, present and future experiences and their collective yearnings (4). In accordance with this concept, the three novels which I have used as the primary texts in my research- *Station Eleven*, *Do Androids Dream?* and *Human Acts*- are the

broader settings where the utopian program may be realized, whereas the progressive imaginations of the individuals or groups are the utopian impulses. However, none of the three novels in discussion are of the utopian genre, since the catastrophic events- the pandemic, the nuclear fallout and the military junta- disrupt the characters' day-to-day living instead of ensuring them peace and harmony. In this chapter, I will utilize Jameson's theoretical framework to analyze the instances of utopian imagination within the individual and collective psyche of the novels' characters to find out if these impulses, combinedly, act as a catalyst for them towards the transformation to a utopia from a dystopia instead of bringing them to a dead stop to mere post-apocalyptic survival. Through the analysis, I will also attempt to discover if the narratives gradually shift towards an uplifting tone via the combined existence of individual utopian impulses and generate possibilities for the formation of distinctive utopian programs.

Traces of utopian impulse are evident in *Station Eleven's* chaotic, consumerist world long before the occurrence of the Georgia-Flu pandemic which wipes out human civilization and turns the characters' familiar environment into a dystopic, survival-oriented waste land. These individual impulses, although apparently insignificant in the broader setting of the pre-apocalyptic world, have far-reaching effects in the formation of utopian imagination in several characters' psyche for years and decades that follow. Twenty years after the collapse, Kirsten not only preserves two issues of Miranda's comic book series that she got from Arthur but also learns the details from heart,

Dr. Eleven is a physicist. He lives on a space station, but it's a highly advanced space station that was designed to resemble a small planet. There are deep blue seas and rocky islands linked by bridges, orange and crimson skies with two moons on the horizon. (42)

Kirsten's deep-rooted admiration for Miranda's creation- Dr. Eleven's imaginary space station- enables her to think beyond her living reality of the post-pandemic world by allowing her to imagine a "shadow life" where the various marvels of human civilization continues as usual,

[...] sometimes when she looked at her collection of pictures she tried to imagine and place herself in that other, shadow life. [...] She tried to imagine this life playing out somewhere at the present moment. Some parallel Kirsten in an air-conditioned room, waking from an unsettling dream of walking through an empty landscape. (202)

My earlier analysis revealed that, despite her vivid imagination and comfort in the nostalgic thoughts of electricity, internet, air-conditioning etc., Kirsten does not necessarily reject the reality of her present struggles rather she accepts both the struggles and the positivities of the new world. One of the things that improves after the 'collapse' of mass industrialization is the purity of the elements, i.e., air, water, sound and light, "[...] but the night sky was a wash of light in Galileo's age, and it was a wash of light now. The era of light pollution had come to an end" (251). Kirsten acknowledges this positive change in her present environment and chooses to celebrate it instead of lamenting for the loss of her past. While walking with August on their way to Severn City Airport, she muses,

The beauty of this world where almost everyone was gone. If hell is other people, what is a world with almost no people in it? [...] Kirsten found this thought more peaceful than sad. So many species had appeared and later vanished from this earth; what was one more? How many people were even left now? (148)

West argues that through her life-long, never-ending work on constructing the post-apocalyptic world of the Station Eleven comic books, Miranda essentially "imagin[es] destruction" of the consumerist world where she cannot find personal solace (17). In turn, Kirsten's musings about the destruction of humanity in a true post-apocalyptic world



indicates that she can relate to Miranda's utopian concept of reconstruction and revival since both the author and the devoted reader of the series share a deep attachment with Dr. Eleven's fictional universe.

Hence, the peace that Kirsten feels in the near-empty world is her individual utopian impulse, transferred from Miranda's life-long creation of the past and amplified by her (Kirsten's) own present experiences and shared lifestyle with The Travelling Symphony. Kirsten tattoos the motto of the symphony, "*Survival is insufficient*"<sup>5</sup>, on her forearm at fifteen years of age as a reminder not to succumb to fate but to thrive for new possibilities (119). As a member of the Symphony and as an artist, she does not stay still but circles around the Great Lakes area of North America to entertain people, visit new places and meet other survivors and communities of her living reality (263). This allows Kirsten and her peers in the Symphony to enrich their experiences and build a sense of collective achievement and shared purpose. When the Symphony discovers that two of their former members, Charlie and Jeremy, have graveyard markers with their names in the town where they encounter the prophet and his cult for the first time, they set out to find their friends' true whereabouts (53). Afterwards, Eleanor, the girl who escapes the prophet's cult to flee with the Symphony, reveals that Charlie and Jeremy went south to the Museum of Civilization. As a result, for the first time in the narrative's post-collapse timeline, the members of The Travelling Symphony talk about, and plan to visit, the museum that Clark builds in Severn City Airport to preserve the marvels of the collapsed civilization (124-126). Jameson states that the utopian science fiction does not provide the reader with concrete depictions of the future, "[...] but rather [...]"

