



VNIVERSIDAD D SALAMANCA

FACULTAD DE FILOLOGÍA
DEPARTAMENTO DE FILOLOGÍA INGLESA

Tesis Doctoral

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE
REPRESENTATIONS OF THE
POSTHUMAN IN CONTEMPORARY
CANADIAN SFF

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE POSTHUMAN IN CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN SFF

Tesis para optar al grado de doctor
presentada por

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VºBº

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Para María, Perfecto y Pilar;

Betty, Tatiana y Joshua;

Ana y Santiago

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A fecha de 27 de marzo de 2023 se recibió la autorización de la Comisión de Doctorado y Posgrado de la Universidad de Salamanca para la presentación de la presente tesis doctoral en formato de compendio de artículos.

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE
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CANADIAN SFF

1. RESUMEN DE LA INTRODUCCIÓN

1.1 ANTECEDENTES TEÓRICOS

El posthumanismo se estableció como un campo de conocimiento especializado durante la década de los noventa, con la aparición de las nuevas tecnologías de la información (especialmente la WWW) (Ferrando 3), aunque sus antecedentes se remontan a la revolución informática de 1970 (Hayles 56, 75) y, de forma más general, a los orígenes de la crítica anti-humanista en el siglo XIX, gracias a la emergencia del modernismo (Eagleton 121; Sheehan, x). Aunque el desarrollo tecnológico y sus consecuencias sociales no han sido el único foco del estudio para el posthumanismo, su estrecha relación con la aparición de las nuevas tecnologías nos permite trazar paralelismos con otra área de producción textual que sigue una trayectoria similar y que está de igual modo ligada al proyecto de la Revolución Industrial: la ciencia ficción. Como el pensamiento posthumanista temprano, la proto-cf celebra su fundación a principios del siglo XIX (Yaszek 385). La crítica suele establecer la publicación de *Frankenstein, o El moderno Prometeo* (1818), de Mary Shelley, como punto de origen de la proto-cf, en consideración con el papel central de la imaginación científica en la novela (Roncaglia 33), que sería muy influyente para el desarrollo de la novela científica [*scientific romance*]. Como prueba de que la cf ha sido, desde el principio, una literatura “híbrida” basada en una consideración del género mucho más flexible de lo que a menudo se reconoce, ofrecemos el hecho de que la designación “novela científica” se utilizó para referirse tanto a las obras de ciencia ficción “dura” de H.G. Wells (Atwood, *Burning* 3) como a las aventuras de Verne, cuyo lugar en el canon de la ciencia ficción sigue, sin embargo, cuestionándose (Roberts 129).

La crítica ha tendido asimismo a exagerar hasta qué punto la primera ciencia ficción y ficción especulativa se ocuparon de reflejar el avance de las “ciencias duras” (como la ingeniería), dejando a un lado el desarrollo de las “ciencias blandas” (como la biología). De hecho, otro importante punto de encuentro entre la primera ciencia ficción y el pensamiento antihumanista del que emana el posthumanismo es el estudio de la naturaleza. Entre otros hechos, la publicación de la obra *El origen de las especies* (1859) radicó en una mayor atención del discurso científico hacia los campos de la biología, la psicología y la ecología, cuyos cambios también se recogen en la imaginación literaria de los siglos XIX y XX. Esto dio lugar a subgéneros como la fantasía evolutiva, un pariente cercano de la utopía (Ablon Cole 90), que es también parte fundamental de la genealogía posthumanista (Hauskeller 101).

En conjunto, parece que el siglo XIX inaugura en Occidente un periodo en el que la literatura se centra en retratar la vida “más allá y a través de la frontera de lo humano” (Koegler 1)¹, con la peculiaridad de que el límite de lo humano se desplaza o se flexibiliza (1) a lo largo de dos ejes principales de lo no humano: el “otro” natural y el “otro” tecnológico. El desarrollo de la ficción especulativa, pues, está ligado a una mayor intervención humana en el entorno material, y a la consideración, dentro de la ficción, del potencial de estas transformaciones materiales para cambiar “radicalmente” el mundo y, de este modo, “modificar las relaciones humanas y crear futuros nuevos” (Yaszek 385). El potencial transformador de estos acontecimientos es histórico debido a la mayor escala de la intervención en el entorno y a la magnitud de las implicaciones epistémicas que esta intervención tendría a partir del siglo XIX. A lo largo de los siglos, estos hilos se seguirán entrecruzando, uniendo con mayor fuerza las historias de la innovación, la ecología, el pensamiento crítico y la literatura.

¹ All translations my own.

Otra prueba de la estrecha relación entre el pensamiento posthumanista y la ciencia ficción se encuentra en la propia genealogía del posthumanismo. Francesca Ferrando señala cómo el posthumanismo crítico y cultural, y por extensión el posthumanismo filosófico, es un desarrollo de la crítica literaria (2). Asimismo, el transhumanismo también tiene sus orígenes en literatura, en la obra del biólogo evolutivo Julian Huxley (29), hermano de uno de los padres de la distopía clásica, Aldous Huxley. Las intersecciones que pueden señalarse entre la historia de la filosofía posthumanista, la literatura de ciencia ficción y la crítica literaria han llevado, de hecho, a que en las últimas décadas aparezca un nuevo espacio dentro de los estudios literarios que ha dado en llamarse “crítica literaria posthumanista” y que se ha dedicado principalmente a analizar las narrativas de ficción especulativa. En este campo de estudio, la transdisciplinariedad emerge como una herramienta epistémica y metodológica fundamental (Braidotti, *PK* 133; Lau 347). De ahí la insistencia en abordar la tecnología y el medio ambiente no solo como objetos representados dentro de la literatura, sino como problemas más amplios para el conocimiento y la sociedad con la capacidad de modificar las prácticas creativas y críticas en sí mismas, que tienen, a su vez, consecuencias materiales para el abordaje de tecnología y medio ambiente más allá de la literatura.

1.1.1. ¿Qué posthumanismo y por qué?

Es necesario realizar aquí una distinción crucial entre “lo posthumano” y “las posthumanidades” o “la/s filosofía/s posthumanista/s.” La condición o convergencia posthumana refiere al hecho de que “‘nosotros’—los habitantes humanos y no humanos de este planeta—nos encontramos ahora mismo entre la Cuarta Revolución Industrial y la Sexta Extinción” (Braidotti, *PK* 2). Por tanto, la condición posthumana refiere a sujetos situados en distinta medida, pero comúnmente, dentro de procesos multiescales como

el cambio climático y el desarrollo tecnológico. El “posthumanismo” ha servido, entonces, como un término general que en las últimas tres décadas ha recogido distintas corrientes de pensamiento, y que ahora sufre un cierto exceso semántico que, no obstante, puede interpretarse positivamente como una representación de la riqueza del mismo. En aras de la claridad, podemos diferenciar dos grandes escuelas dentro del panorama posthumanista: el posthumanismo crítico, encabezado por Rosi Braidotti, Francesca Ferrando, Roberto Marchesini y Cary Wolfe, entre otros; y el transhumanismo, liderado por Nick Bostrom, Max More, Natasha Vita-More, Hans Moravec y Ray Kurzweil. En términos generales, el posthumanismo crítico rompe con la concepción humanista del sujeto, y se considera post-antropocéntrico y no dualista, es decir, que rechaza la supremacía de *Anthropos* así como la contraposición de naturaleza y cultura, natural y artificial, sujeto y objeto, etc. Por el contrario, el transhumanismo se declara heredero del legado humanista y mantiene la perspectiva antropocéntrica y dualista que, en general, ha servido para defender una suerte de determinismo tecnológico que debe garantizar la evolución de lo humano hacia lo posthumano (cronológicamente: aquello que viene tras lo humano), una especie materialmente superior pero, al mismo tiempo, posiblemente desencarnada. Por el contrario, el posthumanismo crítico se desvincula de esta inevitabilidad cronológica y sostiene que es probable que el ser humano siempre haya sido posthumano, porque no todos los miembros de la especie han respondido siempre a la concepción normativa de lo humano (Braidotti, *TP* 1), o porque, como mínimo, es posible argumentar que el posthumanismo sufre de la paradoja semántica del prefijo *post-*, por lo que existe de manera simultánea “antes y después del humanismo” (Wolfe xv-xvi).

