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Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

Green Wisdom in Grey Futures

An analysis of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and Saci Lloyd's *The Carbon Diaries 2015* and why we should teach them

August Hansen

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Abstract

This thesis examines two works of climate fiction, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) and Saci Lloyd's *The Carbon Diaries 2015* (2009), and suggests ways to teach them. The thesis draws on ecocritical work from theorists such as Lawrence Buell and criticism regarding the Anthropocene and ideas on how to integrate climate change in the English subject (ENG01-04).

It argues that teachers of all subjects must help raise pupils' environmental awareness and that English language novels are particularly suited to addressing this curricular requirement. English teachers can be no exception, as their field of study holds particular value in understanding and confronting the climate crisis.

By investigating both novels through an ecological lens, the thesis highlights how their realistic settings and visions of climate changed worlds make them especially suited to the young adult reader.

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1 Introduction

This thesis examines how fiction can be a valuable tool for teaching climate change. I analyse two texts that can act as such tools: *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy and *The Carbon Diaries 2015* (2008) by Saci Lloyd. These novels are markedly different in tone and characterization. Still, they both envision a climate-changed world, and I argue that both are suitable for discussing environmental issues in the classroom. Thus, the thesis explores how *The Road* and *The Carbon Diaries 2015* intervene in a growing body of literature about the Anthropocene and how teachers could apply the texts in the classroom. The introductory chapter details how the Norwegian Core Curriculum approaches humanity's impact on the environment and why it is essential to understand this as fundamental to all subjects, not just natural sciences. I define terms relevant to the later discussion of the two novels – terms such as *climate fiction, the Anthropocene, young adult literature,* and *ecocriticism*. I also examine the literary field of ecocriticism, its beginnings, and its current state. Lawrence Buell, Cheryll Glotfelty, and more contemporary voices such as Adeline Johns-Putra have made considerable contributions to this field of academic studies. The second and third chapters build on the theoretical framework laid down in the introductory chapter. They examine the two novels accordingly, highlighting the features distinguishing them as landmark novels in climate fiction or *cli-fi.* The fourth chapter suggests ways to teach the two texts to pupils at the upper secondary level.

More than ten years have passed since Lloyd and McCarthy's novels became part of the growing body of climate fiction. Those years have seen two major climate meetings materialize: The Copenhagen Accord of 2009 and The Paris Agreement of 2015. It has seen the rise of environmental activist Greta Thunberg and a global movement of young people calling for accountability and climate leadership. Still, more worryingly, we have witnessed an increase in extreme weather around the world. We've experienced more floods and forest fires, a rapid rise in wildlife extinction, and the destabilization of local communities and regions. Just while writing this, the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) released its sixth assessment, stating that climate change is 'widespread, rapid, and intensifying'. The scientific community has now gathered a significant amount of data and evidence that all but cements the idea that human activity is heating the planet, polluting its seas, and killing its wildlife.

This idea, which at its core suggests that human activity and behaviour affect the world around us, is deeply touched upon by both novels examined in this thesis – in similar

ways and ways that are not. In McCarthy's *The Road,* a cataclysmic event has caused a total breakdown in society. In the post-apocalyptic landscape of America, a father and his son are trying to reach the sea. For what purpose, they do not know. What they do know is that they cannot stand still, 'lest they be hunted down by savages who will rape and eat them. The novel deals with numerous themes, such as the relationship between father and son, man and society, memory, human nature, but of most interest to my inquiry; the relationship between man and environment. The cataclysmic event preceding the story is never fully explained, leading critics like Johns-Putra to caution against making 'bald assertions about the novel's relevance' ('Climate Change', 520) when discussing climate literature. This thesis will argue that the text *is* highly relevant and will seek to highlight the different ways it touches upon issues related to the Anthropocene, such as a critique of consumerism and our species' relationship with the rest of nature. The thesis seeks to build on Ben de Bruyn's findings on nature imagery in the novel and David Huebert's concept of 'ecological cannibalism'.

In *The Carbon Diaries 2015,* Lloyd presents the fictional diary of a British teenager, Laura. The novel consists of entries made into this diary during the year 2015. Laura details how she and her family, and her country, are affected by the government's decision to impose strict regulations on personal carbon consumption to lower the emission of greenhouse gases. Climate change appears urgent and widespread in this story, but it still hasn't caused the kind of cataclysmic change described in *The Road.* The novel is stylistically uncommon among other works of young adult literature that thematize climate change and depicts a post-apocalyptic scenario, such as *Blood Red Young* (2012) by Moira Young or *Orleans* (2014) by Sherri Smith. It is noteworthy for its insistence on keeping the climate change scenario grounded in the believable; some might even say mundane. These features, along with its highly relatable and flawed protagonist and its sense of humour, combine to form a landmark text in the category of climate literature. I explore this further in the third chapter of this thesis. The critical discourse surrounding Lloyd's text is relatively small compared to *The Road*. As such, this thesis seeks to add to Alexa Weik Von Mossner's critique of the novel. She highlights the importance of offering the reader a hopeful premise instead of a negative, disillusioned perspective about our immediate future.

1.1 The Norwegian Core Curriculum

The Norwegian Core Curriculum 'describes the fundamental approach that shall direct the pedagogical practice in all lower and secondary education and training' ('Core Curriculum'). The Curriculum states that 'the pupils shall develop awareness of how our lifestyles impact

nature and the climate, and thus also our societies. The school shall help the pupils to develop the willingness to protect the environment'. With these lines, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is sending a strong message towards its teachers: they are critical agents in securing a world in which human civilization can be sustained without causing the planet to grind to a halt. Being a teacher is to be understood as the most important job in the world in practice as much as in theory. The Core Curriculum 'gives direction for the teaching and training in the subjects, and all the subjects contribute to realising the broad purpose of primary and secondary education and training', meaning that teaching climate change is not reserved to any one subject, but common to all. I welcome this approach, and I believe that English teachers such as myself, who teach culture, language, and literature, have the opportunity to engage with climate change in ways specific to our subject.

For instance, Richard Beach et al. argue that 'a purely science-oriented approach to climate change can miss the social, historical, ethical, and human realities that are critical to the problem' (20). We might be doomed to repeat previous missteps if we fail to acknowledge and react to these realities. Thus, those who teach History, Social Sciences, and English cannot leave it to Natural Sciences to teach climate change, and they must instead realize the obligation and their unique position to teach this topic:

> In English language arts classes, students can read about the devastating effects of global warming, comprehend its human-made causes, and understand the creative ways people in all corners of the globe are responding to this challenge. And it is also in this space of possibility where students can learn to write with many tools to express their ideas, voice their concerns, and contribute to the environmental justice movement. (20)

In conclusion, English teachers should feel empowered because their subject holds unique qualities crucial to teaching climate change.

1.2 Climate fiction and the Anthropocene

Defining *cli-fi* appears simple enough at first glance; the logical definition would be 'climate-themed fiction', or 'fiction about the climate'. Blogger Dan Bloom was the first to apply the term in 2008, which he described as a sub-genre of science fiction. Today, when we speak of cli-fi, we think of pieces of fiction in which the climate plays a vital role in shaping the narrative and where the focus of interest is the human impact on the environment, and vice versa. Climate *change* fiction might be a more precise term, although not instantly recognizable as Bloom's original term. The sheer volume of texts that deal with climate grows with every passing year.

As Johns-Putra states, ‘climate change fiction names an important new category of contemporary literature and a remarkable recent literary and publishing phenomenon (267). Some argue that cli-fi is a multitude of genres. Barbara Eckstein writes: ‘The genres of climate change include those that look at the climate debt we have accrued in the Anthropocene and speculate on what future that foretells: climate fiction (cli-fi) or speculative fiction and film (science fiction and fantasy)’ (242).

Added to the growing number of new texts is a freshened focus within the community of literary theorists and critics to re-examine previously published novels, such as Frank Herbert’s sci-fi opus *Dune* (1965), through an ecocritical lens. Today, critics might be less interested in Herbert’s portrayal of power politics between House Atreides and House Harkonnen, and more interested in the Fremen people of the desert planet Arrakis and their quest to terraform their planet into a lush and green landscape. Critics might be more inclined to point out Herbert’s attention to geological details and how the Fremen’s refusal to waste any water at all is a veiled critique of Anthropocenic consumerism. For instance, Timothy Morton draws attention to how water on the desert-planet Arrakis is more valuable than the ‘spice’ to the Fremen. This particular substance is the foundation of the economy in *Dune.* While the Fremen worship the water, the decadent and barbaric Harkonnens have no problem spilling it (‘Imperial Measures’). This is a type of ecocritical approach mentioned earlier in the introduction. Attention is drawn to nature and its inherent relationship with humankind, specifically how people might outright dismiss nature as long as it doesn’t hold any immediate economic value.

Dating the first piece of cli-fi is a question of definition. Johns-Putra draws a line between ‘planetary climatic change’ and ‘specifically man-made, carbon-induced climate change’ (“Cli-Fi ’ Novels”). Johns-Putra alludes to what a growing number of critics refer to as the Anthropocene. Initially a geological term, it defines a proposed geological epoch in which human activity dominates the period. The International Commission has not accepted a start date to this period on Stratigraphy (ICS) or the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) as of yet. Still, a proposal has been put forward by the Anthropocene Working Group (AWG), in which the genesis of this epoch is put around the middle of the 20th century (‘Working Group On The “Anthropocene” | Subcommission On Quaternary Stratigraphy’). Dating the Anthropocene to the middle of the century puts texts such as *Dune* almost right at the start of the era, making it one of the earliest novels tackling climate change. Some critics, however, suggest looking even further back.

Danielle Clode and Monika Stasiak reason that ‘to ignore earlier environmental change literature is to miss a crucial and influential phase on our changing relationship with climate change, one which may shed insights into our current and future behaviour’ (21), and they list several entries dating as far back as the 1800s. In their view, texts such as Gabriel De Tarde's *Underground Man* (1896) and even texts as old as Richard Jefferies’ *After London* (1885) are examples of cli-fi. Narrowing down the definition of climate fiction to mean literature that deals with ‘specifically man-made, carbon-induced climate change’, the novel *Heat* (1977) by Arthur Herzog would be the first true cli-fi novel, according to Trexler and Putra. But while Johns-Putra and Clode and Stasiak’s arguments might not be mutually exclusive, I do prefer thinking about climate fiction as fiction relating to man’s relationship with nature and climate and not fiction exclusively addressing man-made, carbon-induced climate change. Clode and Stasiak's point is that humans for years have imagined futures where nature might suddenly change completely. They might not have had the data to suggest human activity might cause the same kind of apocalyptic scenario they were imagining. Still, they were thinking about the smallness of man compared to the grandeur of nature. In my opinion, this also makes a stronger case for reading *The Road* through the lens of ecocriticism, even if the apocalyptic event isn’t explicitly explained as carbon-induced climate change.

The term *Anthropocene* has now been adopted as a literary term, as exemplified by literary critic Adam Trexler’s book *Anthropocene Fictions. The Novel in a Time of Climate Change* (2015). Thus, literary critics acknowledge that our impact on nature, and knowledge or ignorance of it, affects the way we produce and read fiction. Its conception as a literary term does not necessarily mean that every ecocritic applies it. Astrid Bracke, for instance, prefers to use the term “climate crisis”, as she argues it denotes ‘both the physical realities as well as the contemporary discourses surrounding humankind’s effects on the environment. These discourses have made it symbolic for our age, and therefore more than only an event’ (18). An even more prominent critic of the term is Jeremy Baskin. Baskin argues that the Anthropocene is less of a concept than a paradigm, even going as far as suggesting it to be an ideology (10). He questions the underlying perceptions represented by some of the proponents of the Anthropocene, and he lists four characteristics that to him are especially problematic. First, the Anthropocene ‘universalises and normalises a certain portion of humanity as the human of the Anthropocene’ (15). He argues that this diffuses *which* ‘agents’ can be said to ‘have brought us to this epoch’ (15), viewing the rich and less fortunate under the same lens– essentially obscuring ‘who and what is powerful, and how that power is enacted’ (16).