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<sup>5</sup> In the "Acknowledgements" section of *Station Eleven*, Mandel notes that she came across the phrase "Survival is insufficient" from the 122nd episode of the TV show *Star Trek: Voyager* written by Ronald D. Moore. I have chosen the same phrase as a part of this dissertation's title because it resonates the characters' desire to thrive 'beyond survival' in all three of the primary texts.

de familiarize and restructure our experience of our own present” (286). The uncertainty that the Symphony faces at this point resonates with this attribute, as it is depicted in the narrative,

What to do with Eleanor? [...] Had a grave marker with her name on it already been driven into the earth? Would a grave be dug if she returned? Nothing for it but to take the girl and press on into the unknown south, farther down the eastern shore of Lake Michigan than they'd ever been. (124)

Under the dire circumstance, members of the Symphony must collectively get out of their comfort zone to meet challenges which they never faced before, and through this act they make room for new growth and generate new possibilities of evolving out of *Station Eleven's* post-collapse waste land.

Not only Kirsten but also other members of The Travelling Symphony and other collective communities of the novel benefit from and add to the collective utopian impulses through their individual ideas and experiences. In the first chapter of this paper, I discussed how Shakespeare's *King Lear* foreshadows the imminent collapse of civilization in the beginning of the novel by symbolically relating it with Arthur's 'collapse' on stage. In contrast, the members of the Symphony agree to perform *A Midsummer Night's Dream* instead of *King Lear* in the post-collapse world because they believe that *Lear* would make the environment “more depressing” (44). According to Smith, Shakespeare wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1594 when the theaters in England freshly reopened after a plague and it was possibly written to celebrate an “aristocratic wedding”, therefore representing “revival” and “new beginnings” (294). The collective preference of the Symphony towards a more uplifting play of Shakespeare depicts the tendency of the narrative to shift towards a vibrant mood and it carries on till the end of the novel.

Furthermore, the narrative makes room for differing ideas and perspectives in its post-collapse setting which marks a shift from the binary conflict that I analyzed earlier. The tuba

player of the Symphony believes that the changed world is “[...] horrifically short on elegance” (151), while the Clarinet player rejects the supremacy of Shakespeare and goes on to write her own play which starts with the line, ““Dear friends, I find myself immeasurably weary and I have gone to rest in the forest”” (289). While the naming of the Symphony members based on their role in the collective group puts more emphasis on their individual actions and acquired experiences instead of by-born identities, the naming of Jeevan’s son after his brother, Frank, indicates the value of the same notion in a different characters’ psyche to commemorate his loved one’s memories (312). On the other hand, as opposed to the Symphony’s inherent characteristic of movement and expedition, August muses on the idea of settling down and living a “steadier life” during a watch duty with Kirsten at night near the Symphony’s caravans (135). Even the primary antagonist of the novel, the ‘prophet’, is not labelled as a ‘villain’ by the narrative. Instead, after Tyler’s death, Kirsten thinks about the post-collapse experiences of Tyler as an individual and relates his attachment with the Station Eleven comic books with her own,

The prophet was about her age. Whatever else the prophet had become, he’d once been a boy adrift on the road, and perhaps he’d had the misfortune of remembering everything. Kirsten brushed her hand over the prophet’s face to close his eyes, and placed the folded page from *Station Eleven* in his hand. (304)

Therefore, Mandel’s post-apocalyptic novel neither endorses the tendency to lament over a ‘golden past’ nor continues its initial dystopian tone throughout its narrative progression.

Along with the expeditions of The Travelling Symphony and the curations of the Museum of Civilization, a newspaper in the post-collapse world by an ex-librarian named François Diallo connects people, adds utility and spreads hope by recording “oral history” of the present time, providing “announcements of births and deaths and weddings”, an exchange section for “bartering”, warning messages about “feral” sightings and even an entertainment section with

news of the Symphony's stage performance of *King Lear* (108, 263). The novel nears its end with a hint of revival after The Travelling Symphony reaches Severn City Airport and Clark shows Kirsten "[...] a town, or a village, whose streets were lit up with electricity" (311). Afterwards, when Kirsten and the Symphony members prepare to leave the airport to explore the place with electricity, it acts as a symbolic journey towards utopia because it resonates with their motto, "Survival is insufficient", as well as everything that the Symphony represents, e.g., discovery, hope and freedom (58, 119, 137). The novel ends with Clark musing on the possibilities of a new beginning, as he imagines,

If there are again towns with streetlights, if there are symphonies and newspapers, then what else might this awakening world contain? [...] If nothing else, it's pleasant to consider the possibility. He likes the thought of ships moving over the water, toward another world just out of sight. (332-333)

My analysis in this chapter proves that all the utopian impulses in *Station Eleven* may be realized with collective actions and imaginations of the characters of the post-collapse world. Because of this assurance, characters like Clark and François who have witnessed and cherished the marvels of the 'collapsed' civilization do not give up their hope on the new world rather embrace every possibility that it has on offer.