Lo que resulta fundamental a la cuestión de lo posthumano es que ha sido tanto una preocupación teórica como un “asunto para la ficción” (Badmington 376). En

particular, la ficción especulativa ha sido una gran impulsora del debate posthumanista, ya que esta ficción sirve de “mecanismo primario . . . que utiliza la cultura [occidental] para imaginar su futuro” (Milner 77). Esta imaginación a futuro es otro punto de encuentro clave de la teoría posthumanista y las obras de ciencia ficción y ficción especulativa, especialmente en un contexto globalizado de mediación tecnológica y precariedad medioambiental. Dado que los relatos de ciencia ficción y ficción especulativa pueden adoptar distintos roles para con la sociedad en la que se generan (recrear momentos centrales de la historia de la humanidad, aleccionar sobre el presente, servir de laboratorio social...), estos ayudan a desentramar las complejas relaciones espaciotemporales que unen la Historia y la historia, relacionando así la creación literaria con la creación social. Esta es una conexión que ha quedado por establecida en la literatura canadiense (Atwood, *Burning* 13) y en la filosofía posthumanista (Haraway, *Staying* 101), constituyéndose así en un argumento de peso para un enfoque más serio y exhaustivo al género de la cf, al que esta tesis apunta.

1.2 HIPÓTESIS DE TRABAJO

Hasta ahora, nos hemos referido independiente, pero indistintamente, a la “ciencia ficción,” “cf” y “ficción especulativa.” En las publicaciones que se incluyen en esta tesis y en la investigación realizada en los últimos cinco años, se ha trabajado con estas formulaciones como conceptos separados, a menudo equiparando “cf” y “ciencia ficción.” Sin embargo, tras la revisión de las publicaciones que precede a la configuración de esta tesis, se ha hecho evidente la necesidad de replantear esta concepción rígida del género literario. Aunque, como se ha señalado, esta ha sido fundamental para la investigación que acompaña a estas páginas, en consonancia con el espíritu no dualista de la crítica posthumanista en la que se sustentan, parece sensato abogar por una manera

más maleable de entender el género, que las fuentes primarias que aquí consideramos pueden ayudarnos a dilucidar, y que, como hemos visto, se basa en un precedente histórico.

Esta tesis recoge, con Mussgnug, la idea de que entender el género de forma posthumanista, como modulaciones de “variables en un continuo” (Braidotti, “Intensive 47), puede ayudarnos a “concebir la forma estética como un proceso constante de despliegue, revisión y ajuste a distintos contextos espaciotemporales” (Mussgnug 3), lo que apunta, además, a la función diagnóstica y satírica del género de la ciencia ficción y la ficción especulativa. Este acercamiento al género desde los procesos del devenir desafía “las clasificaciones de género canónicas e instaura un cierto paralelismo entre las artes, las ciencias y el pensamiento conceptual” (Braidotti, “Intensive” 46). En un desplazamiento crítico que pretende buscar formas más inclusivas de trabajar con las fuentes primarias, esta tesis ha optado por utilizar la denominación *SFF*, “ciencia ficción, ficción especulativa y ficción fantástica,” por sus siglas en inglés, que aparece en el título y se utilizará de ahora en adelante. Esta es una denominación que ha ido ganando adeptos entre los críticos de esta literatura, y que se engloba todas aquellas ficciones no miméticas que tienen que ver, a grandes rasgos, con el desarrollo de las nuevas tecnologías y sus consecuencias, pero también con la elaboración narrativa en tiempos de crisis y, por tanto, con la creación de historias y mitologías que inauguren y sustenten nuevos futuros. Aunque algunos teóricos destacados de la *SFF*, como Suvin, hayan excluido el mito, el cuento y la fantasía del género (8), se podría decir que todos ellos están presentes en cierta medida, si no en la ciencia ficción “dura,” en la ficción especulativa tal y como la entiende Atwood. Además, en la medida en que existe una relación entre “religiosidad, espiritualidad y fantasía” (Milner 83), y en que la ciencia ficción y la ficción especulativa se ocupan de diferentes maneras de la creación de mitos, es difícil seguir manteniendo

una distinción rígida entre ciencia ficción, ficción especulativa y fantasía. De hecho, el novelista de *SFF* y crítico literario China Miéville ha afirmado es más apropiado considerar la ciencia ficción “como un subconjunto de la fantasía en tanto que modalidad literaria” (43), socavando cualquier distinción de género inamovible.

Esta tesis también presupone que la generación de cartografías es una herramienta indispensable para el estudio de la ficción contemporánea y, más concretamente, de la literatura canadiense, en tanto se pueden establecer lazos entre la cartografía tal y como la entiende el pensamiento posthumanista y tal y como aparece en la *SFF* y crítica literaria canadiense. En la literatura canadiense, conocer el propio espacio deviene en un asunto de supervivencia, no solo porque la supervivencia ha sido una de las preocupaciones principales de los colonos en tierras canadienses frente a un territorio desconocido y peligroso (Atwood, *Survival* 27) sino también porque la falta de consideración de la literatura nacional como distintamente canadiense corre el riesgo de diluirla en un corpus norteamericano indiferenciado, restándole así importancia dentro de su contexto de producción (xviii-xix). Esta preocupación por el espacio se refleja en las fuentes primarias de esta tesis, que tratan el desplazarse por el territorio como una cuestión de supervivencia: es el motivo del viaje lo que hace avanzar simultáneamente a los personajes y a las tramas. Aunque estos viajes parten de otras tradiciones narrativas, como el *Bildungsroman* o la novela de aventuras, las novelas estudiadas van más allá de la perspectiva antropocéntrica clásica y desplazan al observador humano para hacer hincapié en la unión de los futuros humanos, tecnológicos y medioambientales. De hecho, en algunas novelas, como *The Tiger Flu*, no hay ningún personaje humano, e incluso *The Heart Goes Last*, que no tiene sino personajes humanos, reflexiona sobre la creciente precariedad de las distinciones ontológicas en el contexto social actual.

En un prólogo más reciente a *Survival*, Atwood también ha sostenido que, aunque antes, para la literatura canadiense, fuera fundamental preguntar “¿Dónde estamos?,” en la actualidad es quizá más apremiante discutir “¿Quiénes somos?” (xiii). Esto no significa que deje de ser importante considerar la relación entre el territorio y la literatura, sino que se debe ampliar lo que se entiende por identidad y sujeto en el contexto de crisis actual, que las novelas reflejan. Los aspectos no humanos de estas ficciones—desde sus personajes hasta sus escenarios—también se hacen eco de la eterna pregunta de la filosofía posthumanista: cuando hablamos de “nosotros,” ¿tenemos claro a quién nos referimos? ¿Quiénes somos “nosotros” y quién o qué es lo “humano”? (Braidotti, *TP* 1). Esta es una nueva amplitud de miras que las novelas también reflejan formalmente a través del uso de diferentes puntos de vista. La única novela que se centra en la perspectiva de un solo personaje, *Oryx and Crake*, muestra este desdoblamiento formal al moverse del pasado al presente de forma extrañante, lo que permite a los lectores ser testigos de la magnitud de los cambios provocados, de un lado, por el cambio climático, y, del otro, por la pandemia que establece un nuevo orden mundial.