Second, Baskin worries that the Anthropocene 'reinserts "man" into nature only to re-evalate "him" within and above it' (11). Put simply, Baskin suggests that the Anthropocene is based on the worldview that humans have transcended to become masters of the earth. He finds this problematic and argues that proponents of Anthropocene, at least those from the tradition of natural science, 'show little awareness of the immense body of thought, emanating from the social sciences and the humanities, about the meaning and politics of nature, or why this might be relevant' (17). Third, the Anthropocene's 'use of "instrumental reason" generates a largely uncritical embrace of technology' (11). This, of course, follows the logic of Baskin's second worry. If we consider ourselves masters of the earth and the ones meant to correct the path it's on, then we must be willing to apply technology with fewer scruples and worries about the potential harms. Lastly, Baskin argues that a characteristic of the Anthropocene is that it 'legitimises certain nondemocratic and technophilic approaches, including planetary management and large-scale geoengineering, as necessary responses to the ecological "state of emergency"' (11). Again, based on a perception of man as master of nature, Baskin is concerned that the concept of the Anthropocene allows for a world that puts more power in the hands of an un-elected group of scientists and experts. He worries that its ideology could 'legitimate the need for exceptional rule and authoritarian responses' (22).

I agree with Baskin on several points. There is a danger of ignoring inherent structures and power relations that brought, and keep plunging us, into the Anthropocene, and who or what is chiefly responsible. As Baskin states: 'The Indian subsistence farmer, the African herder, and the Peruvian slum-dweller become part of one "humanity" with the inhabitants of the rich world, despite clearly being very differentially responsible for ecological devastation and planetary overshoot' (16). Similarly, I find it troubling to conceive humanity as either above nature, the embodiment of nature, or its God-given caretakers. I concur that this type of worldview could, in turn, legitimize specific authoritarian responses and policy decisions, 'none of which are likely to be exercised in the interests of most of the world's people' (23). However, I do not follow Baskin on at least two claims. First, I am uncertain that the Anthropocene clouds what or who is responsible for bringing us to this point of potential ecological collapse, as much as it underlines the fact that all of humanity is, knowingly or unknowingly, inherently connected to it. True, most people living in poorer parts of the world have a considerably smaller footprint compared to someone living in a country such as Norway. And yes, the subsistence farmer may be the first-in-line to feel the consequences, but the effects will befall us all. Secondly, I question the suggestion that the ideology of the

Anthropocene naturally leads to large-scale planetary management. Instead, it could lead us to confront our ways of consumerism and energy consumption, which I believe to be the real crux of the matter. And lastly, while I do share Baskin's worries about putting too much power on an unelected group of experts, we cannot forget that one of the reasons we're here in the first place is the choice *not to listen* to experts. That is not to say that science should control and guide policy making, but that science should *inform* policy making.

1.3 Ecocriticism

The term *ecocriticism* came to the rise much earlier than the term climate fiction. Johns-Putra and Trexler write that the ecocritics were inspired by the successes of 'feminist and gender studies, race-based studies, and postcolonialism' (192). Ecocritics wanted to emulate these studies with a focus on the environment, 'using literary critique to show the shortcomings of our current environmental ideas, draw attention to environmental issues, develop new ways of thinking about the environment, and develop new ways of thinking about the environment energize environmental activism' (192). Ecocriticism is often thought of as consisting of two distinct waves. The first wave is characterised by its focus on texts in isolation, and Scott Slovic notes how, in North America, the first phase focused on 'nonfiction "nature writing"; non-human nature and wilderness experience; American and British literature; and "discursive" ecofeminism (that is, the idea that women and the rest of nature share a special bond)' (4-5). Rob Nixon has criticized the focus of this first wave. He believes it was 'skewed toward matters of genre and philosophy at the expense of environmental justice concerns' and that it 'showed scant interest in either the environmental, social sciences or international environmental history' (255). A shift did eventually arrive in the late nineties, described as a second wave, characterized by Michael Verderame as addressing 'itself to human concerns as well as nonhuman nature; to urban and suburban environments as well as to wilderness settings; and all types of literary texts, not just "nature writing". Prompted by dialogue with the environmental justice movement, second-wave literary critics no longer saw human beings and the environment as opposed to one another, but instead focused on the ways in which they were interdependent and mutually constitutive' ('Introduction').

William Rueckfert first applied the term itself in his 1978 essay *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism.* Rueckfert sought to apply ecological learnings and concepts to literature, 'because ecology (as a science, as a discipline, as the basis for a human vision) has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world we all live in of anything that I have studied in recent years' (73). He argued that 'the problem now, as most

ecologists agree, is to find ways of keeping the human community from destroying the natural community, and with it the human community' (73). Others would later pick up Rueckfert's mantle. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm conceptualized ecocriticism as 'the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment' (18). Lawrence Buell envisioned ecocriticism as 'a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis' (20). The last part of Buell's quote is intriguing, as it suggests viewing ecocriticism as political– it has a motive and a defined goal. Other definitions exist as well. Perhaps one of the widest in scope is the one put forward by Catrin Gersdorf and Sylvia Mayer. Ecocriticism, they argue, is meant to re-examine 'the history of ideologically, aesthetically, and ethically motivated conceptualisations of nature, of the function of its constructions and metaphorisations in literary and other cultural practices, and of the potential effects these discursive, imaginative constructions have on our bodies as well as our natural and cultural environments' (10).

It is quite clear that there are different interpretations of the term ecocriticism. Johns-Putra and Trexler call it 'a hybrid discipline, loosely composed of researchers investigating questions to do with literature, culture, and the environment' (192). 'Hybrid discipline' is a fitting choice of words here, as it resonates strongly with the fact that the challenge of climate change is multi-faceted and vast in scope, requiring several disciplines to come together to face it properly. Whatever definition one chooses to go by, most tend to agree that attention to nature in a literary text and the relationship between humankind and the natural world is central to any ecocritical approach. Most importantly, perhaps, is the belief that humanity impacts the physical world around it and is in turn affected by the world around it, which ultimately affects our way of reading and writing fiction. And as we now know to be fact, humanity not only impacts the world around us – we are causing it to change. I analyse the two chosen texts with this commonality in mind.

My ecocritical approach will mostly fall in line with the definition presented by Buell. The Norwegian Core Curriculum appears to have been written in that very 'spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis', and I find it fitting to approach the two texts in this manner. Building on Buell, I seek to establish a clear lens with which to analyse the two novels. I have landed on several questions that will guide me, which are the same ones applied by Gabriele Dürbeck in her analysis of two pieces of Anthropocenic fiction:

> How are large-scale global changes depicted and which characters are suitable to reflect on a deep time perspective? (…) In which way does literature comment on human geologic impact concerning the characters, the role of the

> narrator, and the aesthetic structure? Which modes of narration (comic, tragic, ironic, didactic) are deployed to reflect on the challenges of the Anthropocene? (113)

In the following two chapters, I intend to answer these questions for each of the two novels. I do so because I find these questions apt in identifying how *The Road* and *The Carbon Diaries 2015* intervene in Anthropocenic literature.

1.4 Young Adult Literature

As one of the novels under analysis is considered young adult literature, it seems appropriate to examine the term itself. This will help understanding features specific to this category that makes this kind of literature especially valuable, and the relevance of *The Carbon Diaries 2015* within this category of fiction and as a highly teachable text. Like with climate fiction, the term itself appears self-explanatory: *literature for young adults*. Thomas Bean and Karen Moni suggest that the term young adult reader defines readers between the ages of 12 and 20, but Michael Cart finds the term to be 'inherently slippery and amorphous' (3). Who indeed has the right to determine something as young adult literature? Should we rely on the author's intention, the publisher, or how the public conceives the text? It might be more fruitful to look at characteristics that are common in this literary category. Many such novels share themes that deal with identity and values, themes important in the lives of young adults. Bean and Moni underline this relevancy of issues as a critical ingredient in young adult literature: 'Because they deal with issues that are relevant to teens, including racism, pregnancy, divorce, substance abuse, family conflicts, and political injustice, young adult novels provide a roadmap of sorts for adolescents coping with these issues in real life' (638). Add 'climate change' to that list, and you have just about all the issues presented in *The Carbon Diaries 2015* summed up.

Young adult literature often focuses on young characters. Sarah Herz and Donald Gallo argue that young characters in young adult literature tend to share a few common characteristics, namely that they often are 'perceptive, sensitive, intelligent, mature, and independent' (Herz and Gallo, 1996; qtd. in Bean and Moni, 2003). Having these noble virtues does not mean that all these characters are traditional winners. For instance, in The Carbon Diaries 2015, we find a young protagonist who strikes the reader as a misfit and 'failed teenager', who seems detached from many of her schoolmates, though this might be something of her own choice. This is not uncommon in young adult literature. Patrick Jones suggests that this type of protagonist appears almost as a defining factor of 'a literature full of

misfits, iconoclasts, freaks, geeks, and more than a few nonconformists' (13). Thus, the Laura we meet in *The Carbon Diaries 2015* might not be that dissimilar to the Artemis Fowl in the *Artemis Fowl*-book series by Eoin Colfer, or even to the Holden Caulfield in *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, at least in the sense that they all strike us as misfits. The characterizations offered by Herz and Gallo on the one hand, and Jones on the other, appear somewhat contradictory. But although Laura is a misfit, she still carries many of the qualities mentioned by Herz and Gallo – they might not seem that obvious to all the other characters in the novel because of her misfit status. This could perhaps allow young adults readers, who also find themselves lacking acknowledgment of their virtuous qualities, to find a role model in Laura.

Summarizing the previous paragraphs, I have shown that young adult literature often features protagonists that struggle with issues that resonate with many young people. The protagonists may be outsiders who hold important qualities or at least develop these qualities throughout the narrative. I find myself agreeing with Bean and Moni about how young adults could view these narratives as potential roadmaps for their own lives, which is why I find such literature to hold great potential for being applied in the classroom. But I stress the word *potential*: young people might just as well discard the relevancy of the experiences made by the teenage protagonists in such novels. They might also come to see them as *plausible*, in that they recognize the experiences of others, perhaps even people radically different from themselves, and that they might act just like them if they wore their shoes. This is what philosopher Martha Nussbaum calls 'the "narrative imagination," the ability to imagine what it would be like to be in the position of someone very different from oneself' (289). She argues this is one of three important qualities needed for *world citizenship* and suggests that educating such world citizens must be a cornerstone in any liberal education. This is also one of the reasons why I believe *The Carbon Diaries 2015* to be an important text in the category of young adult fiction and the classroom; it offers the reader a *plausible* experience of a young misfit having to deal with climate change that might appear highly unfamiliar to teenagers in that they aren't yet suffering heavily from climate change, but still familiar in the sense that it also depicts a teenager finding their way in life today. It's also written in the style of a diary, which grants it an air of perceived authenticity, which I return to later in the thesis. Most teenagers do not put their lives on hold because of the climate crisis – they worry about essay deadlines, think about who might be attracted to them, and want to master their hobbies – similar to the majority of Laura's diary entries throughout the novel.