In *Do Androids Dream?*, utopian impulses form within the characters' mindset when they realize the flaws in the systems which alienate individuals and discriminate between groups based on their predefined identities. Some of the key factors behind the characters' sufferings, as I discussed in earlier chapters, are binary distinctions between the human-animal-android triad and an anthropocentric notion of 'empathy'. Furthermore, I focused on the fact that, in the entropic world of Dick's novel, two of the intelligent races on the topmost hierarchy of power have their own egocentric utopian impulses, a phenomenon which Jameson terms as "collective narcissism",

[...] the collective knows a variety of negative expressions whose dangers are very different from those of individual egotism and privilege. Narcissism characterizes both, no doubt: but it is collective narcissism that is most readily identified in the various xenophobic or racist group practices, all of which have their Utopian impulsion [...] (8)

The humans and the rebel androids in *Do Androids Dream?* partake in their distinctive collective narcissism as intelligent species, endorsed by the utopian programs of “Mercerism”- favoring humans- and “Buster Friendly and His Friendly Friends”- favoring androids (27, 175). In the previous chapter of this paper, I explored how both Wilbur Mercer and Buster Friendly feed into the egocentrism and superiority complex of the humans and androids respectively in the post-nuclear dystopia of Dick’s novel, causing binary conflicts and turning organic animals into scapegoats of both races. Now, I will focus on individual utopian impulses of specific characters who realize the flaws within the corrupt systems and strive to break and rebuild it.

Initially, the narrative attempts to neutralize the prejudices existent in the anthropocentric system through the downtrodden character named J.R. Isidore. A foil to the protagonist Rick Deckard, Isidore has a sense of compassion for all beings, synthetic or organic, despite being marginalized as a subhuman “chickenhead” for his apparent mental deformity (15). While Rick's job as a bounty hunter is to test and "retire" androids masquerading as humans (34), Isidore works in a synthetic animal repair shop to ail the ‘sufferings’ of electric animals. (62) Despite mistaking a real cat as an electric one with an apparent “disease circuit”, Isidore shows compassion for the animal, “To the cat, Isidore said, ‘Can you hang on until we reach the shop?’ [...] ‘I’ll recharge you while we’re en route’” (61). This behavior of Isidore is contradictory to that of Rick’s which I discussed previously, since Rick laments for not owning a real sheep instead of trying to build any attachment with

his electric sheep. In “Entering the Posthuman Collective in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*”, Galvan states that “Compassion [...] must arise solely from experience, for a prescriptive philosophy [...] always re-grounds the fleeting subject” (425). Although both Rick and Isidore practice the ideological teachings of Mercerism, Rick acts on his moral concept of ‘compassion’ while Isidore acts on his living experience of the same. This makes Isidore more open to the androids’ individuality later on while Rick’s biased perception of the androids transforms as he gradually breaks free from the prejudices of the system through his personal experiences.

The androids, contrary to the beliefs of their human ‘makers’, also show signs of empathy and communal bond among themselves and emotional responses towards anthropogenic artworks and activities. In the previous chapter, I analyzed how the androids collectively take a ‘last stand’ under the threat of elimination by Rick. This collective bond of the androids is not a pre-programmed function, rather it is built through each of the individual’s unique experiences. Rick’s numerous encounters with Rachael Rosen, the android who works for Rosen Association, proves that Nexus-6 androids are capable not only of logical thinking but also of understanding and replicating human emotions such as anger, despair and even affection or love. My earlier analysis showed how Rachel nearly evades the Voigt-Kampff test by confusing Rick with her empathetic reactions only to be unveiled as an android at the last moment. As the narrative progresses, this characteristic of Rachael and another android, Luba Luft, spurs the transformation within Rick towards accepting the synthetic beings as individuals capable of developing and inducing real emotions, as he questions “the traditional self-other dyad, which affirms a persistent human mastery over the mechanical landscape” (Galvan 414). When Rachael discovers that Pris, one of the androids whom Rick is hunting, is the same “type” as she is, she does everything in her power to stop Rick from ‘killing’ her, including seducing him into romantic intimacy (163, 165). While

Rick terms this protective nature as “empathy”, Rachael terms it as “identification” (164).

Later on, when Rick discovers that Rachael had manipulated not only him but other bounty hunters as well, he is unable to kill her because by then he perceives Rachael as an individual and not merely a machine to ‘retire’ (174-175). Rick’s experience with Luba Luft, his second bounty hunting assignment, also induces a similar manner of emotional turmoil within him as he observes Luba’s creative performance,

On the stage Luba Luft sang, and he found himself surprised at the quality of her voice; it rated with that of the best, even that of notables in his collection of historic tapes. [...] Perhaps the better she functions, the better a singer she is, the more I am needed. (85)

Here, Rick is acknowledging the fact that the level of perfection in Luba’s creative performance matches that of the most famous human singers, as he wonders if that is the reason why he should eliminate Luba from the human society. Although Rick is still set to his mission of ‘retiring’ the androids, he no longer treats them as objectified commodities or mere machines. As a result, when Phil Resch, another bounty hunter, suggests the ‘use’ of female androids as mere objects of pleasure, the above experiences combined makes Rick think differently and muse on the possibility of a mutually cherishable human-android relationship (124-125).

While Rick’s assimilation with the androids’ de-objectified identity represents a merger of higher to lower order of the anthropocentric social hierarchy, in case of Isidore it is the other way around since he is treated as a ‘chickenhead’- the lowest position within the status quo of *Do Androids Dream?*. The narrative depicts Isidore, a human, to be reverse-objectified by the androids- initially by Pris and then by her accomplices Roy and Irmgard Baty. After learning that Isidore is a mentally challenged ‘special’, Pris treats him in a rude

manner and commands him to perform mundane tasks. For example, when Roy and Irmgard arrive in the apartment, Pris tells Isidore,

*YOU GO TO THE DOOR.*

Isidore, nervously, took the pen from her and wrote:

*AND SAY WHAT?*

With anger, Pris scratched out:

*SEE IF IT'S REALLY THEM. (132)*

Initially, Isidore does not realize that Pris and her friends are the escaped androids from Mars, as he continues to treat Pris as his attractive neighbor and Roy and Irmgard as Pris' friends.