Si estos escenarios muestran hasta qué punto el espacio es fundamental para cualquier esfuerzo cartográfico, los distintos tiempos de las novelas también apuntan al hecho de que cualquier intento de elaborar un mapa supone reflejar un momento concreto. La ventaja de estas cartografías posthumanas, sin embargo, es que muestran cómo “espacio” y “tiempo” pueden relacionarse y representarse sin por ello fijarse de manera estricta. En *The Dialogic Imagination*, Mijaíl Bajtín n expone su definición de “cronotopo” y señala que “es precisamente el cronotopo lo que define las distinciones de género . . . El cronotopo, como categoría constitutiva formalmente, determina también en gran medida la imagen del hombre en la literatura. La imagen del hombre es intrínsecamente cronotópica” (85). Actualizando esta formulación para la convergencia

posthumana, podríamos decir que la literatura refleja la posición del ser humano, pero, en el contexto contemporáneo, este posicionamiento es distribuido, ya que el ser humano debe dar cuenta no solo de su propio lugar en el cosmos, sino de las muchas interdependencias que establece en su relación con otros agentes creadores de mundo (como, nuevamente, la tecnología y el medio ambiente), cuyo impacto se propaga a través del tiempo y el espacio. Esto explica por qué las seis novelas no solo se ocupan de la exploración del territorio, sino que hacen del tiempo uno de sus temas centrales. *Oryx and Crake*, por ejemplo, empieza y termina con referencias al tiempo y *The Tiger Flu* reflexiona constantemente sobre las diferencias entre el presente narrativo y el tiempo pasado. En *The Heart Goes Last* y *Midnight Robber*, el tiempo es también un motivo central: *The Heart Goes Last* se centra en una comunidad retrotópica (Bauman 8), y *Midnight Robber* actualiza la mitología caribeña dentro de un contexto futurista, demostrando la actualización del pasado en el presente y la consiguiente configuración del futuro que esta actualización permite.

Estos procesos, sin embargo, no solo reflejan lo permeable de los límites cronotópicos (en línea con los permeables límites genéricos de la *SFF*), sino que, como señala Bajtín, apuntan hacia la negociación de la figura central de la literatura, el ser humano. El cronotopo multidimensional de las novelas coincide con el tiempo “fracturado” e igualmente “multidimensional” (Braidotti, “A Theoretical” 22) del posthumanismo crítico, que registra en el presente “aquello que estamos dejando de ser y aquello en lo que estamos en proceso de convertirnos” (22). Es un reconocimiento de que, aunque la temporalidad está “ligada” tanto a “lo posthumano” (Clarke 143) como a la literatura en tanto que uno de sus elementos constitutivos (Bajtín 85), es decir, a los mundos materiales y simbólicos del ser humano, esto no quiere decir que haya que volver por fuerza a “grandes o grotescas narrativas de superación humana” (Clarke, “The

Nonhuman” 143). Por el contrario, los mundos permeables de las novelas retratan la supervivencia (contra las pandemias, los grandes conglomerados tecnológicos, los elementos, el apocalipsis, etc.) como un acontecimiento posthumano, lo que significa que requiere el esfuerzo colectivo de muchos agentes heterogéneos distribuidos a través del espacio y el tiempo.

1.3. OBJETIVOS

Como hemos apuntado, partimos de la premisa de que las publicaciones recogidas en este trabajo revelan distintas aproximaciones al concepto de “lo posthumano” a partir de hipótesis y desarrollos genéricos dentro del campo de la ficción especulativa y ciencia ficción (*SFF*). Leídas en el orden en que se presentan, estas tres publicaciones conforman el objetivo principal de la tesis, que es el de elaborar una cartografía inicial de las distintas posturas, temas y fórmulas estéticas adoptadas por los autores de las fuentes primarias seleccionadas con respecto a la categoría de lo posthumano. Las publicaciones seleccionadas pretenden reflejar y establecer el papel clave de la *SFF* contemporánea en Canadá para reflexionar sobre el pasado, el presente y el futuro en el contexto de lo posthumano, así como sus distintas implicaciones en términos de raza, género y precariedad, que se distribuye de manera desigual en un contexto de crisis planetaria que engloba la crisis climática y las peores consecuencias del desarrollo tecnológico y socioeconómico.

1.4. CONCLUSIONES PRINCIPALES

Esta tesis llama a la consideración de la *SFF* desde un punto de vista más flexible con la noción de género literario. Esto no es solo más coherente para con el marco posthumanista que subyace a las publicaciones, sino que también es una estrategia para el

descubrimiento de nuevas asociaciones entre el posthumanismo y la *SFF*. Tanto el posthumanismo (Braidotti, *PK 2*) como los géneros literarios (“Intensive” 47) funcionan como herramientas de navegación. La cartografía es central al posthumanismo crítico, donde sirve de herramienta metodológica fundamental. Esta permite conformar “un relato teórico, políticamente fundamentado, del presente, que rastrea la producción del conocimiento y de la subjetividad” (Braidotti, “A Theoretical” 3) y que aporta “figuraciones alternativas o *personae* conceptuales para las subjetividades que se construyen en la actualidad” (4), entendiendo como “figuración” una “dramatización situada y no normativa de los procesos del devenir” (4). Esto significa que la elaboración de cartografías nos permite seguir los desarrollos críticos y creativos de la sociedad tanto en el mundo real como en entornos imaginarios, lo que, a su vez, nos permite trazar los cambios acaecidos en entornos diversos, como el tecnológico y el medioambiental. Esta labor de trazado o planificación nos recuerda los distintos posibles usos de la *SFF*, a saber, advertencia, laboratorio social, imaginación generativa, etcétera, que demuestran la creación de mundos dentro y fuera de la literatura es un evento bidireccional: “hacer mundo” significa imaginar futuros nuevos tanto en la literatura como en el pensamiento crítico, pero también implica trabajar para su actualización fuera del papel.

Además, esta cartografía llama a una consideración más detallada de cómo la escritura mal llamada “periférica” o “no canónica” debe leerse en paralelo con aquella que emana del centro del panorama literario canadiense. Este es un desarrollo particularmente importante para géneros arrinconados con respecto a los circuitos literarios de prestigio, como la *SFF*, ya que esta marginalización ejerce una doble violencia epistémica: por una parte, niega la medida en que el género de la *SFF* se ha basado la historia de la colonización y las historias de explotación en general (Grewell 26), y por otra, impide que se considere seriamente a obras y escritores de gran valor

literario en base a sus convenciones genéricas preferentes. Es la misma Margaret Atwood quien advierte de que leer únicamente a “extranjeros muertos” no hace sino “reforzar la creencia de que la literatura solo puede ser obra de extranjeros muertos” (*Survival* 8) y de que el estudio de cualquier literatura “debiera de ser comparativo” (10). De este modo, considerar aptas para el estudio académico solo aquellas obras de escritores consagrados, juzgados según los estándares actuales de canonicidad (que excluyen ciertas convenciones genéricas), reproduce dentro de la crítica literaria los mismos prejuicios que deberían quedar obsoletos dentro de la convergencia posthumana, contradiciendo además el manifiesto compromiso que estas obras tienen con lo posthumano.

Para contrarrestar lo que supone un cierto grado de miopía crítica, se propone como necesario abordar el conocimiento desde un punto de vista multiepistémico (Kuokkanen 57) y se avanza, asimismo, un compromiso palimpséstico con la cartografía y la genealogía para que resulten realmente funcionales como herramientas para el análisis posthumanista. No basta con trazar una única cartografía, sino que hay que seguir construyéndolas, superponerlas y establecer líneas de comunicación entre ellas, de forma que los patrones de movimiento que revelan (centrales para la teoría crítica así como para la literatura canadiense) puedan ser trazados y utilizados como herramientas de navegación. Estas lagunas dentro de los estudios de la *SFF* y el pensamiento posthumanista deben abordarse para producir cambios cuantitativos y cualitativos en el pensamiento crítico (en cualquiera de sus modalidades), ya que uno sin el otro resulta insuficiente para lograr avances conceptuales dentro de la convergencia posthumana (Braidotti, *PK* 125).