1.5 Young Adult Dystopian Literature

Both Lloyd and McCarthy's texts carry dystopian qualities, but one targets young adults, the other for an older audience. Traditionally, dystopian literature often depicts near-or-distant futures in which democracy and free will have been done way with and where smaller or larger factions of humanity serve as slaves for their government or otherworldly rulers. George Orwell's *1984* (1949), Stephen King's *The Running Man* (1982), and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) all share these commonalities. Justin Scholes and Jon Ostenson identify a list of common traits in such literature, including 'excessive measures to police society; unjust laws, pressure to conform, media manipulation and propaganda, (…) suppression of the arts', and 'limited or complete lack of individual freedom' (11). All-powerful governments oppressing the people of the texts are not, however, a requirement. A post-apocalyptic scenery set sometime after a nuclear war or natural event, without any form of government or rule-of-law, is also typical. Some argue that real-life events during the last 20 odd years carry substantial influence over dystopian writing. Raffaella Baccolini writes:

> (…) the traumatic event of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, DC, and what followed seem to have influenced contemporary SF writing, and especially cinema, toward the representation of postapocalyptic dystopias centered on characters involved in quests for self-survival or to rescue loved ones; see, for example, Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* (2006) or Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003). (37-36)

For Baccolini, the function of dystopian literature is 'to warn readers about the possible outcomes of our present society' (37), and that 'dystopias (…) frequently revolve around the character of the misfit, a citizen who feels or learns to feel out of place and at odds with the generally accepted norms and values of the dystopian society' (38). Young adult dystopian literature does indeed share these characteristics. However, texts in this category are staunchly different in that they are considerably more hopeful. Weik points out that 'scholars and writers tend to agree that in the case of the young adult dystopian text, one cannot in fact do without at least a glimmer of hope. The young reader expects— and needs— stories that are gripping but nevertheless offer at least a promise that a better world will be possible' (70).

Young adult dystopian literature, like young adult literature, depicts young characters and often returns to what Baccolini describes as 'the convention of the voyage'. *The voyage* is to be understood as the moral and mental journey undertaken by characters, in which they grow as persons to overcome the odds. Put simply; these texts are about young people having

to grow up amid chaos or/and tyranny. Balaka Basu et al. argue that such literary works, at their core,

> (…) recapitulate the conventions of the classic Bildungsroman, using political strife, environmental disaster, or other forms of turmoil as the catalyst for achieving adulthood. The novels detail how the conditions of the dystopian society force protagonists to fall from innocence and achieve maturity as they realize the dystopian realities in which they live. (7)

The central elements in this type of literature are typically ones that resonate with a younger audience. Scholes and Ostenson argue that common themes are 'Inhumanity and Isolation', 'Agency and Conscience', and 'Relationships: Platonic and Romantic'. These themes are, indeed, all found in Lloyd's novel. However, these themes aren't exclusively appealing to young adults. These elements are just as present in *The Road, 1984,* and *The Handmaid's Tale* as they are in *The Carbon Diaries 2015*. This underlines the commonly held perception that young adult dystopian fiction carries many significant similarities with traditional dystopian fiction. But as argued by Weik and others, the primary distinction might lie in its focus on hope – on the idea that change *is* possible and that the young protagonist might be an, or the, agent of change. It is also clear that although significantly darker in scope and resolution, *The Road* does share some commonalities with young adult dystopian literature. There is a straightforward journey in the novel, and the young child is indeed presented as the one true hope the man holds. On the other hand, there is no real personal growth depicted in the novel, and beyond the child's capacity to trust strangers, there is little to no hope that he would be able to cope in the brutal world of the novel.

1.6 Conclusion and moving forward

Throughout this introductory chapter, I've explained and examined essential terms for analysing my two novels from an ecocritical perspective. Through investigating them with an ecocritical lens as described by Buell, I highlight how each text intervenes with the tradition of climate fiction. Dürbeck's questions about how the literature under consideration comments on the Anthropocene will be applied to both texts. The second chapter explores how the characters in McCarthy's text are reliant on the forces of nature and how the novel criticises over-consumption. I examine the hopelessness found in McCarthy's text and how the novel's form of protomourning invites the young adult reader to consider the kind of world we might stand to lose. The third chapter examines how Lloyd's text distinguishes itself from other young adult dystopian fiction novels, such as *The Hunger Games* or *The Windup*

Girl, and how a British teenager is an interesting character to comment on a deep time perspective. It highlights how both narrative structure and Lloyd's determination to keep the climate change action realistic makes for a compelling read, as well as how Lloyd's humorous portrayal of adults not coping with said change helps elevate the novel's didactic potential.

2 *The Road:* Environmental Change, Hopelessness and Overconsumption

2.1 Introduction

Hope is a scarce resource in the world of *The Road.* That much is made clear in its very first paragraphs: ‘He pushed away the plastic tarpaulin and raised himself in the stinking robes and blankets and looked toward the east for any light but there was none’ (1). Not only are we presented with a character, “the man” as we come to know him, whose terrible condition gives us an early indication of the kind of world the story is set in, but we're given a poetic clue as to where the story might be headed in the phrase ‘looked toward the east for any light but there was none’. Quite rightly, *The Road* is a novel in which hope and light are scarce, save for the faint hope of reaching the coast, lights from the seemingly ever-lasting woodfires, and the light emanating from ‘the fire’ carried by the man and his son. In this chapter, I first examine the claim raised by Johns-Putra that we should be cautious in reading the text as ‘climate fiction’, which I will argue against. I then apply Dürbeck’s questions to the text, namely how ‘large-scale global changes’ are depicted, how ‘literature comments on human geological impact’, and ‘modes of narration’ (113). I comment on the contrast in tone and narration between this novel and *The Carbon Diaries 2015* and how *The Road* can be read as a more intimate text than Lloyd’s novel. Towards the end of the chapter, I detail how the text resonates with the intended outcome of the Norwegian Core Curriculum and why such a brutal and often disturbing text as *The Road* holds value for young adult readers.

2.2 Climate fiction or not?

It is hard to read the apocalyptic scenery described in *The Road* and not think of the most pressing issue of our time, climate change. Johns-Putra agrees, stating that the novel ‘taps directly into a set of concerns that, in a time of climate change, have imperceptibly crept into the inner lives of the privileged, globalized, educated, virtually networked classes of the world so often described as “us”’ (‘Climate Change’, 520). Indeed, producing the movie adaptation was made easier by choosing to film certain scenes in parts of New Orleans deeply affected by Hurricane Katrina, which naturally lent itself to bringing McCarthy’s vision to the big screen, reducing the cost of set-pieces and special effects. Still, she cautions the reader about oversimplifying things and reading global warming into the text. She points to the unexplained origins of the apocalyptic landscape in the text and goes on to argue that ‘at the heart of climate-change discourse resides an anxiety about whether we have cared enough, not just about and for each other and the planet but about and for the future’ (520). Johns-Putra

focuses a great deal on the notion of care on display in the novel, questioning a supposed eagerness to link the man's care for his child to humanity's care for the ecosystem and the next generation. She states that 'any attempt to read the novel as a climate-change novel is predicated on equating a lack of humanity toward children with a lack of humanity toward the nonhuman world', and that the 'too ready—or even too lazy—belief that caring for our children is a proxy for caring for the environment simply repeats the self-righteousness and self-interest of this gesture' (534). Put simply, Johns-Putra does not find enough evidence to warrant a climate change reading of the text, and she seems to be implying that such a reading has more to do with the fears and anxieties about tomorrow brought into the text by the reader, rather than the text itself warning us about the threat of global warming.

As previously stated, I find myself disagreeing with Johns-Putra. There are several strong points in her analysis. For instance, the way she contrasts the man's 'exceptionalist care' (533) for his son's wellbeing, with the boy's growing expression of a type of 'democratic care' for the people they meet, and people imagined by the boy 'to be out there', is particularly fascinating. It is a strong reminder that for all the violence and heartlessness observed by the young boy, he is still able to embark on his own path and devise his own sense of morality. But I do take issue with her on at least two very important accounts. First, I find she's too quick to dismiss climate change as a potential origin, or at least driving force, for the societal decline depicted in the novel. She points out that different explanations have been offered: 'an asteroid strike, nuclear attack, divine apocalypse' (520), but that, 'in the novel, climate change never definitively figures among the events that so transform the world'. She also points to critics like Kevin Kearney, who argues that discussions about the catastrophe appear somewhat pointless and that this guessing game ignores 'the very nature of lacuna in the text' (165).

I do agree that going into the details of possible catastrophic scenarios preceding the novel might be somewhat fruitless. However, I find that both Johns-Putra and Kearney fail to acknowledge the fact that climate change, and its potential to create a shortage for fuel, food, and other resources, could lead to the type of military escalation that could, in turn, lead to a nuclear war. This would be to ignore the potential held by climate change to destabilize societal structures, even nations, a potential I suspect both critics surely recognize. More important than asking *if* climate change caused the catastrophe, is recognizing that climatic change *has* happened. The biosphere appears destroyed, beyond repair. *The Road* depicts what living in a climate-changed world could look like. It asks us to consider whether it

would be a world we would want to live in, rather than how we ended up there – how a climate-altered world affects us as a species. David Huebert sums it up neatly, arguing that 'whether or not he intends to portray a post-climate-disaster world, in this novel McCarthy depicts the imminent and universal horror of a terrestrial climate irrevocably altered' (69).

Secondly, I find Johns-Putra overstating the father-son relationship as *the* reason people gravitate to the text as a piece of climate fiction. I do not mean to say that the novel *can't* be read in this way – rather, I argue that it isn't the *only* way in which the text can be read as climate fiction. This ignores several other aspects of the text, perhaps most alarmingly that nature and changes in the weather appear as the true forces that move the narrative. Right at the outset of the novel, the change in weather drives the man and boy south, as 'there'd be no surviving another winter here' (2), signalling their dependence on the forces of nature. Both snow and rain keep pushing them to keep on the move, as both forces threaten their chances of survival. Something as trivial as rainfall could be critical: 'If they got wet there'd be no fires to dry by. If they got wet they would probably die' (14). Whether or not humanity's perceived mastery of nature is what brought upon the apocalypse, they have no hope of regaining such mastery or control. Both characters understand that they are subordinate to the whims of nature, not the other way around. In contrast, it is also elements of nature that present some sense of hope to the characters; whether it's the lucky discovery of mushrooms (40-41), or the overarching quest of reaching the sea; '(…) everything depended on reaching the coast' (29). Even if the man deep down knows that the hope of something being better at the coast is 'empty' and with 'no substance to it' (29), the coast and the sea still represent something grand, a promise of something better. Thus, the quest to reach the coast is another way in which elements of nature move and push the narrative forward.

Another important nature element pushing the story forward is 'fire' – both in the physical sense and in a more metaphorical one. First, much of the landscape traversed by the man and the boy is described as laden with 'ash'. Forest areas, that are often thought of as brimming with life and creatures, are dead. Along the road, they observe 'charred and limbless trunks of trees stretching away on every side' (6). They are also bound to constantly keep moving, as to not be caught up in the fire: 'There were fires still burning high in the mountains and in the night they could see the light from them deep orange in the sootfall' (30). Secondly, the man and the boy keep referring to themselves as 'carrying the fire':

> And nothing bad's gonna happen to us.

That's right.

Because we're carrying the fire.

Yes. Because we're carrying the fire.