When he does find out their android identity, the androids ask if this revelation bothers him, to which he replies, "But what does it matter to me? I mean, I'm a special; they don't treat me very well either, like for instance I can't emigrate" (142). In *Do Androids Dream?*'s

dystopian setting, the same superiority complex that the human community holds against androids is therefore applicable on their own kind as well, since although Isidore is allowed to own and use an empathy box- the device that is used to infuse with Mercer and his devotees- he is treated as an outcast by his own race. As a result, while Rick gradually moves away from his binary prejudices against the androids, Isidore does not suffer from such superiority complex to begin with but expresses the opposite sentiment- he claims to be inferior to the androids in terms of intelligence,

"You're intellectual," Isidore said; [...] "You think abstractly, and you don't—" He gesticulated, his words tangling up with one another. As usual. "I wish I had an IQ like you have; then I could pass the test, I wouldn't be a chickenhead. I think you're very superior; I could learn a lot from you." (142)

The above behavior might be strange and unexpected from humans in the upper social hierarchy such as Rick but not from Isidore because he is "stranded in multiple environment-



worlds that are inhospitable to one another, and his expansive affectivity enables him to feel deeply for all participants” (Vinci 105). Realizing Isidore’s genuine compassion for all beings, the androids taking shelter in his apartment also overcome their preconceived hatred towards all humans, as Pris praises him to be “a credit to... [his] ...race” and Roy exclaims to be “overwhelmed with admiration” and joyfully expresses that earth is not a “friendless world” for the androids after all (Dick 143).

Rick’s transformation as a bildungsroman character reaches its climax when he prepares to terminate the last three androids- Pris, Roy and Irmgard- to fulfil his bounty hunting assignment. As Rick prepares his gears to hunt the androids, Mercer appears as a shadowy figure and guides him to overcome his hesitation to “retire” Pris (193). However, once he shoots Pris with his laser tube, he finally realizes the true depth of his emotional weakness towards Rachael,

“For what we’ve meant to each other,” the android said as it approached him, its arms reaching as if to clutch at him. The clothes, he thought, are wrong. But the eyes, the same eyes. And there are more like this; there can be a legion of her, each with its own name, but all Rachael Rosen— [...] They can follow me with Rachael Rosens until I die, he thought, or until the type becomes obsolete (193-194)

Although Pris and Rachael are not the same ‘individual’, Rick now understands that the notion of individuality is not the same for androids as it is for humans because the androids are factory produced, not ‘born’, and can therefore be infinitely replicated. Despite this fact, Rick does not cancel out the androids’ identity as a ‘self’ rather learns to perceive it as a collective individuality which is different from that of the personal identity of humans but not so different from Wilber Mercer’s teaching of collective compassion. Afterwards, the only obstacle which remains for Rick to overcome is his anthropocentric prejudice which he had been taught to perceive as ‘natural’, as he muses, “For Mercer everything is easy [...] because

Mercer accepts everything. [...] But what I've done, he thought; that's become alien to me. In fact everything about me has become unnatural; I've become an unnatural self" (201). In contrast, Rachael struggles to individuate after realizing that she is not the only android 'platform' with the same physical and psychological characteristics, "We *are* machines, stamped out like bottle caps. It's an illusion that I—I personally—really exist; I'm just representative of a type" (164).

The individual utopian impulses in *Do Androids Dream?*, therefore, take shape when both the humans and the androids break away from their predefined and expected roles and learn to understand each other through intrapersonal thoughts and interpersonal experiences. Within the dystopian, post-fallout setting, the text makes room for the formation of utopian programs such as "Mercerism", "Buster Friendly and His Friendly Friends" and even the naming of a human colony in Mars as "New America" (26, 2, 14). However, the novel sheds light on the fact that all of these programs are biased towards a specific race or class, and its very title- *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*- raises the question- are the androids mere machines or can they have 'human-like' attributes such as dreaming, loving and feeling as well? In a speech titled "The Android and the Human", Phillip K. Dick states, "Rather than learning about ourselves by studying our constructs, perhaps we should make the attempt to comprehend what our constructs are up to by looking into what we ourselves are up to" (184). The journey of Rick in *Do Androids Dream?* nears an end while trying to seek answer to this question, as he travels to a wasteland away from the city into the "uninhabited desolation to the north" and sacrifices his identity by becoming one and inseparable from Mercer (199, 204). There, Rick finds a toad in the rubble and initially thinks that it is an organic animal in the wild and brings it back home. However, when he and Iran discover that the toad is electric, he finally acknowledges that "[...] electric things have their lives, too. Paltry as those lives are" (211). Through this statement of Rick, the binary conflicts and racial prejudices of

Dick's dystopian fiction takes a narrative shift towards a utopia where egocentrism is shattered and racial prejudices are broken. The novel ends with Iran calling an electric "animal accessories" shop to order "artificial flies that really fly around and buzz" for the electric toad (213-214), fortifying the fact that the non-organic entities also have their own microcosm in the post-nuclear earth of *Do Androids Dream?* and can co-exist with their organic counterparts in harmony.