2. INTRODUCTION

This doctoral dissertation is submitted at the University of Salamanca in the format of Compilation Thesis or collection of previously published papers. The three articles here collected relate to the doctoral research project titled “A Critical Analysis of the Representations of the Posthuman in Contemporary Canadian Speculative Fiction,” financed by the Spanish Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture (current Spanish Ministry of Universities) by means of a national competitive predoctoral scholarship FPU (*Formación del Profesorado Universitario*) during the years 2019-2023. Initial funding was also secured through a competitive scholarship financed by the University of Salamanca and Santander Bank (2018-2019). Both scholarships have been tied to research and teaching duties at the Department of English Studies of the University of Salamanca. Research for this dissertation has also been carried out across three research stays at the Universities of Bergamo, Milan (La Statale) and Gießen (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen), respectively.

The primary sources analysed in the here compiled pieces reveal different approaches to the concept of ‘the posthuman’ from the generic hypotheses and developments within the field of speculative and science fiction studies. Read in the presented order, these three pieces fulfil the thesis’s overall aim of elaborating an initial cartography of the different positions, themes and aesthetic formulae adopted by the authors of the selected primary sources. In the process, I suggest that the selected articles establish the key role of contemporary speculative and science fiction in Canada for reflection on the past, present and future within the context of the posthuman and its various implications in terms of race, gender, and the differentially distributed precarity of global critical environments, including those regarding the climate crisis as well as socioeconomic and technological developments.

2.1. CONTEXT AND ANTECEDENTS

As a specialized field of knowledge, posthuman scholarship took flight in the decade of the 1990s with the emergence of new information technologies, most notably the WWW (Ferrando 3), although its antecedents hark back to the more general computational revolution of the 1970s (Hayles 56, 75) and, before that time, to different modes of anti-Humanist critique as well as precedents of structuralist and post-structuralist criticism that can be traced back to early modernism in the 19th century (Eagleton 121; Sheehan, x). Although technological advancements, and the social consequences thereof, have not been the sole focus of posthumanist inquiry, its strong connection with the appearance of new technologies allows us to draw parallels with the emergence of another area of literary production that follows a similar trajectory and is likewise tied to the rise of modernity: science fiction narratives. Like early posthumanist thought, proto-sf also celebrates its foundational moment in the early 19th century (Yaszek 385). Scholars often establish the publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) as a point of origin for proto-sf in light of the central role of the scientific imagination in the novel (Roncaglia 33), which would then inform the genre of the scientific romance. Proving that sf has, from the onset, been a 'hybrid' literature resting on a much more pliable consideration of genre that is often acknowledged, the term "scientific romance" was equally applied to the 'hard' sf works of H.G. Wells (Atwood, *Burning* 3) and to the adventure tales of Jules Verne, whose place in the sf canon is nevertheless often contested (Roberts 129).

Critics also often overstate the extent to which the early science and speculative fiction narratives concerned themselves with advancements within the 'hard' technological sciences, overlooking their well-recorded preoccupation with matters of biology and the 'soft' life sciences. Indeed, another important point of encounter of early

sf and anti-Humanist thought beyond technological developments is the study of nature. The publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and the subsequent increase in attention paid within scientific discourse to the fields of biology, psychology, and ecology also fed the literary imagination of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, spawning such subgenres as the evolutionary fantasy, with strong genealogical ties to the utopia (Ablon Cole 90), another close relative of the posthuman (Hauskeller 101).

Taken together, for the West, the nineteenth century seems to mark a period in which literature focuses on portraying "life beyond and across the edges of humanity" (Koegler 1) with the crucial characteristic that boundaries are either displaced or made flexible (1) along two main axes of the non-human: the natural and the technological. The development of speculative fiction is tied to increased degrees of human intervention in the material environment and the imaginative exploration of how these material transformations can "radically" change the world and, in so doing, "change human relations and generate new futures" (Yaszek 385). The potential for transformation of these events is epochal because of the growing scale of the physical alterations to the environment as well as of the magnitude of its epistemic implications from the nineteenth century onwards. These echoes would only resonate louder in the coming centuries, further imbricating the stories of innovation, the ecology, critical thinking, and literature.

Further proof of the close relationship between posthumanist thought and science fictional narratives is to be found in the very genealogy of posthumanism. Francesca Ferrando notes how critical and cultural posthumanism, and by extension philosophical posthumanism, are critical developments that arose from literary criticism (2). Transhumanism, too, can be traced back to the literary sphere, in the work of evolutionary biologist Julian Huxley (29), brother of renowned dystopia writer Aldous Huxley. The many intersections that can be traced between the stories of posthumanist philosophy,

science fiction literature and literary scholarship have, in fact, led in recent decades to a fast-growing literary studies niche—mostly devoted to speculative fiction narratives—that may be termed ‘posthuman literary criticism.’ In this field of study, transdisciplinarity emerges as a fundamental epistemic and methodological tool (Braidotti, *PK* 133; Lau 347), hence the insistence on addressing technology and the environment not merely as objects within literary representation, but as broader problems for knowledge and society that shape creative and critical practices in themselves, and which have, in turn, material consequences for the extratextual engagement with both.

2.1.1. What Posthuman? Why?

A crucial initial distinction needs to be made between ‘the posthuman’ and ‘the posthumanities’ or ‘posthumanist philosophy/ies.’ The posthuman condition or convergence refers to the fact that “‘we’—the human and non-human inhabitants of this particular planet—are currently positioned between the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Sixth Extinction” (Braidotti, *PK* 2). It therefore speaks of variously situated subjects differentially, but commonly, intersected by multiscalar processes (climate change, technological advancement). ‘Posthumanism,’ on its part, has for the last three decades served as an umbrella term under which different strands or philosophical inquiry have fallen, and now suffers of a sort of nominative excess that can nevertheless be considered positive, as it reflects the richness of the field. A very small sample of approaches to the posthuman includes “compostism” (Haraway, *Staying* 101), “critical posthumanism” (Braidotti, *TP* 38), “the cybernetic posthuman” (Hayles 5), “extropianism” (More 6), “multi-species posthumanism” (Fetherston 101), “the neocybernetic posthuman” (Clarke 193), “philosophical posthumanism” (Ferrando 2), “speculative posthumanism” (Roden 398), “techno-posthumanism” (Fetherston 101) and “transhumanism” (Bostrom 2). For

the sake of clarity, we may differentiate two broad schools within the posthumanist landscape: the critical posthumanist one, spearheaded by the likes of Rosi Braidotti, Francesca Ferrando, Roberto Marchesini, and Cary Wolfe; and the transhumanist, led by Nick Bostrom, Max More, Natasha Vita-More, Hans Moravec, and Ray Kurzweil. Generally speaking, critical posthumanism departs from the Humanist legacy and the Humanist conception of the subject, is post- (or de-) anthropocentric and post-dualist, i.e. it rejects Humanist binary oppositions such as nature and culture, natural and artificial, subject and object, etc. Transhumanism, by contrast, declares itself heir to the Humanist legacy, and remains dualistic and anthropocentric. The unyielding commitment to anthropocentrism allows transhumanists to argue for a kind of technological determinism that will ensure the evolution of the human into a posthuman (chronologically speaking: after the human) species that is materially superior but also potentially disembodied; in opposition, critical posthumanists argue that we might have always been posthuman because we have never been (only or fully) human (Braidotti, *TP* 1) or, if nothing else, because posthumanism suffers from the paradox embedded in its prefix, and so it comes simultaneously “before and after humanism” (Wolfe xv-xvi).