(87)

This metaphorical fire not only acts as a sort of motivation for the two to keep going but also as a form of moral construct with which they distinguish themselves from 'the bad guys', who resort to cannibalism. A few days after the pair barely escaping a group of cannibals, the boy seeks reassurances from his father that they in fact would not eat others:

No. We wouldn't.

No matter what.

No. No matter what.

Because we're the good guys.

Yes.

And we're carrying the fire.

And we're carrying the fire. Yes.

(136)

Thus, the fire acts as an important distinction between those who strive to remain a sort of humanism and decency, and those who have forsaken it. As Jasmin Kirkbride argues, 'It is both a literal flame in the landscape and campfires, and a metaphorical moral flame carried by the "good guys"' (107). Kirkbride argues that the representation of fire in *The Road* is crucial and asks us to read the novel through what she calls 'Heraclitus's *arche* of fire' (100). Heraclitus thought that fire was the principal element of the world, 'the preserving and destroying element from which the cosmos came, to which it will return, and by which it will be judged' (100). Kirkbride links Heraclitus and McCarthy's novel by suggesting that 'if we can all be seen as being from and heading to the same source of fire, then it follows that we are all connected to it. The arche is a part of us, and connects us, whether we are aware of it or not' (107). Kirkbride suggests that by reading the novel through this lens, we can interpret the 'metaphor of "carrying the fire" as remaining connected to humanity and the ecosystem that surrounds us, even in the face of its greatest creations and most devastating destructions'

(110). I agree with Kirkbride that 'the fire' could be read as an important metaphor in McCarthy's novel – a metaphor that further underlines how the novel comments on the relationship between humanity and nature.

Admittingly, my critique of Johns-Putra's position runs the risk of putting too much importance on the scenery rather than the plot. Then again, the elements I have identified are not an attempt to 'fill in the blanks' (164), as Kearney might put it – that is to say, I am not so much attempting a highly speculative interpretation of what brought the world to a halt. On the contrary, it's an attempt to highlight what is already there, recognizing how climate, weather, and deeply ingrained images of nature are notably present in McCarthy's text. As stated in the introduction to this thesis, I understand climate fiction as fiction relating to humanity's relationship with nature and climate, not exclusively texts detailing carbon-based climate change. The novel might not explicitly state that the world has been put the way it is because of an increase in CO^2 emissions, but it doesn't refute such an explanation either. Then again, the novel is more interested in showing us what a world in which the climate *has* dramatically changed might look like, how it could shape the people living under such conditions. It implores the reader to think about the things one might take for granted – relationships, experiences, and the beauty of our natural surroundings. In my view, this resonates with the wording found in the Norwegian Core Curriculum, which states that the school shall 'help the pupils to develop the willingness to protect the environment'. *The Road* is an important reminder about what is at stake, and why it is worth defending – as a world without the splendour of nature is a cold and desolate one and one in which we have little hope of surviving. As aptly put by Nels Anchor Christensen; 'What's missing from the debate about how to respond to climate change isn't science. What's missing is the power to imagine both what stands to be lost and how we might actually go about avoiding that loss' (202).

2.3 *The Road* and the Anthropocene

Having introduced this chapter by arguing for *The Road*'s to be read as climate fiction, I now move to comment on the way the text comments on the Anthropocene by utilizing the questions suggested by Dürbeck. First, 'how are large-scale global changes depicted and which characters are suitable to reflect on a deep time perspective?' (113). I start by examining the first part of this question. The world of *The Road* is described as grey, dead, and desolate. Upon finding a roadside gas station, the man and the boy find it filled with 'dust and ash everywhere' (5). Along the road they're following are 'charred and limbless trunks of trees stretching away on every side' (6). Notice the use of the word 'limbless', as if the tree

was a body similar to the human body, distorting the boundary between the human world and the natural world. ‘So little promise in that country’ (92), the man thinks to himself. It is tempting to suggest that these changes to the environment are only localized to the United States, but I find the description of the ocean to be indicative that these changes are global. Upon reaching it, the man realizes that even this small beacon of hope is ultimately fruitless: ‘Beyond that the ocean vast and cold and shifting heavily like a slowly heaving vat of slag and then the grey squall line of ash’ (230). They find the ocean ‘Cold. Desolate. Birdless’ (230). Kawshik Ray sums up the natural world of the novel as follows:

> (…)’ crumbling trees and heaps of mummified dead bodies. Nothing grows on soil. No creature apart from a few humans exists any longer. The landscape is chequered with deserted towns, dilapidated and rifled departmental stores, and other detritus of the twenty-first century consumerist culture. This is a post-natural, post-cultural world where ecological as well as economic collapse is complete. (122)

The second part of Dürbeck’s first question asks us to consider which characters are suitable to reflect upon a deep time perspective. Initially, I’d argue that not many of the characters seem appropriate to reflect upon such a perspective – they (most chiefly the man) reflect upon the age of humanity, the remnant of this age, and the sorry state it is in. For instance, at one point the man stumbles upon the ruins of what was once a library. Holding up a book, he reflects upon the idea of knowledge comprised into a tome, and how poor the world has become when such objects are of use no longer: ‘He’d not have thought the value of the smallest thing predicated on a world to come. It surprised him. That the space which these things occupied was itself an expectation’ (199). Again, the man’s reflection about time appears limited to the time in which humans transferred knowledge between one another. Any reflections about deep, ecological matters appear lost to him and other characters. The closest we get to any reflection upon a deep time perspective is the man and the boy's quest to reach the coast, which appears to allude to both the instinctive and geologically held belief that life on the planet originated in the seas. That does not mean that we as readers are unable to reflect on a deep time perspective ourselves. Huebert writes: ‘The antifantasy of a lifeless ocean is of course one of the most acute fears of environmentalist discourse in the era of increasing ocean acidification, over-fishing, coastal nuclear power plants, and marine habitat degradation. The excessive amount of animal corpses the man and the boy see on the beach foregrounds the sense in which this landscape represents the cadaver of the earth itself’ (76).

The arrival at the coast, and the sight of the all-but-dead sea, acts as a sort of final confirmation that indeed all chance of anything growing again seems lost. It offers both the man and the boy, and the reader, the chance to reflect upon humanity's capacity to destroy the very source of life on the planet, rendering it unable to sustain any sort of life in the future.

The next question asks: 'in which way does literature comment on human geologic impact concerning the characters, the role of the narrator, and the aesthetic structure?'. As previously remarked, it is difficult to pin down the cause of the disaster as human geological impact, which initially would make it problematic attempting to answer this question. There are a few, brief considerations upon humanity's impact – for example when the man and the boy approach a dam. The boy asks what its purpose is, to which the man replies 'It made the lake. Before they built the dam that was just a river down there. The dam used the water that ran through it to turn big fans called turbines that would generate electricity' (19). Note that the man classifies it as *just* a river, indicating that it didn't appear to serve many purposes before being fitted to serve human needs. When the boy asks if it will last a long time, the man answers 'I think so. It's made out of concrete. It will probably be there for hundreds of years, thousands even' (19). Thus, human impact on the natural environment is thought to last for millennia, possibly outlasting the last human born into their hellish world, further underlining man's impact on the world. Perhaps this is a reflection upon a deep time perspective – in which humanity's ecological impact vastly outlasts our relatively short history as a species. As to whether anything could still live down in the lake, he replies 'No. There's nothing in the lake' (19). Whether because of the dam constructed by the humans, or because of the breakdown in the biosphere, life has all but no chances of returning to this world. And while the dam might have served a purpose, in this case powering turbines, nobody remains to reap the reward of such an installation anymore, thus making it useless to non-humans and humans alike.

Although human ecological impact is not specified as the catalyst for the events in the novel, larger questions about humanity's geological impacts do indeed seem to be raised by the novel, perhaps especially our extreme increase in consumption and reluctance to appreciate and preserve the environment. In his discussion on post-apocalyptic ecology and memory in *The Road*, De Bruyn writes:

> Although the novel does not specify the cause of the disaster, the critique of mechanical consumption is nevertheless present, as the evocation of the industrial garden of ashes already indicated. If we continue to carelessly fill our shopping carts and to ignore the environmental problems which force some of

> us today to wear mouth masks, McCarthy suggests, our children may have to wear masks everywhere and carry their entire world in a grocery cart, like fundamentally homeless vagrants.
> (780)

This critique of consumption and self-preservation is also noted by Christopher Lawrence, who argues that 'the blind drive towards self-preservation (exemplified in *The Road* by rampant cannibalism), breeds resource-centered secondary and tertiary drives (such as territoriality and a subsequent drive for dominance within a territory), which eventually lead to socially and environmentally oppressive and abusive behaviors' (162). This is further echoed by Huebert, who identifies a strong bond between the human cannibalism in the text, and what he defines as '"ecological cannibalism"—humans are ecological cannibals insofar as they excessively devour their own planetary body' (67). Huebert argues that although the man and boy never resort to actual cannibalism, they do scavenge the landscape for any type of food they can find, in an ecosystem that 'can no longer produce human food' (76). He also points out that 'ecological cannibalism is the familiar form of unsustainable consumption of natural resources that may lead to societal collapse and a situation of widespread starvation' (76).

It is, of course, hard to fault the man and the boy for their decision to search for alternatives to cannibalism to sustain themselves, even if they end up consuming foods that they have no way of replenishing. Initially, I found it troubling to consider that the two main characters partake in ecological cannibalism. But Huebert's line of reasoning is convincing. Consider the man's thoughts as he recollects the fall of humanity:

> By then all the stores of food had given out and murder was everywhere upon the land. The world soon to be largely populated by men who would eat your children in front of your eyes and the cities themselves held by cores of blackened looters who tunneled among the ruins and crawled from the rubble white of tooth and eye carrying charred and anonymous tins of food in nylon nets like shoppers in the commissaries of hell. (192)

Huebert here points to a disconnect between us as consumers and where we get our food from: 'Because we don't know where it comes from, we don't think too hard about sustainable production practices as we casually contribute to the massive ecological wastages involved in contemporary industrialized agribusiness' (75). He argues that the passage hints at a link between ecological cannibalism and 'traditional' cannibalism: 'wasteful consumption of food and resources results in a breaking point at which extreme starvation causes

widespread anthropophagy (75). *The Road* could thus act as a critique of consumerism and our growing consumption of the planet's limited resources, and Huebert argues that we should pay heed not only to the literal cannibals that the man and the boy are running from, but to the practices of ecological cannibalism that the novel criticizes: 'rather they are inheritors of the legacy of grocery stores, gasoline, and roads—a legacy that has turned the world into the corpse on which they now gnaw' (76).

Returning to Dürbeck's question: I argue that the term 'broken' is apt to describe both the characters, the narrator, and the aesthetical structure of the novel. The characters themselves are broken – both the boy and the man in their clothes, in their steadily declining health, and the man's decaying memory of the world. Most characters they meet appear even more broken in that they have resorted to cannibalism and even filial cannibalism in some cases. These fateful encounters work to destabilize the two main characters even further, shaking their sense of faith in the possibility of any order ever being restored. After stumbling upon a newborn infant roasted on a spit in the forest, the man wonders if the boy would ever speak again (212), and notes how 'a year ago the boy might sometimes pick up something and carry it with him for a while but he didn't do that anymore' (213). Apart from the bunker they find fully intact with canned foods, water, and bunk beds, all they come across appears to be broken - be it buildings, landscape, or people.