In the previous chapters, I discussed how *Human Acts*, the only historical fiction among the three primary texts of this research, shocks the reader with a chaotic setting full of violence, bloodshed and despair. Although it is seemingly difficult to imagine the formation of utopian impulses within such a narrative, Han Kang constructs the story in such a way which gives the sufferers the 'driving seat' of the plot with vivid thoughts, feelings, interpersonal bonds and both cherishable and grievous memories instead of terming the characters as mere 'victims' of the atrocities. Furthermore, the Gwangju citizens' very act of raising their voices against the military oppression in unison generated a collective utopian impulse which acted as a driving force of freedom in the entire South Korea. Kang depicts this phenomenon in her novel by infusing the characters' stream of consciousness with philosophical passages about truth, humanity, justice and so on. According to Jameson, "Utopia is not a place in which humanity is freed from violence, but rather one in which it is released from the multiple determinisms (economic, political, social) of history itself" (275). The reflection of this notion is evident in the previous sections of my paper where I argued that the narrative of *Human Acts* gives voice to the voiceless, re-humanizes the dehumanized and attempts postmemorial transmission of the Gwangju uprising from a unique perspective which neither glorifies suffering nor gives a factual depiction of the sufferers' experiences rather attempts to provide a first-person depiction of the series of events. In this chapter, I will argue that the novel not only attempts to re-imagine the history of the Gwangju Uprising

but takes this incentive farther by acting as a repository of fragmented utopian impulses revolving around the uprising- impulses which ultimately lead to the establishment of individual freedom and democracy for the citizens of South Korea.

In an interview titled “Violence and Being Human: A Conversation with Han Kang”, Kang states that existential questions without answers, such as, “Who am I? What is my purpose? Why do people need to die, and where do we go afterward?”, inspired her not only to remain a reader but also to become a writer herself (63). Kang raises these questions time and time again in *Human Acts* through the narrative voices of the several characters, and although it is not possible to know for the living what the dead thinks or wants, she uses her imagination to infuse the narrative with metaphysical passages to make the dead come alive. In the first chapter, the rain falling on the volunteers in front of the Provincial Office as well as on the entire city of Gwangju acts as a metaphor of grief, but also of unity, of those who have fallen during the uprising,

The chilly rainwater, which has crept inside the collar of your uniform, soaks your vest as it trickles down your back. *The tears of souls are cold, all right.* [...] Those trees over there, who hold those long breaths within themselves with such unwavering patience, are bending under the onslaught of the rain. (25)

Here, the narrative voice is imagining that all the deceased souls of the city of Gwangju are collectively weeping in such a force that it is making the trees contort under the pressure. This replicates the mass slaughter of the innocent during the uprising, but the narrative voice chooses to give immense power to the dead instead of those who caused their deaths, and instead of bayonets and bullets, here the ‘weapon’ of the dead is imagined as the rain- a force of nature falling over all. Moreover, the narrative depicts the sense of unity that citizens of all ages and social backgrounds felt during the uprising by providing a similar sense of unity to the bodies of the dead. In the second chapter, the narrative voice of Dong-ho’s deceased

friend Park Jeong-dae repeatedly addresses himself- or his body- in the collective ‘us’ instead of ‘me’. For example, at one point, Jeong-dae states the effect of the rain on their dead, rotting bodies, “The sheer force of it sluiced the caked blood off our bodies, and the rot ran even quicker after this ablution” (64), while at another point, he states the individual difference of the deceased even during their collective decadence, “[...] what had been binding us to this place was none other than that flesh, that hair, those muscles, those organs. The magnetic force holding us to our bodies rapidly began to lose its strength” (65). This sense of indiscriminate unity in the face of imminent danger truly existed during the 1980 uprising, as Kahn-chae states,

These soldiers made no distinction between the demonstrators and the ordinary citizens who happened to be on the scene and began to beat them and strip them. A large number of citizens were struck by batons and fell on the streets with blood. [...] In consequence, from the late afternoon, Gwangju citizens began to attack the police stations to occupy them [...] (179)

Although the dead bodies can no longer raise their voices against oppression, they are still held together by an invisible force which begins to lose its grasp as the souls depart from the bodies. In *Human Acts*, this force is none other than the symbolic representation of the collective will of the Gwangju citizens to fight for their freedom no matter what the consequences may be. Even within the dystopian brutality of the torture and massacre and the gore of the putrefied body, all the Gwangju citizens are unified by their shared impulse to be free.