Crucially, posthumanism has been “as much a matter of theory as . . . a question of fiction” (Badmington 376). Irrespective of where one’s sympathies may lie with respect to the different strands of the posthuman, narrative has been at the center of their critical and theoretical developments. Fatefully, sf and speculative fiction narratives have driven the posthumanist debate, because sf functions as “a primary mechanism—perhaps *the* primary mechanism—by which [Western] culture imagines its possible futures” (Milner 77, emphasis in original). Concerns with futurity, and the imagination of the future, are another key point where posthumanist theory and works of science and speculative fiction meet, particularly in a contemporary context of high globalised

technological mediation and precarious environmental outcomes. Because sf narratives can take on different roles—as re-renderings of critical historical moments, cautionary tales about the present, and self-contained laboratories for social forecasting—they contribute to unearthing the complex time relationships that bind history- and story-telling, and so relate worldmaking with wordmaking. This connection has already been made in Canadian literature (Atwood, *Burning* 13) and in posthumanist philosophy (Haraway, *Staying* 101), and so presents a strong case for a more serious and comprehensive approach to the sf genre, which this dissertation points at.

2.1.2. The Question of Genre

In the earlier pages, I have independently, but at times indistinctly, worked with the different denominations ‘science fiction,’ ‘sf’ and ‘speculative fiction.’ In the articles included in this dissertation and in my research over the last five years, I have worked with ‘science fiction’ and ‘speculative fiction’ as separate concepts, and have often equated ‘sf’ with the former. After having reviewed my past research for this compilation, however, the need has become apparent to revise these conceptions of literary genre. Although they have been, as noted, foundational to the research in this pieces, in line with the non-dualistic spirit of posthumanist inquiry that is also held throughout these chapters and articles, it seems wise to argue for a more pliable understanding of genre, which the primary sources analysed in this project can help us elucidate and which, as we have noted in our initial remarks, has historical precedents.

In the publications that make up this collection, we can individuate three different points of the speculative/science fiction spectrum that correspond with the different primary sources: first, Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy and her standalone novel

The Heart Goes Last; second, Larissa Lai's *The Tiger Flu*; and third, Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber*.

Margaret Atwood has been one of the firm proponents of the speculative/science fiction division, notably arguing for it against sf giant Ursula K. Le Guin. Atwood notes that, for her, "science fiction" includes "books that . . . [treat of] things that could not possibly happen," whereas "speculative fiction" means . . . things that really could happen but just hadn't completely happened when the authors wrote the books" (*In Other* 6). Atwood places her own books in this second category: "no Martians" (6). Accordingly, Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* would be unambiguously located within science fiction, as the novel concerns itself with space travel and truly 'otherworldly' other worlds—featuring Hopkinson's equivalent of Atwood's sf tell-tale "Martians." The extent to which such a clear-cut distinction is applicable to Lai's novel, however, is debatable, portraying to a similar degree, as it does, unlikely future technologies (such as mind uploading) and current biotechnological possibilities (like cloning). Atwood has admitted, however, that "[b]endiness of terminology, literary gene-swapping, and inter-genre visiting has been going in the SF world—loosely defined—for some time" (*In Other* 7), betraying the difficulty of any scholarly agreement, let alone rigid taxonomy, on the matter: "what Le Guin means by 'science fiction' is what I mean by 'speculative fiction,' and what she means by 'fantasy' would include some of what I mean by 'science fiction'" (7).

To add to the debate, generic concerns have not been foreign to posthumanist scholarship, which, as has previously been shown, has always dealt in some form or another with literature and literary criticism. In the span of a decade, Braidotti's call to understand narrative genre as modulations of "variables existing along a continuum" ("Intensive" 47) has been picked up by literary scholars such as Florian Mussgnug, who not only agrees but observes that, by way of these changes in perspective "is in the process

of becoming once again a central critical concept” (1). According to Mussgnug, this specific approach to genre as modulations “helps us conceive aesthetic form as a process of constant unfolding, revision and adjustment to different spatiotemporal contexts” (3), which, incidentally, directly points towards the diagnostic and satiric function of the science and speculative fiction genre. It also affirms that a focus on the processes of becoming as relevant for literary scholarship “[defies] the canonical genre classifications and install[s] a sort of parallelism between the arts, sciences, and conceptual thinking” (Braidotti, “Intensive” 46). This parallelism, which beckons the joint consideration of posthumanist critique, artistic creativity, and literary insight is also taken up by other prominent posthumanist scholars. Most notably, Donna Haraway—who has nevertheless moved away in recent years from the ‘posthumanist’ label (*Staying* 101)—has pointed to the cohabitation of “[s]cience fiction and science fact” (7), noting that sf also stands for “speculative feminism, science fantasy” and “speculative fabulation” (10), a correlation that she explores in speculative narratives of her own, “The Camille Stories” (134-168).

In a critical move in the direction of de-constructing labels and finding more inclusive forms of engaging with primary sources, this thesis has ultimately opted for the denomination ‘SFF’ or ‘Speculative/Science Fiction and Fantasy’ (also ‘Science Fiction, Fantasy, Speculative Fiction’), which appears in the title and will be used from now on. This is a label that has been gaining traction among literary scholars within this field, and which is used to incorporate the kinds of non-mimetic fiction that have to do, broadly, with the development of new technologies and consequences thereof, but also with the creation of new narratives in critical times and so, of histories and mythologies for new futures. Although some prominent critics, like Suvin, exclude myth, folktale and fantasy from the genre of science fiction (8), these are all arguably present to some extent, if not in science fiction ‘proper’ (i.e. classically defined), in speculative fiction as understood

by Atwood. Moreover, insofar as there is a connection between “religiosity, spirituality and fantasy” (Milner 83) and science and speculative fiction concern themselves with different forms of mythmaking, it is difficult to continue to uphold a hard boundary between science fiction, speculative fiction and fantasy. In fact, SFF novelist and literary critic China Miéville has argued that science fiction is “best considered a subset of a broader fantastic mode” (43), further undermining hard-set generic distinctions.

2.2. METHODOLOGY: CANADIAN MAPS, POSTHUMAN CARTOGRAPHIES

The emphasis on approaching SFF from this more flexible critical standpoint is not only more coherent from the point of view of the critical posthumanist framework that sustains the research, but it is also a strategic move that allows us to uncover even more associations between posthumanism and SFF. According to Braidotti, both the posthuman (*PK* 2) and artistic genres (“Intensive” 47) function as navigational tools. Mapping is a fundamental concern of critical posthuman scholarship, which hails cartographies as a major methodological tool. A cartography is “a theoretically-based and politically-informed account of the present that aims at tracking the production of knowledge and subjectivity” (Braidotti, “A Theoretical” 3). Cartographies “bring forth alternative figurations or *conceptual personae* for the kind of knowing subjects currently constructed” (4), where figurations stand for the situated, non-normative “dramatization of processes of becoming” (4). This means that the work of mapping allows us to trace the creative and critical developments of society in both real-world and imagined settings, which, in turn, allows us to chart possible changes in a broad range of subjects—from the human to the technological to the environmental. This work of planning or mapping ahead brings to mind the different possible uses of SFF that have been outlined in the previous section, showing “world-” “and word-making” to exist in a relationship that unfolds in

both directions: “worlds” exist within and without narrative, and “words” refer to storytelling as much as to critical thinking practices.

2.2.1. Cartography as Content and Cartography as Form: The Canadian SFF Chronotope

Productive intersections, then, can be traced between cartography as conceptualised in posthumanist thought and as is deployed in Canadian SFF and literary criticism. In Canadian literature, knowing one’s space becomes a question of survival, not only because survival preoccupied settlers in Canadian land, faced with vast and dangerous natural expanses (Atwood, *Survival* 27), but also because a lack of consideration of Canadian literature as distinctly Canadian risks the dilution of the national literature into a broader, undifferentiated North American corpus, thereby downplaying the significance of Canadian narrative within its production context (xviii-xix). This concern with space is reflected in the novels analysed in this dissertation, which all deal with movement and reconnaissance as a matter of survival. From Jimmy’s journey to the Paradise Dome in *Oryx and Crake* to Stan’s escape from Consilience in *The Heart Goes Last*, passing through Kirilow Groundsel’s crossing of the quarantine rings in *The Tiger Flu* and Tan-Tan’s exile to New Half-Way Tree in *Midnight Robber*, a number of necessary journeys move the characters, and so the plots, forward. Building on other traditions of narrative journeys, for instance the *Bildungsroman* or the adventure romance, these novels go beyond the classic anthropocentric perspective of the human observer to emphasise the interconnectedness of human, technological and environmental futures. Indeed, some of these novels, like *The Tiger Flu*, have no human protagonist at all, and even *The Heart Goes Last*, which features no uncanny techno-beings, still reflects on the ontological interchangeability of humans and machines, and the increasing precarity of boundaries in contemporary social conditions.