This sense of something being broken is also apparent in the narration of the text and its aesthetical structure. In stark contrast to *The Carbon Diaries 2015*, where we follow a straightforward timeline with dates, there is no real telling of when the events are taken place, which is pointed out by the man himself: 'He thought the month was October but he wasnt sure. He hadnt kept a calendar for years' (2). Not only is the place in time unknown, but the narrative itself appears somewhat broken. Here and there, the description of the journey towards the coast is intercepted with dreams, or the man's memories of certain dreams, or memories from 'that long ago' (19). The story is told in a third-person perspective, but even without the kind of diary fiction utilized in *The Carbon Diaries 2015*, the story about the man and the boy appears just as intimate, if not even more, than the one about Laura. Only at the very end does the perspective change to that of the boy. The third-person narration is limited to the immediate thoughts of the man, his actions, and what he can perceive and remember:

> He tried to think of something to say but he could not. He'd had this feeling before, beyond the numbness and the dull despair. The world shrinking down

> about a raw core of parsible entities. The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. (93)

In summarizing the question raised by Dürbeck, I believe the text makes an important comment on the inherent relationship between nature and man; a breakdown of our environment and societal structures ultimately leads to a breakdown of our own humanity, our capacity to care, and our capacity for memory. This is represented both in the characters found in the text, along with the narration and aesthetical structure.

Finally, Dürbeck asks the following question in her analysis: 'Which modes of narration (comic, tragic, ironic, didactic) are deployed to reflect on the challenges of the Anthropocene?'. I argue that both tragic and didactic modes of narration are at play in *The Road*, though perhaps the tragic one is the most obvious. While ironic and comic modes are at play in *The Carbon Diaries 2015*, McCarthy's novel is all but devoid of it. It is tragic in the sense that there aren't that many glimmers of hope seen throughout the novel. The father-and-son pair always seems to just escape certain mutilation and death, and there appears to be no hope in the landscape around them. As previously argued, the chance represented by the ocean for salvation, or a new start, is snuffed out towards the end of the novel. The man dies and leaves his malnourished son to fend for himself in a world that knows little love. Even when picked up by a group of seemingly 'good people' in the last pages of the novel, there is no guarantee that they'll be able to survive in a climate where nothing grows, and where the only replenishable food source in the short term is human flesh. And of course, the novel is tragic in the sense that it highlights all the things that stand to be lost; green forests, blue seas, clear skies, a flora of life. In this regard, McCarthy certainly deploys a tragic mode of narration for us to reflect on the challenges of the Anthropocene, challenges such as rapid deforestation worldwide, industrial wastelands, toxic waters, and of course loss of natural life on land, in the seas, and the skies.

But while a didactic mode of narration might not immediately seem just as obvious as the tragic one, it is certainly possible to read a sort of didactics in the text. Hanna Stark writes that 'in the tradition of dystopian fiction having a strong didactic function, *The Road* can be read as a warning about impending environmental catastrophe' (71). Whether or not the future depicted in *The Road* was caused by human-induced climate change, the resulting breakdown in the biosphere and of societal structures is not an unthinkable scenario in our world. Thus, the novel holds an immediate didactic function as a warning. But one could also approach the text as an extension of the tragic mode. Huebert writes:

> As species and ecosystems continue to vanish, the recognition of loss and the project of collective mourning become increasingly necessary. Though it may seem to be a defeatist gesture to mourn what is not yet lost, confronting the necessity for environmental protomourning can help to create a richer approach to environmentalism, one that challenges and builds on the existing, primarily conservative, rhetoric of climate change. (77)

Huebert's point is that in the act of mourning, there is a sense of didactics. By recognizing and grasping what is already lost and what stands to be lost, we might learn to both appreciate that which we still have and to act in strength to preserve it. In this way, *The Road* could help young adult readers develop 'the willingness to protect the environment' as heralded by the Norwegian Core Curriculum.

2.4 Too Gruesome to Teach?

Thus far, I've detailed why we should read the novel as climate fiction. I've examined how it reflects on the Anthropocene, both in setting, characters, narration, and aesthetic structure. But why should we consider it important for the young adult reader? Huebert is right in arguing that the novel might enable a sense of protomourning that could help inspire environmental action or environmental consciousness. But isn't the novel too gruesome for the young adult reader? Although *The Carbon Diaries 2015* is dramatic enough in its depictions of protesting youths and the immediate aftermath of a flood striking London, it never goes as far as *The Road* and its grotesque imagery of dead bodies and cut-off limbs. For all the carbon restrictions put on her life, there aren't many instances where we truly fear for Laura's life, and her use of humour and exaggerations allows for a somewhat light-hearted narrative. We never follow Laura down a cellar door, only to find 'a man with his legs gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt' (116), or walk through the woods with her, only to stumble upon 'a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit' (212). *The Road* bears many more similarities with traditional dystopias, offering a bleak and hopeless image of the future, whereas *The Carbon Diaries 2015* never allows the light to be completely snuffed out.

Not being categorized as young adult literature does, however, not disqualify *The Road* from being approachable or indeed rewarding for young adult readers. Few would argue that *Hamlet* is especially targeted at young adult readers, yet we still teach it in high schools. We do so, not only because of its status as an important piece of the Western literary canon, but because we want students to engage with the text, consider its characters, moral dilemmas,

and its sensitive subjects such as mental illness and suicide, etc. *The Road* contains a few grotesque and horrible depictions, but it never encourages suicide or cannibalism. Rather, it depicts the circumstances that would drive people to such extremes, while exploring important moral boundaries. Jöelle Turin asks us to remember that 'a book is not reduced to the themes that it treats, but (…) is a wisely organized construction that makes sense and invites readers, by diverse procedures, to put themselves in the story and to extract some meaning from the information that is given them and the reported events' (7). As Gavey Johnson and Peter Johnston experienced in their study of young adult reader's engagement with disturbing texts, 'students who chose to read disturbing texts were drawn to the moral complexities of the narratives more than to any graphic details' (144). *The Road* even assists young adult readers in identifying these moral complexities, as illustrated by the boy's insistently questioning his father about whether they are the good guys after first shooting a cannibal in the woods early in the text, and then forcing a desperate thief to strip naked and leaving him for dead at the end of the novel.

Thus, even if *The Road* might employ a tragic mode of narration, it does not exclude it from having a didactic impact. Perhaps more importantly is to recognize the value of reading multiple stories that engages with the Anthropocene, not just tragic stories, or comedic stories. As argued by Siri Veland et al.: 'Diverse narrative forms, from scientific reports and scenario planning, to fictional writing, each have a role to play, as they set conditions for imagined and possible futures. A poverty of stories risks trapping us in surreptitious human-natural system dynamics. Narrative matters for sustainability' (45). They point out that 'Globally, diverse societies interpret risk and experience agency and belonging according to cultural narratives into which the climate change story may or may not find purchase' (44), and that while fictional narratives on their own might not be able to fill the 'information' deficit of communicating the dangers of climate change, they might 'fill a "narrative deficit" that could push the reader to become more curious about real risks and opportunities' (44). We should acknowledge that there does not exist *one* way of writing about climate change, but multiple. And we should, accordingly, offer pupils a diverse range of fiction to choose from when teaching environmental change, rather than solely a tragic one.

2.5 Conclusion

The Road, just like *The Carbon Diaries 2015* which is the focus of the next chapter, offers a realistic take on a world affected by climate change, although set in two starkly different periods of such a change. Apart from some of the dreams dreamt by the man in *The Road*, the

text appears perfectly grounded in a realistic and gritty setting – the choices taken by the father are increasingly desperate and highly believable given the circumstances the pair find themselves in. But where *The Carbon Diaries 2015* depicts a society trying to combat climate change by regulating private luxuries, *The* Road depicts a climate ravaged world in which the only luxury is staying alive – the worth of which is constantly questioned throughout the text. I argue that it holds an important place in the canon of climate fiction and that its thought experiment of a modern world devoid of a functioning biosphere is more important than its refusal to speculate on what caused it. The text presents a 'what if'-scenario of a world devoid of many of the things young adults may take for granted today. It affords the young adult reader the chance to realize that these comforts are indeed under threat and that many species and parts of the biosphere have already gone extinct or become destroyed.

I further argue that McCarthy's novel asks the question of what living in a world deprived of nature does to us humans, specifically our ability to trust, and care for, other people. Discussing this central question could go some way towards implementing the willingness to 'protect the environment', as mandated by the Norwegian Core Curriculum. The text might be bleaker and more tragic than other texts taught to young adults, but it still lends itself to teaching climate change in a number of ways. Students could be asked to consider the description of the environment in the novel and draw scenes from it. They could investigate some of the descriptions from the novel and compare them with their own world – can they find places similarly ravaged by environmental degradation? They could discuss whether some people are more responsible than others for bringing about a potential environmental collapse. They could be asked to investigate the claim that climate change forced some Neanderthals into cannibalism. They could be asked which steps are morally just and which aren't in order to avoid a world deprived of a biosphere, and whether merely 'staying alive' justifies eating other people. These thoughts will be revisited in chapter four.

3 *The Carbon Diaries 2015:* Climate change as Teenage Nuisance

3.1 Introduction

In *The Carbon Diaries 2015*, we meet sixteen-year-old Brit Laura Brown. She's the bassist in the local punk-rock outfit 'the dirty angels', and she resents going to school. Like many teenagers, she feels like the sanest person in her family, and she secretly wishes for her crush to notice her. The novel is narrated through the entries in her diary, starting on 1 January 2015. Laura introduces us to a world where the UK has decided to reduce its carbon emissions by 60%. The decision comes after the catastrophic event known as 'the Great Storm': 'We were supposed to get there by 2030, but after the Great Storm everything changed, and it all became more hectic' (10-11). A 'compulsory carbon card' is issued to all citizens, which restricts the use of carbon through a points system. Laura's diary entries narrate the mundane and deceptively slow impact climate change comes to have on her life and how she, as a rebellious underachiever, tries to cope with it.

In this chapter, I first examine the attributes the novel shares with other works of young adult dystopian literature. Then, as with *The Road*, I apply Dürbeck's approach to examine how the text comments on the Anthropocene. Through this analysis, I highlight three elements that in combination make the novel a good choice for addressing the Norwegian Core Curriculum's call for environmental teaching. First, the novel introduces readers to a teenage protagonist who is both relatable and flawed, and who distinguishes herself from most other cli-fi protagonists in being 'ordinary'. Secondly, the novel is written in the style of *diary fiction*, which offers a sense of honesty and immediacy, as well as allowing climate change to move in and out of focus throughout a full year for the young protagonist, just like it does for most readers. And lastly, the novel depicts climate change as a slow and ongoing process, as opposed to a catastrophic, apocalypse-event scenario, which in turn confirms the experiences of climate change held by most readers, while still challenging them to imagine the real impact it could have on their future.

3.2 *The Carbon Diaries 2015,* Climate Change and Young Adult-Post Disaster Fiction

Climate change was not an unexplored topic in the world of fiction or public debate around the time Lloyd's novel was being published. By 2009, climate change had made its presence felt in various disaster movies and several novels. In 2004, the special effects-heavy disaster movie *The Day After Tomorrow* told the story of global warming resulting in a global

cooldown, hitting major cities with everything from blizzards to monster tsunami waves. It grossed close to 190,000,000 USD domestically, and more than 550,000,000 USD worldwide. In 2006, former Vice-President Al Gore starred in *An Inconvenient* Truth, a film that documented Gore's campaign to educate the public about global warming. Gore and the IPCC (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) went on to win the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. By 2008, blogger Dan Bloom had coined the term 'cli-fi' in one of his blog entries. 'Bursting onto the scene' seems a suitable description for the development taking place during the start of the 2000s. In her 2016 review of climate change's prevalence in literature and literary study, John-Putra states that 'climate change is no longer a marginal topic in literature and literary studies' (266).