This sense of unity and hope is conveyed in the novel not only through the voices of the dead but also through those of the living, as the narrative shifts from its dark, somber mood of the magic realist aura of the dead and connects the reader with the vivid, living reality of the Gwangju survivors during and after the crisis. Previously, I discussed how

*Human Acts* generates postmemorial transmission of the May 1980 uprising by rehumanizing the dehumanized and depicting their memories and experiences through its stream of consciousness narrative style. This effectively shatters the binary distinction of individual roles and rigid identities within the narrative, since no longer is an individual labelled as a student, a teacher, an office-worker etc. like a historical documentation of a brutal event, rather the richness of their lives is acknowledged and celebrated. The first chapter of the novel provides a vivid description of Jeong-dae's older sister, Jeong-mi, and the closeness of her bond with Jeong-dae and Dong-ho, even providing a picture-perfect depiction of the moments when Dong-ho feels enchanted by her beauty, "You stood there staring at her smiling face, dumbfounded by this unprecedented volubility, and by the blossoming in her bright eyes, pale petals unfurling from tightly closed buds" (42). In chapter 4, the narrative depicts Kim Jin-su's prison time friendship with a boy named Yeong-chaе who speaks in his stuttering voice, "*I-I l-like to eat sp-sponge cake the best. W-with S-sprite*" (126). Similarly, Chapter 6 of the narrative depicts the reminiscence of Dong-ho's childhood memories with his mother as she attempts to rekindle the emotions of having him close within her mind,

My Dong-ho, I never knew a baby look so happy to be breastfeeding. [...] You crawled all over the place like a puppy, and there wasn't a thing on earth that you wouldn't put in your mouth. [...] You wobbled towards me one step at a time as I clapped and chanted, *Here you come, here you come*. Seven chuckling steps until I could fold you into my arms. (199-200)

Although such intimate, personal memories and experiences of the characters with their friends and families have no direct connection with the Gwangju uprising or the brutality and massacre that followed, these act as a counter-narrative of the objectification and oppression of the Gwangju citizens by showing that they are living, breathing human beings with vivid emotions, shared experiences and intense feelings for one-another. As a result, the reader is

able to connect with these individual characters, feel what they feel and the meanings of all the lives that were lost through sudden death are retained.

*Human Acts*, through its different narrative voices, also raises numerous questions about human existence, violence and injustice which have both contextual relevance with the events of the Gwangju uprising and universal relevance with other similar incidents throughout the history of humanity, such as the 1945 nuclear bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki or 'The Black Night' of 25 March, 1971 in Bangladesh. In chapter 4, Kim Jin-su wonders about the fragility of apparently concrete truths that humans make about certain abstract concepts such as 'humanity' and 'compassion',

*Before, we used to have a kind of glass that couldn't be broken. A truth so hard and clear it might as well have been made of glass. So when you think about it, it was only when we were shattered that we proved we had souls. That what we really were was humans made of glass. (137)*

Kim Jin-su's harsh experiences in the narrative as well as the experiences of all the other sufferers renders the message that our beliefs and qualities are just as fragile as our body if we do not nurture those values with respect and care. At another point, the narrative questions the definition of humanity through Eun-sook's consciousness, "[...] *the question which remains to us is this: what is humanity? What do we have to do to keep humanity as one thing and not another?*" (100). These existential questions are important in the context of the 1980 Gwangju Uprising because the sheer intensity of the brutality shocked the entire population of South Korea of that time. In a chain of events, it led the citizens to the June Uprising of 1987 which eventually led to the establishment of democracy in South Korea (Cheol 234, 235). Therefore, the Gwangju Uprising was a "perfect case of losing the battles but winning the war in the end" (Kahn-chae 192). By raising the questions about concrete terms and definitions regarding human behaviors which we often take for granted, *Human Acts*

resonates the same incentive that the participants of Gwangju Uprising felt about breaking away from historical determinism while allowing its several characters to be the narrators of their own stories. The closing lines of the novel depict another memory of Dong-ho's bereaved mother where her son again comes alive, asking her to step out of the shadows and walk with him in the sunlight,

*Let's walk over there, Mum, where it's sunny, we might as well, right? Pretending that you were too strong for me, I let you pull me along. It's sunny over there, Mum, and there's lots of flowers too. Why are we walking in the dark, let's go over there, where the flowers are blooming. (201)*

Even though Dong-ho's life ends abruptly in the hands of the military junta, his legacy is carried on by the people who love him. Hence, the lines above may be interpreted as a symbolic journey of the South Korean people to break free from the oppression and rebuild their country with unadulterated love, compassion and harmony.

My research brings me to the conclusion that, in the end, the Georgia-flu pandemic of *Station Eleven*, the nuclear fallout of *Do Androids Dream?* and the authoritarian brutality of *Human Acts* drastically change the lifestyles and psyche of the living or non-living characters of their respective narratives, but are unable to abolish or distort who the characters truly are or what they long for as long as they keep their minds open to novel possibilities. The androids and the humans in *Do Androids Dream?* learn to be compassionate towards each other after they come into conflict by acknowledging their differences and imagining an environment where they can exist side-by-side. *Human Acts* acts as an allegory to the South Korean movement of freedom by focusing on the point where the rebellion sparked- the May 1980 Gwangju Uprising- and endorsing the narrative voices of the tortured and the massacred. *Station Eleven* highlights the myriad shortcomings of the modern, consumerist world and creates a setting of near-absolute disintegration from where the survivors may



rebuild civilization from scratch. The inherent characteristics of these novels to thrive for regrowth and renewal proves that the dystopian genre of fiction does not necessarily lead to endless despair but renders a common message to find what has been lost and discover what is yet to be unveiled, similar to the poetry that August writes for Kirsten at a point in *Station Eleven* after they lose their friends- Dieter, Sayid and the clarinet- and feel uncertain about their imminent future,