In a more recent prologue to *Survival*, Atwood also has argued that, though formerly, the most important question for Canadian literature was “Where is here?,” it is currently perhaps most pressing to address the question “Who are we?” (xxii). Lest of weakening her initial point about the connection between the land and identity, which I would argue is still relevant both in contemporary Canadian literature and in a general consideration of narratives as situated artifacts, I believe this speaks of the increasing need to broaden our understanding of identity in critical times, which the novels reflect. The nonhuman aspects of these narratives—from their characters to their settings and beyond—also echo the perennial question in posthumanist philosophy: who is the “we” that “we” seem to speak of so easily? Who is this “human”? (Braidotti, *TP* 1). The greater broadness of scope that these narratives present is also reflected formally in the novels through the changing narrative viewpoints: the only novel among the six with a single focaliser or narrator is *MaddAddam*’s first installment, *Oryx and Crake*, which nevertheless still moves from past to present in a defamiliarising move that allows readers to witness the full extent of the changes brought about by anthropogenic climate change, on the one hand, and the pandemic that establishes a new world order, on the other.

If the shifting settings point to the extent that space is, naturally, central to any cartographic endeavour, the changing temporalities of the novel also point to the fact that any attempt at mapmaking is necessarily reflective of a specific time. The advantage of these posthuman cartographies—both as a methodological framework for analysing and as a way of describing the novels—is that they show how ‘space-’ and ‘timemaking’ are both related, but neither need be fixed. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Mikhail Bakhtin puts forward his felicitous definition of ‘chronotope’ and notes that “it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions . . . The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as

well. The image of man is intrinsically chronotopic” (85). Updating this formulation for the posthuman age, we may say that literature reflects the situatedness of man, but, in contemporary times, this situatedness has become distributed as man has to account not only for its own place in the universe but for the many relational interdependencies with other world-making agents (such as, again, technology and the environment), whose impacts are propagated across time and space. This explains why not only exploring space, but questioning time, is also a central theme of the novels. *Oryx and Crake*, for instance, begins and ends with references to time: “Out of habit [Snowman] looks at his watch . . . A blank face is what it shows him: Zero hour” (Atwood, *O&C* 3); “Zero hour, Snowman thinks. Time to go” (433). *The Tiger Flu* is similarly preoccupied with differences between the present and the “time before,” not uncharacteristically, since, as post-apocalyptic narratives, in the *MaddAddam* trilogy and *The Tiger Flu* “[e]verything after the end, in order to gain, or borrow, meaning, must point back, lead back to [the apocalyptic event]; and everything before that . . . reconfigures itself into prologue and premonition” (Berger xi). Although not post-apocalyptic, *The Heart Goes Last* and *Midnight Robber* also make time a key motif: *The Heart Goes Last* has a retrotopian (Bauman 8) community at the center, and its last chapter functions as an epilogue that retrospectively re-frames the events in the novel; for its part, *Midnight Robber* updates Caribbean mythology for a SFF setting, and so is concerned with the way that folklore actualises the past in the present, and, in so doing, takes part in the configuration of the future.

These processes of actualisation, however, are not only reflective of permeable chronotopic boundaries (in line with the permeable generic boundaries of SFF) but, as Bakhtin himself notes, point towards the negotiation of that central figure of literature, man. The multi-dimensional chronotope of the novels falls in line with the “split”

(Braidotti, “A Theoretical” 22) and “multi-dimensional” (22) temporality of critical posthumanism that records in the present “what we are ceasing to be and what we are in the process of becoming” (22). It is a recognition that although temporality is “bound up” both “in the post- of the posthuman” (Clarke 143) and in literature as one of its constitutive elements (Bakhtin 85), that is, in the symbolic and material worlds of the human animal, this does not necessarily mean that its representations are doomed to “revert to a grand or grotesque narrative of human overcoming” (Clarke, “The Nonhuman” 143). Instead, the permeable worlds of the novels portray survival (against pandemics, corporations, the elements, the apocalypse) as a posthuman event, meaning that it requires the collective effort of many heterogeneous agents distributed across space and time.

2.3. CHOICE OF WORKS

As noted, this compilation includes articles that study Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy, Larissa Lai’s *The Tiger Flu*, and Nalo Hopkinson’s *Midnight Robber*, which are held as relevant novels for the analysis of posthuman themes and motifs. Because the overarching aim of this dissertation is to formulate what an initial cartography of the posthuman within Canadian SFF novels could look like, the articles selected seek to reflect the variety of Canada’s national SFF landscape in terms of authorship and canonicity, thematic scope, and, as mentioned, generic breadth. As regards the representation of the posthuman, an initial premise for the selection of the works is that it questioned the three central axes around which the posthuman is articulated: the human, the environment, and technology (Braidotti, *PK* 2). Although there are a number of other novels that could have been fruitfully analysed from the perspective of the posthuman, as we shall note later, the fact that they address these axes in isolation has not allowed their

integration into this dissertation, although more research is needed into the modulations of the representations of the posthuman, as well as of the imbalances in the representation of each of these thematic pillars in contemporary SFF.

As one of Canada's most prominent writers alive and one of the central ideologues of its national literature, Margaret Atwood cannot fail but find a place in such an effort, both as fiction writer and as literary critic. The widespread public and critical attention, as well as the ready availability of both her novels and analytical approaches thereto, go a long way towards explaining the comparative imbalance of critical attention that is paid in her favour within these articles. This is also explained by the fact that it is currently—now that all of its instalments have been published—impossible to consider any of the books in the *MaddAddam* trilogy without making recourse to the others, least of all because, in a favoured Atwoodian mode, the final book in the series compels the reader to re-interpret the previous two in its light. Furthermore, Margaret Atwood's advocacy for environmental concerns, astute commentary on technological developments and the dangers thereof, general prolificity, and strong focus on speculative fiction for the better part of forty years, have constructed a solid SFF corpus that must necessarily be integrated in any serious scholarly attempt to map the Canadian SFF landscape.

Among the corpus of Atwood's speculative fictions, the *MaddAddam* trilogy stands out a necessary inclusion for the consideration of the representations of the posthuman. In Braidotti and Hlavajova's comprehensive *Posthuman Glossary*, for instance, the *MaddAddam* trilogy features thrice (Iovino 233; Lau 348; Vermeulen 127), not unsurprisingly, since scholarship on *MaddAddam* has steadily been published since the completion of the series ten years ago, testifying to its relevance within the contemporary SFF canon. The themes of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, punctuated by a technological and ecological apocalypse, are also particularly relevant to posthumanist

theory, as the trilogy questions not only what makes (or breaks) a human, but what are the consequences of our exploitative relationship with the environment as well as of a cynical use of technology. Furthermore, it questions what true recklessness towards the future looks like: could perhaps the truly ethical alternative to our contemporary state of permacrisis be that of cutting out the Anthropos of anthropogenic climate change and systemic inequality? Is violence against man greater or lesser than the violence man exerts?