In both *The Road* and *The Carbon Diaries* 2015, disasters strike, and the climate has changed for the worse. But unlike McCarthy's novel, Lloyd's text was written with young adults as the intended audience. Elizabeth Braithwaite characterizes *The Carbon Diaries 2015* as *young adult post-disaster fiction*, which is to say fiction that features a world set some time after a disaster. It can be set momentarily after, some months or years may have passed, or it might even be generations into the future. The disaster might be somewhat local, and it does not have to be on such a scale that it fundamentally changes the landscape of the world or societal structures depicted in the novel. Braithwaite further classifies Lloyd's novel as a *survivor text* (8). In this kind of text, 'the function of the disaster is to create a situation in which the young adult protagonist and other survivors of the disaster have to struggle with simply staying alive' (8).

A few things about this description and its relation to the novel in question are worth elaborating on. First, there are two such disasters at work in this novel: climate change itself, and the event referred to as 'The Great Storm', which in the book took place in December 2010. Second, it does seem a bit far-fetched to say that the protagonist 'struggles with simply staying alive'. The storm event of December 2010 does result in the death of about 8,000 people, wreck 6,000,000 homes and businesses, and destroys nearly 2,500,000,000 acres of agricultural land (6), but it does not plunge the world of the protagonist into a world of barbarism akin to the world depicted in *The Road* or the *Mad Ma*x-franchise. Neither does it introduce a form of dystopian dictatorship that rules the world of Susanne Collin's *The Hunger Games* (2008). In this sense, *The Carbon Diaries 2015* does not go 'all the way' in terms of dystopia – the world is far from beyond mending, and its inhabitants are not as oppressed as we might find in other novels. It would then perhaps be more appropriate to term

the novel as a *soft survivor text*. In sum, *The Carbon Diaries 2015* is both cli-fi and a soft survivor text. As mentioned in the previous chapter, we must read and teach a variety of stories about climate change and the Anthropocene. A sole focus on texts that describe worlds beyond mending should be avoided, and a focus on a multitude of texts should be adopted. Thus, both McCarthy and Lloyd's texts could be taught side-by-side. Where *The Road* is a *hard survivor text,* Lloyd's novel presents the reader a world not too unfamiliar to our own, underlining just how close we might be to the kind of scenario this chapter now turns to.

3.3 The Anthropocene as Witnessed by a Teenager

Moving on to Dürbeck's questions, I begin by investigating the following: 'how are large-scale global changes depicted and which characters are suitable to reflect on a deep time perspective?' (113). As with *The Road*, the first half of the question will be answered first. *The Carbon Diaries 2015* presentation of large-scale global changes remains within the realm of the possible. It never goes too far into what could be considered an apocalyptic scenario or something unrealistic. Like the world of today, weather phenomena such as firestorms, heatwaves, and floods are highly present. Throughout the novel, Laura informs the reader about the steadily changing weather conditions. Observe her comments from May about the recent water shortage: 'Unbelievable. No rain since the beginning of April and they're saying there's going to be a water shortage. Turns out London's had less rain this year than Ethiopia. Who makes this stuff up? All I can remember is rain and snow' (117). Or her entry from June 17th: 'No rain for 9 weeks and counting' (147). The young adult reader in 2021 is highly accustomed to seeing TV clips and news bits featuring these kinds of extreme weather events. Such images will not feel fictitious or unrealistic at all, but highly (and perhaps scarily) familiar. Large-scale global changes are presented as something almost mundane, but unquestionably present – as slow-moving, but steadily affecting our lives.

Even when venturing into a more apocalyptic territory, the novel refuses to stray too far off from the believable. In its final arc, the text depicts the flooding of London. But rather than focusing on the big water masses themselves, Lloyd is more concerned with detailing the catastrophic effect on the people of London. In this instance, Laura is attempting to obtain antibiotics for her sister Kim:

> I've lined up for 2 days at the hospital for antibiotics for Kim. They've cleared out the reception, turned it into an emergency room, and there's tents set up all over the car park. It was so horrible. At one point they wheeled in this little kid.

> He was curled up on a bed and kept groaning, "Please don't inject me", but the doctor pushed a syringe into his skull and began to stitch up a deep cut in the back of his head. (314)

Here, we're presented with a highly believable scene of what a post-disaster would look like for a teenager like Laura – the dramatic event of a young boy injected with a syringe through the skull inducing a sense of horror as to how natural disasters aren't just destructive on impact, but in its aftermath as well. Lloyd's depiction of disaster does not constrain itself to the inter-personal level but offers us something of an overview of how a multi-million city like London could be affected by a huge, climactic event:

> There's looting across the city, and it's spreading. The mayor's ordered loads of police to stop search-and-rescue and get back to the streets to stop the raiding. The cholera's spread out from Canning Town. 5 dead overnight and 105 hospitalized today from Beckton and Silvertown. All water's been cut off in the east to stop people even *washing* with contaminated supply. (311-312)

There are several descriptions such as these throughout the novel, in which Lloyd decides not to focus on big tidal waves and the destruction of landmark buildings. Here, the focus is on people, human behaviour, and human experience. The novel works as a clear contrast to the disaster movie clichés that the young adult reader has been steadily provided throughout the early 21st century. The story does not primarily concern itself with dramatic descriptions of massive earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Neither does it feature the stereotypical brave but emotionally broken scientists as its protagonist. Instead, it puts the human experience of coping with ever-changing circumstances caused by big, environmental change at the heart of the story. It presents its characters as everyday people living under increasingly hard conditions, even going as far as to ridicule the big Hollywood blockbuster:

> After practice we all went to watch *Icebreaker*, which was this 3-D thriller about New York freezing over. It was kind of weird watching it, though; it was meant to be all tearjerky – this family and all the shit they were going thru – but every time they cried or whatever, everyone in the theater laughed. The family just seemed so spoiled, like children. In the end scene the dad hero guy was trying to outrun a glacier in a Jeep and Adi shouted "Bullshit!" and a whole bunch of people in our row cheered. (36)

It is difficult not to think about the movie *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), which features an identical scenario to the one in *Icebreaker.* It's a special effects-heavy science fiction movie, featuring a paleoclimatologist protagonist attempting to save his son who's trapped in New York by the freezing weather. What is interesting here is the two-pointed criticism raised by the novel toward these kinds of representations. First of all, it attacks consumerism – the audience is laughing at the 'spoiled' family. It is not far-fetched to suggest that they wouldn't have found this scene funny, had they not been currently living under the newly introduced carbon rationing scheme. Now that they're forced to live more restricted and carbon-reduced lives, they appear able to see the humour in being overly attached to material possessions. It's also clear from the messages Laura receives from her cousin in Washington (Amy) that people outside the UK are having a hard time imagining their struggles: 'we re doin a skool project on u guys in uk and wtched a crazy docu on all the hard shit n stuff. its really cool, we are totally 110% behind you guys all the way. for real' (57). Amy's fascination with the UK is down to the fact that they are the only country enacting such a drastic carbon rationing scheme. But just like Laura in the UK, Amy's life soon becomes drastically altered when massive storms start hitting the US.

Secondly, Lloyd is criticising the realism of such portrayals. Laura's friend Adi spontaneously reacts to the image of a Jeep being able to outrun a glacier. Not only does this scene seem way over the top for the audience members – it appears as far too recognizable to the reader. Over the last couple of years, audiences have been steadily fed with disaster flicks that heavily rely on the hard work of C.G.I, animators, and special effects makers to sell their illusion – so much so that we might feel even more numbed from the human element in such films. Adi's response in some way also echoes some of the fears certain scientists had concerning the release of *The Day after Tomorrow.* In an article detailing the political debate surrounding the movie at the time of release, paleoclimatologist Dan Schrag was quoted as saying: 'I have mixed feelings about this (…) On the one hand, I'm glad that there's a big-budget movie about something as critical as climate change. On the other, I'm concerned that people will see these over-the-top effects and think the whole thing is a joke.' (Bowles). Further cementing the novel's sense of realism is its decision to stray away from a techno-optimistic narrative. The way of dealing with the climate crisis illustrated in the book is not some form of revolutionary new technologies including bioengineering, like in Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* (2009). Rather, the solution is good, old-fashioned government regulations – and a push to reduce excessive consumerism. This is of course the very crux of

what is happening now, as it becomes painfully clear to more and more people and decision-makers that there is no quick-fix to climate change. The idea that endless growth can be combined with a sustainable climate for all life to thrive in is being challenged by more and more young people. The young adult reader will find that concern echoed by the myriad of protests mentioned throughout the novel.

Returning to Dürbeck, the second half of the first question asks, 'which characters are suitable to reflect on a deep time perspective?' At first glance, it is tempting to disregard Laura as a suitable character. She's 16 years old, well off, and appears uninterested in anything other than her immediate future. But I argue that she is such a character. Not only is she highly critical of the effect climate change has on her life, illustrated by her band having increased difficulties finding the time to practice, as electricity becomes hard to come by. Her family starts breaking apart as they're forced to spend much more time in the same building while having their luxuries greatly reduced due to the Carbon Point system. She's also clearly disillusioned with the lack of agency left to her generation by the preceding one: 'How did people let things get so bad? Selfish bastards' (209). This is a clear example of Laura reflecting on a deep time perspective: generations upon generations of humans have put the planet on a path that leaves Laura no other option than to abandon many of the freedoms and pleasures known to the generations before her.

Through Laura, the young adult reader can reflect on the kinds of luxuries and liberties they themselves may take for granted, as they observe them being taken away from Laura. Helpful in this sense is the fact that Laura is a relatable protagonist, which is a feature the novel shares with many other entries into young adult literature. But unlike many pieces of climate fiction that feature the proto-type white scientist who tries to warn everyone about the impending disaster (like Frank Vanderwal in the *Forty Signs of Rain* or Jack Hall in *The Day after Tomorrow*), *The Carbon Diaries 2015* opts for the unacademic youngster – a teenage girl with an unspectacular life. Lloyd secures a more realistic, less over-the-top narrative that keeps us focused on human thoughts and interactions, and less on earthquakes and blizzards. Laura is concerned with what happens next with her band and her love interests - having climate change regulations thrown into the mix on top of it all is more of a nuisance than something that frightens her, at least initially.

As noted by writer Elizabeth Dearl: 'having a relatable main character is the key ingredient to a young-adult novel' (54). And Laura strikes us as such. She's privileged, but

she's also an outsider. She's opposed to authority and feigns ignorance to those she holds dear, but she is still clearly harbouring worries about how climate change is affecting the world around her. But just as important as the impending breakdown of the societal structures on the macrolevel is the one taking place in her family – her parents' relationship starts decaying rapidly, and her rebellious older sister is refusing to adhere to neither her parent's concerns nor the strict regulations enforced by the Government. This affords Laura the space to act as a voice of reason and clarity for the reader; she's the young person who's being forced to act like an adult in her social circle, just like many of us might feel when we are growing up. She describes her parents as being 'in deep denial' (2) about the gravity of the situation and what lies ahead. Her mother resorts to responding to everything in an over-positive way. Her father is gently optimistic at first but slowly realizes that his job in the tourist industry is going to go away soon and with it his enthusiasm and purpose in life. Her sister Kim has effectively decided to unsubscribe from the family, who has no second thought about spending her whole family's carbon budget on watching TV all by herself: 'I actually feel sick being in the same atmosphere, she's radiating so much wicked energy. She's definitely got the TV going 24/7 in her room, I can hear it through her wall' (12). Kim is not just being anti-social; she's also ignorant of how her actions might put her whole family in trouble. She chooses not to let her life be limited by the actions of the preceding generation.