*A fragment for my friend—*

*If your soul left this earth I would follow and find you*

*Silent, my starship suspended in night (141)*

## Conclusion

I conducted most of the required research to write this dissertation in 2020- a year which would forever be marked in human history as the year when the Covid-19 pandemic rapidly spread throughout the world via air travel and brought the familiar living conditions of all the people on earth to a standstill. When I selected *Station Eleven* as one of the primary texts back in 2019 and got approval of my supervisor, I did not have the faintest idea that something similar to the fictional Georgia-flu pandemic which Mandel imagined in her novel would turn into reality in the imminent future. Although the novel coronavirus did not wipe out the human population from the face of the earth, yet it forced us to isolate ourselves in our respective homes and attend offices, seminars, classrooms etc. through virtual communication platforms. We even had to maintain contact with our friends and family via the internet. These unanticipated experiences drastically transformed our perception of regularity in favor of the 'new normal'. In the same year, the Black Lives Matter movement erupted to seek justice for the felonious murder of George Floyd as millions of United States citizens took to the streets to raise their collective voices against racially motivated violence against the African American people. On 4 August 2020, a massive chemical explosion wreaked havoc in Beirut, the port capital of Lebanon, leaving hundreds dead, thousands injured and rendering nearly 300,000 Lebanese citizens homeless. In recent times, the frequent occurrences of these catastrophic events in such large scales suggests that dystopian fictions are not necessarily detached from reality rather they speculate and/or record the extremities of sufferings under these dreadful conditions. As a result, when we read dystopian fiction, we see reflections of our time and are able to observe our actions as well as their consequences on a mirror. The dystopian genre not only portrays the myriad of catastrophes which happen or may happen at any moment around us but also inspires us to become aware of our surrounding environments, make informed choices and motivate others to think and act

in the same way. Throughout this paper, I built my research around this specific function of dystopian fiction and attempted to build my arguments to support the progressionist qualities of the genre.

Initially, I categorized the three narratives, *Station Eleven*, *Do Androids Dream?* and *Human Acts*, in three different phases- crisis, survival and imagining utopia. This division allowed me to analyze the three stages within each narrative in order to discover how the different texts depict the distinctive crises, how they portray the survival of the characters within their respective narrative contexts and whether these narratives incline towards utopian imagination or stay constricted within a vicious cycle of conflict, corruption and catastrophe. In the first chapter of my paper, I explored how the speculative global catastrophes of a deadly pandemic and nuclear fallout brings ultimate destruction on earth and how a military dictatorship turns the serenity of a peaceful city into a tragedy. My analysis in this chapter unveiled that, although the catastrophes were diverse, they were almost always caused by human greed, egocentrism and negligence and could be mitigated or completely avoided if people nurtured compassion for each other and cared for their surrounding environments. The toxic patriarchy and individual isolation from *Station Eleven*'s post-collapse world carried on after the collapse to make the anarchic world even more insufferable, while the humans' and the androids' intolerance for each-other in *Do Androids Dream?* creates unnecessarily conflicts and wastage of precious, near-extinct animal lives on earth. Furthermore, the unwillingness of the military junta to accept Gwangju citizens as equals leads to needless bloodshed, trauma and decades of civil unrest in *Human Acts*. My research in this chapter prompted me to investigate whether the narratives actively scrutinize these problems and offer probable solutions or whether they merely depict the crisis from an observational perspective.

After the catastrophic events, the characters of the novels try to survive in their shattered homes and comprehend the absurdity of their existences. Afterwards, they try to preserve the fragmented objects and ideas from the rubble and try to pass on their sociocultural identities to their succeeding generation. In the second chapter of my paper, I utilized the theoretical viewpoints of solastalgia, salvage and postmemory to argue that life after a catastrophe does not leave most of the characters of the dystopian novels to endlessly lament for their losses or succumb to perpetual suffering but sows the seed of utopian imagination in their individual and collective psyche. Furthermore, my research revealed that the survival mechanisms on their own cannot drive the characters out of their miseries, rather it is the informed choices that they make based on their respective contexts which enable them to overcome their hardships. For example, solastalgia acts as a positive force in *Station Eleven* to accept life after civilization's collapse, but overdependence on technology to deal with the solastalgia caused by *Do Androids Dream?*'s nuclear fallout makes the humans desensitized towards colonial manipulation and unethical consumerism. Salvage allows the narrative of *Human Acts* to rehumanize the dehumanized by honoring the rebels' memories while the humans in *Do Androids Dream?* exploit the same mechanism to repurpose and abuse the androids after the WWT. The narrative of *Human Acts* acts as a postmemorial allegory to the Gwangju Uprising from the perspective of the sufferers while the absence of postmemorial transmission in the androids' false memories in *Do Androids Dream?* renders them hostile towards organic beings. Up to this point, my research revealed that although there is no unified solution to the wide array of conflicts that originate after the dissimilar disasters in the three texts, yet simple acts of acceptance, compassion and rational thinking may mitigate many of the problems, ail the characters' sufferings and enable them to progress beyond their respective dystopias.