In comparison to the *MaddAddam* trilogy, *The Heart Goes Last* has received much less critical attention, in particular from the point of view of the posthuman. Indeed, at surface, its more ‘realistic’ premise of economic collapse, human protagonists, and focus on classic humanistic questions like the possibility of free will, would make it harder to sustain the claim that it is a truly ‘posthuman’ novel. The strongest argument for that case is, I believe, not that it pays particular attention to one or other of the posthumanist thematic *foci* (like climate change or technological mismanagement), but that it is subtly, but closely, able to show the central interconnectedness of events that leads simultaneously to social collapse, environmental degradation, and technological misuse. This it also does, like the *MaddAddam* trilogy, by closely tying the futures of the individual characters. This provides a satisfying narrative resolution to a Shakespearean comedy of errors while upholding the intrinsic relationality of individuals as the “better” value, “cleaner” solution (Atwood, *The Heart* 361) to dire scenarios within a social context that relies on the logic of economic profit.

The second and third contributions to this volume, which examine, respectively, *The Tiger Flu* and *Midnight Robber*, seek to broaden the horizons of the initial cartography of Atwood’s works. These novels add to this endeavour the viewpoint of diasporic SFF writers, providing Chinese- and Caribbean-Canadian perspectives on

Canada as well as on the SFF tradition. Against widespread claims that SFF is, all in all, a progressive genre, the reactionary story of SFF (Santesso 139) begs considering diasporic perspectives to account for the ways in which non-Western traditions and postcolonial nations have enriched the SFF tradition not just with their autochthonous SFF production, but by integrating their cultural capital into the mainstream SFF discourse, displacing hegemonic discourses and reclaiming a place in the SFF canon for marginalised subjectivities. This both *The Tiger Flu* and *Midnight Robber* do effectively by portraying racial and gender diversity as well as by bringing queer affects to the fore, all of which are either downplayed or conspicuously missing from Margaret Atwood's novels.

Like the *MaddAddam* books, *The Tiger Flu* is an obvious contender when considering representations of posthumanism in contemporary Canadian SFF, not least because, as mentioned, it has no truly human protagonists: both Kirilow Groundsel and Kora Ko, the focalisers of the narration, are members of a clan of genetically-altered clones, and so, in spite of having human DNA, stretch the limits of what can be biologically considered 'human' as such. From its onset, the novel presents the question of what quantitative and/or qualitative changes are necessary to consider someone more- or other-than-human, especially when the protagonist non-humans behave in more humane ways than their creators, fostering co-operation and solidarity against a backdrop of competitiveness and revenge. Like *MaddAddam*, it also presents a context of environmental catastrophe, heightened by the social unrest caused by the tiger flu pandemic, as well as the inequalities fostered by corporations that push high-tech solutions (like a digital 'second life' as an uploaded consciousness) to frightened and vulnerable people.

Midnight Robber departs from the same high-technology context of *The Tiger Flu*, in a new planet surveilled by a disembodied artificial intelligence that all inhabitants can hear. However, it soon moves to a different setting of vast natural expanses where the AI can't reach. In this way, *Midnight Robber* reproduces the parallel exploration of technology and the environment of *The Tiger Flu* and the *MaddAddam* trilogy that makes them suited for posthumanist analysis. As the more 'science-fictional' of the novels, *Midnight Robber* also includes a variety of non-human species, and explores what the consequences of human intervention of these non-human environments can be. It therefore also picks up on the themes of contamination and virality, since it is ultimately human violence that drives the expulsion of the human protagonist from the non-human settlements. Against cleanliness, segregation and purity, however, *Midnight Robber* seems to point, again, to hybridizing paradigms of subjectivity and techno-ecological agency. This it does by showing how social and techno-ecological justice are tied in the story of its protagonist, who kills her father in self-defence but, taking one life and saving two (Hopkinson, 327), she redeems herself and gives birth to a child who is able to bridge the distance between the first planet of technology and the second planet of nature.

The time is high to consider more closely how so-called 'peripheral' or 'non-canonical' writers can be read in parallel—be seen to converse—with established figures in the Canadian literary landscape. This is particularly important in already marginalised genres like SFF, often sidelined from the most prestigious literary circuits, because the exclusion of so-called 'minority' perspectives exerts a double epistemic violence: it negates how the histories of colonisation and exploitation have been foundational to the SFF genre (Grewell 26), and it forecloses the consideration of serious writers as poignant social critics and transmitters of culture on the basis of their preferred generic framework. Atwood herself proclaims that only reading "the work of dead foreigners" does nothing

but “reinforce the notion that literature can be written only by dead foreigners” (*Survival* 8) and that the study of any literature “ought to be comparative” (10). By the same token, considering fit for scholarly attention only works by established writers, judged on their merits by current standards for canonicity—which include the generic conventions of their works—, featuring only heterosexual kinships and affects, reproduces in literary criticism the same social and biological biases that the posthuman convergence ought to render obsolete, thus contradicting, too, the overt engagement of these works with key posthumanist concerns.

A point of note within this cartography is that, for its sought diversity of viewpoints, it does not include any work written by a man, even when there are recent and relevant examples of Canadian SFF written by male authors, such as Wayne Compton’s *The Outer Harbour* (2014) and Waubgeshig Rice’s *Moon of the Crusted Snow* (2018)—incidentally, the latter would have added an important Indigenous perspective on Canada that also does not feature in this cartography. Part of the reason why there are no male authors in this cartography is because male writers are already arguably overrepresented in SFF literary criticism, and so attending to SFF production by women and gender non-conforming writers corrects a critical imbalance. Another reason for this has to do with containing of the thesis in terms of length and maintaining its thematic coherence: for instance, an analysis of works by male authors would have also had to include a consideration of how approaches to the posthuman may differ in terms of the diversely situated perspective of male authors with respect to differentially located privileges. As for the lack of Indigenous writers, there are, of course, current important examples of SFF written by Indigenous Canadian women, such as Lee Maracle’s *Celia’s Song* (2014). Nevertheless, *Celia’s Song* (like Rice’s *Moon of the Crusted Snow* and, in general, works of Indigenous SFF) focus on human and non-human interaction within an

ecological, land-oriented context, and only comment on technology insofar as it is a hindrance to life in the reserves and further proof of the disconnect between them and the city (for instance, *Moon of the Crusted Snow* begins with a generalised power outage that goes unresolved for the duration of the novel). Thus, the inclusion of these works would have created an imbalance in the present volume insofar as the representation of technological posthumanism is concerned. It would have also required paying close attention to Indigenous voices in posthumanist discourse, which are also sorely underrepresented, even when many of the central notions of posthumanism—like Haraway’s celebrated ‘response-ability’ (*When Species* 88), ‘naturecultures’ (*Companion* 3) or ‘kin’ (*Staying* 99)—aren’t novel figurations of Western philosophical discourse but core tenets of Indigenous knowledge. Indeed, it is easy to credit Haraway—a white American professor—for these expressions, but it is difficult to pinpoint the origins of the naturalcultural continuum within its rightful milieu of Indigenous epistemology. This seems to be a specific brand of epistemic myopia within mainstream posthumanist discourse, which is, for instance, also ready to credit Elizabeth Kolbert for her formulation, in the 2014 book of the same name, of the “Sixth Extinction,” while seemingly ignoring the existence of the homonymous older volume *The Sixth Extinction: Patterns of Life and the Future of Humankind* by Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin. What is needed going forward, then, is both multiepistemic literacy (Kuokkanen 57) and a palimpsestic commitment to cartography and genealogy, if they are to be truly functional tools of posthuman methodologies. It is not enough that a single cartography be drawn, but that they are continuously constructed, overlapped and put into conversation, so the patterns of movement—so crucial to scholarship and, in our case, literary and Canadian studies—can be individuated and put to use as navigational tools. In the future, these critical *lacunae* in SFF scholarship and posthumanist theoretical thought need to be

addressed so that both quantitative *and* qualitative shifts can be brought about in critical thought, whatever its mode, since only one without the other is insufficient for conceptual breakthroughs (Braidotti, *PK* 125).

2.4. SUMMARIES OF THE NOVELS

As an aid for the reading of the included pieces, this section provides a summary of the six novels in the order in which they appear in this compilation.