Being judgemental of her family is of course not enough on its own to guarantee a character for a young adult reader to latch onto. Laura must be shown to have more worth to the story than that of a commentator; she must be fully fleshed out, with desires and interests of her own. These desires and interests are indeed stated at the start of the novel, typed into a 'New Year's wish list' (2) by her father. Her three wishes are: 'Keep the dirty angels up and running. 24/7 access to e-pod. Ravi Datta to notice me (did not write this down)' (2). Summed up, she wishes for her band to keep on going, to be able to listen to music whenever she likes, and for her school crush to notice her – all common aspirations of a teenager. A counterargument to Laura being a relatable character would be to point to her being a member of a punk-rock band, a music genre branded with outsider status (bar its glory days in the '70s and '80s). She also appears to be highly knowledgeable of what's happening in the world around her, despite all her difficulties getting through school and feigned ignorance about politics. Take for instance this passage:

> It's like some ice-giant's taken Europe in its frozen grip. Traffic paralyzed everywhere – 20,000 people stuck in their cars overnight around Budapest in –

> 33 °C; 35,000 trapped on a highway near Heidelberg in Germany; 18, 000 snowed in in Vienna. Practically every airport's closed in central Europe. (52)

This is reflective of the fact that Laura is anything but ignorant of her surroundings; she's attentive and concerned with the way the climate crisis is unfolding across Europe and Britain. Not only is Laura critical towards the behaviour of others and the older generation's inability to solve the issue – she's concerned that her life will start rapidly changing. And like any other teenager, Laura is desperate for things not to change, and it's only a month into the first year of carbon rationing that she writes: 'I almost felt like a standard teenager on a Friday night tonight' (36). This entry signifies Laura's desire for a society unaffected by climate change restrictions and her appreciation of for once being able to fully engage with her own life. This type of desire would appear highly relatable for the young adult reader, as Weik points out:

> The young adult reader will likely understand that desire. It is the desire for a "better world" that is characterized not so much by an ideal society that lives in harmony with nature, but by total freedom and security, unlimited resources, a complete lack of responsibilities and obligations, happy but invisible parents, emotional stability, and a rewarding but undemanding love life. (75)

Although that kind of life might seem highly ideal in the eyes of a teenager, it is both highly unrealistic and indeed a dreadful prospect. And by witnessing that vision slowly fade in Laura's world, the young adult reader can reflect upon their own beliefs upon what freedom and a sustainable future means, and what securing such a future might demand of them. What *The Carbon Diaries 2015* so accurately portrays is Laura's slow realization that her selfish desire might never be fulfilled, as long as society is not able to live in harmony with nature. The young adult reader would realize along with Laura herself that she will need to learn to start *coping* – not only in terms of her emotional life but in terms of the rapidly changing circumstances caused by climate change. Braithwaite puts it aptly:

> Although she is not old enough to vote, she can admit to herself that she wants her old life back. This text is not about the brave and noble young adult (…) but rather points out the difficulties of changing ways of thinking and behaving, juxtaposed with the necessity of changing carbon-expensive practices. (7)

Through the portrayal of Laura as a relatable, pessimistic but passionate teenager growing up in Western society, the young adult reader can both identify the struggles climate change might impose on their own lives and make their value judgment as to whether Laura's ways of coping with reality are ones they'd consider themselves.

Having a relatable main character is not uncommon in young adult fiction and choosing an underachiever (as we might characterize Laura) as the focal point of the narrative is not new. Nor is it uncommon for these types of novels to feature main characters that do not start as extraordinary, but who are either revealed to be of much larger importance to the world mythos (take Harry Potter in the *Harry Potter*-novels), or characters that by their own efforts rise to be recognized as heroes (Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games*-novels). But writing about an ordinary teenager that remains that way throughout the novel, with no special powers, prophecies, or destined future, who does not do anything that upsets the world of the novel, is somewhat rare in terms of cli-fi novels. Concluding then on Dürbeck's first question, I argue that the novel depicts large-scale global changes in a highly realistic way and that Laura, through both her frustration with previous generations and her relatability to the young adult reader, makes for a suitable character to reflect on a deep time perspective.

Secondly, Dürbeck asks: 'In which way does literature comment on human geologic impact concerning the characters, the role of the narrator, and the aesthetic structure?' (113). In this aspect, I argue that Laura acts as an imagined time witness of a future that appears ever more conceivable. As stated when answering the first question, the liberties and freedom afforded to Laura have been greatly affected by human geologic impact. She's not afforded the same sort of agency and opportunity offered to her parents, which infuriates her, along with the fact that it is this very same parent generation that is found chiefly responsible for the restrictions now forced upon Laura. Not all characters are as bothered as Laura by the regulations. Some even see it as an opportunity for society to pull together: her neighbour, the old man Arthur, argues that 'carbon rationing won't last for ever' (266), even suggesting that this rationing is indeed something to be proud of: 'these years, when we all said No, enough! – those who come after us may well view us all as heroes' (267).

3.4 Laura as a Narrator and Diary Fiction

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, I argue that the increasing effects of climate change described in the text have implications for the role of the narrator in Lloyd's novel. In *The Carbon Diaries* 2015, Laura acts as a witness of a climate changed world to come. This is

enabled by Lloyd's decision to let Laura act as the sole narrator of the unfolding events through her diary entries from the fictional year 2015. But as opposed to *The Road*, in which the protagonist's only focus is for the well-being of his offspring, *The Carbon Diaries* envisions a protagonist, and a narrator, whose primary focus is on the well-being of the self. Thus, not only the role of the narrator but the aesthetical structure itself is affected. Utilizing the style of diary fiction is indeed one of the ways in which *The Carbon Diaries 2015* forcefully intervenes with the canon climate fiction, to which I now turn my attention. This narrative form is not uncommon in young adult fiction in general, but it is indeed uncommon for the type of post-disaster fiction mentioned by Braithwaite. Such texts are often written in a third-person perspective, such as in *The Giver* (1993) by Lois Lowry or *The Maze Runner* (2009) by James Dashner. There are texts written in a first-person perspective, such as *The Hunger Games* (2008) and Veronica Roth's *Divergent* (2011), which does give it some of the same narrative traits offered by *The Carbon Diaries 2015*, but they are not stylized as diaries.

True diary fiction texts in this literary landscape are harder to come by, although there are at least two worthy exceptions: James E. Sanford's *Nuclear War Diary* (1989) and Susan B. Pfeffer's *Life As We Knew It* (2006) – both of which could be considered survivor texts (though not *soft-survivor texts*), written from the perspective of young female protagonists. They are thus clearly like *The Carbon Diaries 2015* in style. However, none of the two deal with man-made climate change. Of course, the disaster in *Nuclear War Diary* is entirely man-made, but it is not a text about climate change. And while *Life As We Knew It* features both tsunamis and earthquakes, the disaster is caused by the Moon being hit by an asteroid, bringing the Moon closer to Earth which in turn affects the Earth's gravitational pull. None of the texts mentioned in this paragraph combines diary fiction with man-made climate change. Thus, *The Carbon Diaries 2015* could be said to be an uncommon novel, stylized as the diary of an ordinary 16-year old dealing with the ever-increasing threat of climate change.

How does the style of *diary fictio*n operate? Porter H. Abbott describes *diary fiction* 'not as a genre but as fiction employing a particular narrative device' (12). He identifies three 'functions' that this sort of fiction employ: '(…) mimetic, thematic and temporal – which distinguish the diary as a literary document' (12-13). Starting with the mimetic functions, Abbot highlights the perceived realness and authenticity of diary fiction, stating:

> (…) the sense of reality which the diary can foster is of two kinds. The artless spontaneity of the internal, non retrospective record is one. The other is the document itself, which, as a *document*, claims to be real. In other words, this is the kind of document that people, not professional writers, actually write. (13)

Abbot's point is that employing this narrative device can make both the action and, crucially, the author, feel more believable. The novels' attempt to mimic a real-life document gives it an air of authenticity – like the novel could just as well have been the real thing. In *Carbon Diaries 2015*, Lloyd does a good job of mimicking what a diary of a 16-year old living in 2015 might look like. There are multiple instances of informal language, along with entries that just spell simple statements like 'Weds, Jan 14th. There's heavy snowstorms all over southern Europe' (19). Additionally, there are multiple clip outs from newspapers, band posters, and e-mails throughout the text – all of them attributing to the illusion that this is a real diary written by a teenager. It helps breathe life and colour into the world of the protagonist, detailing what she's interested in and what she deems worthy to share with others. The addition of e-mails, posters, texts, and newspapers strengthens her authenticity as a teenager living in the 21st century. Entries such as the one from Jan 14th also display Laura's attentiveness to how climatic change is affecting the world she's living in.

The second functions mentioned by Abbot are the thematic ones. He explains that a great advantage afforded by diary fiction 'lies in its confinement of the reader to the internal world of a single ego' (17). This does of course hold true in the sense that our perspective into the world of *The Carbon Diaries 2015* is mostly restricted to Laura's, apart from her mail exchanges with her cousin Amy in the U.S. We're offered a well-off teenager's take on a world affected by climate change and restricted from viewing it from a position of someone already living in poverty. On the other hand, Laura is very keen to describe to the reader what is happening in other parts of the world, through multiple media clip outs and detailed descriptions of dramatic climatic events in Europe and the U.S. Abbot goes on to describe how some pieces of diary fiction utilize the physical surroundings and location of the diarist to certain effects, such as an isolated room, or an island even (18). However, *The Carbon Diaries 2015* does not appear too concerned with specifying Laura's location or place of writing. Abbot also acknowledges that the effect is 'not an inevitable effect of the form, but (…) an available one – an effect' (17). Laura is more focused on the detailing the events themselves than her surroundings. Thus, Lloyd's novel does not appear to fully subscribe to the thematic functions of diary fiction described by Abbot. We should also keep in mind that

many of us perceive the diary as a more honest and open medium than others, and we believe that the writer is not trying to convince us as readers of some given facts, as much as they are trying to convey an actual lived experience of reality. And if the goal is to make the young adult reader think about the potential impact climate change could have on their lives, which seems to be at the very least a secondary motive for Lloyd (330), avoiding a didactic, top-down message could be of extreme importance. As Dearl writes:

> Teens are able to smell a lecture coming a mile away, and they'll go to great lengths to avoid it (…) If a teen even suspects that a novel is trying to teach him a lesson, he'll toss that book aside so fast its pages will curl. This doesn't mean a writer can't impart a bit of wisdom – it simply means that the process must be subtle. (56-57)

Abbot's third set of functions concern temporality. Perhaps most relevant to *The Carbon Diaries 2015* is the idea about immediacy. Abbot argues that the immediacy to the action could help strengthen the authenticity of the story told, because while it can take away some of the narrator's credibility, 'the principal advantage of diary fiction on this score is the *immediacy of the writing itself*, however variable its distance from the action' (21). Laura's entries in *The Carbon Diaries 2015* are not as immediate as the ones described by Abbot. Her entries are not some variation of 'stream of consciousness' writing. But Laura's narrative still comes across as immediate. There is always the sense that the diary entry is written sometime later that day, and that Laura would be able to recollect the event and how she was feeling at that moment. Her entries appear to be written partially or fully in hindsight, not as it is happening – and the novel never strays from this.