In the concluding chapter, I analyzed the narrative progressions of the three texts to determine whether the characters are able to overcome the binary conflicts and intolerances based on class, race, species and so on. I also investigated whether the characters are able to accept their losses, welcome new possibilities and learn from their present experiences in the post-apocalyptic settings to reshape their future. Additionally, I attempted to argue that the three unique novels that I chose as representatives of dystopian fiction do not stay constricted within the dystopian genre, rather take narrative shifts to imagine the formation of a utopia within their respective narratives. Through my analysis of the fragmented utopian impulses existent within the texts, I reached the conclusion that the disasters drastically alter the lifestyles of the characters and push them to their limits of endurance but their core values, thoughts and memories remain unscathed as long as they keep their minds open to unforeseen possibilities of transformation and progress. When *The Travelling Symphony of Station Eleven* reaches Severn City Airport, the two major communities which represent hope, preservation and revival throughout the novel finally meet and their joint efforts to live beyond the barren world is actualized by signs of technological revival in a town on the horizon lit by electricity. Rick Deckard, the human protagonist of *Do Androids Dream?* assigned with the task to hunt down remarkably intelligent androids, finally realizes the flaws of his actions and beliefs as he becomes one with the sage, Wilbur Mercer, in a wasteland and acknowledges the synthetic creatures as living beings with their own microcosm. The brutality of the military junta on the innocent Gwangju citizens as depicted in *Human Acts* is unable to extinguish their collective yearnings for freedom as they never give up their pursuit to reclaim what they lost. Therefore, the characters' individual and collective struggles from the beginning till the end allow them not only to overcome the initial conflicts but also to look beyond their day-to-day survival as their fragmented utopian impulses conjoin to bring about large scale changes in their respective post-apocalyptic societies.

In the end, my research proves that utopian imagination indeed takes place within the dystopian narratives of *Station Eleven*, *Do Androids Dream?* and *Human Acts*. Although the plots, settings and sociocultural contexts of the three novels are dissimilar to one another, the causes and effects of the catastrophes, the characters' actions and decisions during survival and their shared inclination to break free of their sufferings prove that dystopian fiction does not necessarily lament for everything that is lost but criticizes certain malpractices in our lifestyles and defects within a governing system which, if not dealt with sincerely and efficiently, will keep expanding as parasites till the catastrophes can no longer be contained or controlled. Nevertheless, dystopian fiction does not promote endless misery and nothingness even after acting as a cautionary tale of the respective crisis that it represents, rather speculates how life may continue after a large-scale catastrophe and what the surviving populace may learn both from their past mistakes and present experiences to rebuild civilization from scratch. Because of this dual representation of absolute destruction and revival, the dystopian genre of fiction acts as a quintessential allegory of the present time which no other literary genre is able to replicate.

Partially due to time and space restraints and partially to stay relevant to my research topic, I could not accommodate many arguments, references and analytical perspectives in this paper. In *Station Eleven*, both Arthur and Miranda's deaths are portrayed through stream of consciousness narrative technique with vivid flashbacks of their pasts- a phenomenon which brings the lifelong experiences of the two important characters from the novel's pre-collapse world to a full cycle and leaves a lasting impact even in the post-apocalyptic scenario. The existential struggles of several characters such as Jeevan, Clark and Kirsten and their dynamic developments are thoroughly depicted in the novel- most of which I could not focus on to make room for other details. Further research can be done to compare and contrast between the pre-collapse world of the novel with a global capitalist network which

fails to contain the pandemic and the post-collapse, anarchic world with no governing body. Although numerous researches have been conducted on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Phillip K. Dick's classic science fiction, since its publication in 1968, there are still countless scopes to critically interpret the conflicts between organic humans and synthetic machines and the utopian impulses which generate within the narrative. For example, human overdependence on technology to socialize and nurture compassion while ignoring their environment that Dick speculates in his novel can be contrasted with the contemporary dependency on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and other social networks. The problems of anthropocentric thinking and the refusal to treat synthetic intelligence as equals can be related with rapidly developing artificial intelligences like Apple's Siri, Amazon's Alexa, Microsoft's Cortana and their impacts on our everyday living. The mass animal extinction that Dick envisions may be connected with how pollution, climate change, overfishing and illegal hunting are causing many species to become extinct or near-extinct in the present world. In the epilogue of *Human Acts*, Kang explains how the narrative about Gwangju Uprising slowly formed within her mind through a mixture of facts, her own memories as a child in South Korea, her dreams, feelings and surreal epiphanies. The character of Dong-ho is based on a real schoolboy who was murdered during the 1980 uprising, and Kang's search for Dong-ho's past leads her to his elder brother who agrees to let her take his interview as long as she does justice to Dong-ho's legacy. These elements certainly play a crucial role in the narrative depiction of Gwangju Uprising and the postmemorial transmission of the event in the novel, hence future researches may connect the author's own experiences in the epilogue with the historical fiction of the main text. Last but not the least, the dystopian genre as a whole may be critically analyzed with diverse texts, such as, the young adult sub-genre of *Hunger Games*, *Maze Runner* etc. or cyberpunk novels such as *Altered Carbon* and *Necromancer* using versatile theoretical lenses, e.g., posthumanism, cyber-criticism and so

on. This would allow diverse interpretations to take shape and reinforce the depth and heterogeneity of our knowledge on this literary genre.



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