2.4.1. The *MaddAddam* Trilogy: *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood* and *MaddAddam* (Margaret Atwood, 2003, 2009 and 2013)

The *MaddAddam* trilogy recounts the events prior and after a deadly virus is unleashed to make the human race extinct. Crake, formerly known as Glenn, is the scientific mastermind behind the virus, and the inventor of the Crakers, a race of genetically-engineered hominids that are designed to take over the Earth after the virus, since they include a number of features to lessen their environmental footprint (for instance, they are caecotrophs) and thrive in a severely damaged ecology. The Crakers also ostensibly lack the features that make mankind so destructive: they have no concept of violence or patrilineal descent, but also no concept of art, music or literature, as Glenn deemed symbolic thinking the enabler of human destructiveness.

Oryx and Crake starts at the onset of the pandemic, and follows Jimmy (known as Snowman in the viral post-apocalypse), Crake's childhood friend and reluctant caretaker of his creatures. As supplies run short, Jimmy is forced to start an expedition towards the Paradise Dome, old home of the Crakers, to gather provisions. The tale of his journey is interspersed with recollections of life before the apocalypse, his youth, and his friendship with Crake. Present and past narration end up converging upon reaching the

Paradise Dome, where it is revealed that Crake after admitting to having propagated the epidemic through one of his commercially successful health products, murdered Oryx, Glenn and Jimmy's former lover as well as the former tutor of the Crakers, prompting Jimmy to shoot him. Jimmy, who has by this point sustained an injury that has become infected, goes back to the Crakers and realises that other survivors have approached his camp, and must then decide whether to approach them in turn.

Jimmy's predicament is not disambiguated until the end of the second novel, *The Year of the Flood*. For the most part, *The Year of the Flood* tells the stories of Toby and Ren, two young women who manage to survive the pandemic, and so runs parallel to the events of *Oryx and Crake*. The novel's central axis is the God's Gardeners, an eco-religious sect that preaches oneness with the environment while warning of the coming "Waterless Flood" that will restore this unity by doing away with mankind. To prepare for this event, it also teaches their members survival skills, like foraging and gardening, that are not only useful for, but gentler on the post-Flood environment. Toby and Ren are former members of the sect, and the story alternates between the women's viewpoints telling of their time with the Gardeners as well as their life after the pandemic, where they eventually find each other again. Once they are reunited, they are attacked by Blanco and his gang, a host of criminals who did their time in Painball, a televised show where inmates are instructed to kill each other, and who survived thanks to their isolation in the Painball Arena. It is at this point that Jimmy finds Toby and Ren and decides to help them, attacking Blanco, and the novel ends in much the same fashion as the first, with Jimmy's group witnessing another group approaching.

As the final installment in the series, *MaddAddam* ties the events of *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* together. Nevertheless, it too is punctuated by flashbacks, where we learn of the brothers Zeb and Adam One. These create yet another

nexus between *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* as we uncover the familial ties between Zeb and Adam One, and their independent life stories. We discover that Zeb initiated Crake into the MaddAddam group whom the latter would in his adulthood employ to work at his scientific enterprises, and that Adam One, also a former MaddAddamite, founded the God's Gardeners to shelter the remaining members of the group from the oncoming pandemic. Jim, Ren, Toby, Zeb and Adam One are reunited in *MaddAddam*, and, with others, form a group of surviving Gardeners. Together, and with the help of the Crakers as well as of other hybrid bioforms that are thriving in the post-apocalypse—like the organ-host pig species, the Pigoons—confront the Painballers. The survivors establish a new commune and new children are born to the human women of the Craker men, whose group has gained by this point some degree of symbolic thinking and has been introduced into reading and writing to record the story of how the new commune came to be.

2.4.2. *The Heart Goes Last* (Margaret Atwood, 2015)

Among the social devastation caused by an economic crisis we find Stan and Charmaine, the protagonists of *The Heart Goes Last*. Stan and Charmaine are a married couple who have lost their house and are now living in their car. Short of money, fed up with the many discomforts of their life and increasingly afraid of being attacked, they sign up for an experiment in new living arrangements at the Positron Project in the town of Conscilience. In this social experiment, they rotate between living in a house and working different jobs in town with living and working in a prison for a month at a time, when they are replaced in their duties by their 'Alternates,' another couple who takes their place at home and in the prison in alternate months. At first, the arrangement seems to work seamlessly, but after getting involved with their Alternates, Max and Jocelyn, Stan and

Charmaine become entangled in a plot to dismantle the Positron Project. It is revealed that the Positron Project is funded, in part, through an organ farm, and that its owner, Ed, is planning to make Charmaine undergo a surgical procedure to bind her sexually and romantically to him against her will. In the rush of events, Charmaine eventually goes through the surgery, but is bound to (‘imprints on’) her husband, Stan, and not Ed, which rekindles their relationship. The Positron Project is also publicly exposed for what it is, and all characters seem to have a happy, settled ending. At the end of the novel, however, Jocelyn reveals to Charmaine that she did not undergo the imprinting process after all, and that she is free to choose another life for herself, leaving the ending of the book—and of Charmaine’s life—open.

2.4.3. *The Tiger Flu* (Larissa Lai, 2018)

The Tiger Flu begins in the year 2145, 127 years after all of Earth’s oil has been burnt. The context is one of ecological depletion and social unrest, after plans to revive an extinct tiger species lead to the transmission of a pandemic that is particularly deadly to men. Because of the pandemic, territories are divided into quarantined areas whose borders are strongly policed. Kirilow Groundsel, member of a community of parthenogenic clones, the Grist Sisters, must depart from her commune to the city in search of a ‘starfish,’ a Sister with the unique ability to regrow organs, in order to ensure the survival of her kind. Kora Ko, who is later revealed to be this starfish but believes herself to be human, must likewise leave her family after it is ravaged by the tiger flu. The stories of Kirilow and Kora intertwine since, as clones and members of the Grist Sisterhood, they are sought after to test a new mind upload technology that is being pushed to the population fearful of the pandemic and the growing scarcity and violence. Kirilow and Kora are kidnapped, and only manage to escape after Kora’s body is crushed

during an attack, and Kirilow uploads her consciousness to a vehicle, allowing them to flee. The epilogue tells how this consciousness is later transplanted into the earth and becomes a tree, initiating the Starfish Orchard that allows the Grist Sisterhood to re-settle and be re-established away from the ravaged cities.

2.4.4. *Midnight Robber* (Nalo Hopkinson, 2000)

Hopkinson's novel is set on Toussaint, a planet colonised by Caribbean folk and reigned by the surveillance technology and wide digital network Granny Nanny (the 'Nansi Web'), who can track and speak to citizens through microrobots ("nanomites") syringed into people at birth. The novel's protagonist, Tan-Tan, is the daughter of Antonio, mayor of Cockpit County. After Antonio cheats in order to win a duel during Carnival time, he is disgraced and taken by the authorities. At the last moment, he is able to overrule Granny Nanny's security protocols and escape to New Half-Way Tree, taking Tan-Tan with her. New Half-Way Tree, though a prison planet, presents a new opportunity for Tan-Tan and Antonio to live life on their own terms; however, things turn sour, ending with Antonio attacking and raping Tan-Tan. On her sixteenth birthday, Tan-Tan kills Antonio and flees, hiding from his new wife, Janisette. During her travels, Tan-Tan takes on the persona of the Carnival's Robber Queen, performing songs and creating relationships with the New Half-Way Tree folk along the way. Eventually, Janisette catches up with Tan-Tan, who, as the Robber Queen, tells the tale of her flight from Toussaint across the dimension veils, the abuse she suffered at the hands of her father, her unfulfilled dreams, and the killing of her father with Janisette's knife. With this song, Janisette admits defeat and Tan-Tan is freed. She then gives birth in the bush to her and Antonio's son, Tubman, who is organically connected with the 'Nansi Web that Tan-Tan had lost her link to.

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