A good example would be the day she and her friend get stuck on the tube due to a power failure (31). The diary entry starts in this manner: 'Oh God. Oh God. Me and Adi got trapped on the tube in rush hour' (31). Note that this also builds up suspense, one of the functions mentioned by Abbot as a temporal function available to diary fiction. The entry goes on to describe what was going on in detail, clearly illustrating that it has left its mark on Laura: 'Everyone was screaming and trying to get on the ground, but there wasn't enough space. I was going *please make it stop* over and over in my head but we just kept on and on. I thought we were gonna die' (27). Here, Laura is recollecting the event in hindsight, not writing it as it is happening. Thus, the text stays within the realm of the possible. But notice that Laura not only informs us about what has taken place – she's also letting us know how

she's feeling at the time of writing the entry itself: 'Oh God. Oh God'. Laura's quite clearly shaken by what has taken place, and her sitting down to write about the event before even getting enough time to truly settle down makes for a much more dramatic, and realistic read, and serves as a great example of Lloyd taking advantage of the diary format. It is an example of how human geological impact imposes itself on the role of the narrator.

It also marks a powerful moment in Laura's diary – a point at which she is forced to realize that a climate changed world is more than just bothersome regulations and fewer hours of band practice. It is a more fragile world, where the risks are increasingly heightened, and where something as mundane as taking the tube could quickly turn into a matter of life and death. The passage also serves as a way of presenting to the young adult reader the kind of scenario (power failure) that could become more common in a climate changed world. Thus, we can conclude with regard to Dürbeck's second question by stating that human geologic impact does affect the characters of the novel, both in terms of the characters themselves, but also the way the story is told. Laura's diary ascends from teenage diary to testament of the young adult living in a climate changed world. In such a world, even the most privileged of young people are gradually deprived of their liberties, and must like all others learn to live in a world of higher risks and greater instability.

3.5 Humour and Didactics

The last of Dürbeck's questions asks: 'Which modes of narration (comic, tragic, ironic, didactic) are deployed to reflect on the challenges of the Anthropocene?' (113). It is safe to say that *The Carbon Diaries 2015* is nowhere near as tragic as *The Road*. Although packed with it's fair share of catastrophes, especially towards the end of the novel, most of these happen elsewhere and to other people than Laura. It's mode of narration is more ironic than tragic, in the sense that adults start behaving like irrational children, while many young people start acting more responsibly. The text relies heavily on humour and irony. This is helped by the diary format, as this offers a sense of sincerity that Lloyd is sure to utilize – Laura offers us a range of funny remarks throughout the novel, like her increasing frustration with her parents' inadequacy in dealing with the climate restrictions: '*Both* parents going on about the miners! If they don't watch out I'll be a damaged child' (18). She also notes the irony of people heading off to the church, only to carry home free candles: 'Hypocrites. When did we all last go to church?' (27). Alison Miller et al. remark that 'the use of humour in the novel can be read as part of the text's agenda for promoting specific environmentally-responsible behaviours' (55). They argue that the Lloyd utilizes 'comedy and humour as methods to

position readers to consider and respond to the importance of environmental responsibility, at both personal and global levels' (55), putting the reader in a subject position 'which is based in "the recognition of the inevitability of failure and error" when it comes to the widespread and sustained ethical use of the natural environment, but which also understands "the need to act, with due care, in the very face of that recognition" (Szersinsky, 2007, p.351)' (p.52). Thus, both Laura's sarcastic tone throughout the text and her parent's rapid descent into childishness are not just meant as humour, but as moments of reflection for the young adult reader.

Laura is also keen to ridicule people representing authority, such as her school principal who is tasked with presenting the new carbon regulations at her school:

> Bob Jenkins, the principal, got up on stage and talked a load of crap about new horizons, but he looked the shakiest of the lot if you ask me (I saw him come in by bus this morning – where's your leather-seated Volvo now, Bobby boy?). Beads of sweat keep dropping off his forehead onto notes about our new heating and lighting allowance. (17)

The principal is of course looking shaky because he – just like a host of other authoritative figures in society, realizes the gravity of the situation and finds himself in clear lack of both competence and struggling to appear on top of things. Miller et al. argues that 'there is an evident gap between the conventional headmaster rhetoric and the reality that the college has overspent its rations, one which indicates that in effect Jenkins is powerless' (59). Laura does not take Mr. Jenkins seriously in any shape or form, being more interested in ridiculing his nervous appearance than the content of his presentation – as young adults often do if they don't respect the person in front of them. It is of course worth noting that Laura is very quick to judge others – a trait many people would say stems from insecurity and lack of confidence in oneself. Such insecurity and lack of confidence are not uncommon by any means, especially in teenagers, but in *The Carbon Diaries 2015*, that sense of insecurity is heightened to new levels as not even the grownups seem certain in their decision-making. Thus, the passage acts as social commentary on leaders and their apparent inadequacy to do anything about climate change.

Laura's lamentation over her essay assignment in Critical Thinking class is another way in which Lloyd employs humour to criticize people of authority: 'Whoever thinks up this

stuff (Crit Thinking teacher, Lisa Bell) definitely needs more sex. She's got to be frustrated. Otherwise why would she want to punish innocent teenagers so badly?' (14). Again we see Laura's discontent with authoritative figures in her life who are trying to educate her, and how her focus shifts to the way they talk, behave and appear, rather than their actual message. Ironically, the assignment given by her teacher is to write 'an informal personal review of an aspect of your home-life environment in the light of the new carbon rationing system' (19), which in all fairness is an attempt from the teacher to *do something about climate change*; that is putting the ball in her pupil's court, letting them explore, identify and discuss how climate change affects their life. This attempt is, of course, aggressively blocked out by Laura. This form of unwillingness to listen does not constrain itself to just educators, but grown-ups in general and official representatives. At one point, the family is visited by a female representative from the Carbon Department, or one of the 'carbon pigs' (58) as Laura designates her. Observe Laura's narration here:

> She talked *at* us for an hour. Blah, blah, the U.K is achieving its targets; blah, massive reduction in CO2 emissions in the atmosphere; blah, blah, setting an example to the world; blah, the personal is political; blah, blah. She kept putting her head on one side and doing this weird smile, sort of peeling her lips back over her pointy teeth, like a weasel on drugs. (59; emphasis added)

Laura steadily shuts out most of what somebody is trying to tell her. Also notice how Laura describes the representative as talking *at* her family, not *to* or *with* which would suggest an actual conversation as opposed to a lecture. Laura appears both disinterested and discontent with this form of top-down communication, just like Dearl suggests we might come to expect from just about any teenager. Thus, the governmental employee's message that the effort of everyone is needed to solve the climate crisis is lost on Laura. This critical interpretation of top-down communication is also on display at the end of the novel. As a flood hits London, the authorities appear both incapable and incompetent to handle the situation. It falls upon Laura's gym teacher, a few parents, and teenagers to look out for each other. At the time of greatest need, they are left alone. Lloyd's important point here is that top-down policies cannot amend the climate crisis on its own, and that there is real risk in believing that it could. The current status of the climate crisis proves her point, as decision makers are still unable to agree on the right path forward, while people are left helplessly waiting for any action to be taken. It will take the everyday heroism of everyone to care for each other, and to work together in order to change our current trajectory.

But although chiefly comic and ironic in narration, there is a definite sense of didactics at play in the text. Because even though Laura might not be much of a didactic expert herself, the novel does indicate to the young adult reader the kind of society they might soon end up living in, and how our human ecological impact on the planet might both restrict our freedom and put our everyday lives at much higher risk. Miller et al. writes:

> In *The Carbon Diaries 2015* the irony of a sixteen-year-old-girl understanding and responding to the environmental crisis with greater maturity than her mother creates space for a questioning of whether alternately helpless and hopeless adults can be trusted to competently enact the change required to prevent the catastrophic outcomes of carbon overuse. It becomes the role of young person to be critical of, and in turn choose to reject, adult behaviours from a position "above". (56)

Laura and her friends seem to want what any other teenager could be expected to want – freedom to do as they please, with responsibilities kept at the bare minimum. With carbon rationing bearing down on them, Laura feels robbed of the fun and carefree future of her teenage years. Weik accurately states: 'She feels that, as a teenager, she should have a right to a certain (carbon-saturated) normalcy and that her parents, as grown-ups, should somehow be on top of the situation instead of oscillating between false cheerfulness, anger, and denial' (74-75). Today's young adult reader will be able to recognize and share in the grudge held by Laura toward the parent generation – not only are these adults perceived to be the ones most responsible for the climate crisis, but they are failing to deal with it adequately. However, the young people in Lloyd's novel have to learn to live with the new regime and the impact of climate change on their lives, suggesting to the young adult reader that for future generations, dealing with climate change will not be a choice, but a necessity.

But although Laura and her generation appear highly frustrated with the way the parent generation acts and talks about climate change, which could suggest that a didactic approach to teaching climate change would be fruitless, they are not entirely negative to all forms of climate messaging – especially when it's voiced by young people themselves. One of the running plotlines in the novel is her fascination with the band *the hydrogen* (oftentimes shortened to *the hydro),* who themselves act as political activists. Laura's friend Claire describes their demonstration at Heathrow Airport in glowing detail:

> Then Paul Rees, the bass player out of *the hydro*, climbed onto that ladder thing passengers use to board the plane, yeah? And he sprayed all down the side of the plane, Climate Change = 250,000 deaths per year = 9/11 every week. Flying kills. Stop now. (89)

Protests such as these are applauded by the young people in the novel, which suggests that they are much more likely to take a climate-sensitive message seriously if presented to them by other young people. This seems to resonate very strongly with the emergence in recent years of young environmental leaders such as Greta Thunberg and groups like the Extinction Rebellion, and their impact on young people. It would also suggest that a message playing on a sense of both aggression and urgency could be effective in mobilizing young people. In sum, both Dearl and the novel would seem to suggest that we should seek to avoid talking *at* young adult readers about climate change, if we are to succeed in helping them process the complexity of this global challenge – and, that young people themselves need to be involved with communicating this message.

Lloyd's novel succeeds in avoiding the pitfall described by Dearl by keeping the story focused on the experiences of the narrator, rather than flood the text with statistics and environmentally friendly messaging. The novel certainly utilizes fictional news items, weather statistics, and weather descriptions at several points in the novel, but they all serve the purpose of creating a relatively realistic diary – take for instance the inclusion of the 'carbon card' (12), the news story about the forest fire in Algarve, Portugal (167), or the sketch of the Thames barrier (250). These all serve to enrich the reader's immersion into Laura's world, rather than point an obvious, lecturing finger about what will happen if we don't start living in balance with nature. The young adult reader is allowed to recognize for themselves the similarities between their realities and that of Laura's, and thus Lloyd can be seen to adhere to Dearl's advice. Summing up the last of Dürbeck's questions, the novel does indeed operate mostly with comedy and irony, but it does hold a didactic potential as both a stern reminder that climate change could come to restrict the kinds of liberties and risk-free life most Western teenagers experience today, and that while changing our habits might be tough, the alternative would be catastrophic. Miller et al. points out, 'the humiliations visited upon Laura and her family often cause them to correct their behaviours and in doing so they serve a parable-like function for readers – thus the text attempts to encourage the reader to correct their own behaviour in accordance with the overt ideologies of the narrative' (55).

3.6 Conclusion

The eerie similarity between what is happening Laura's world and the steadily increasing impact of climate change in the world of the young adult reader, should make the novel an appealing choice for teachers wanting to teach climate change - possible even more so now than when it was first published. In 2008, the fictional year of 2015 was still seven years off. Still, I argue that Lloyd presents the young adult reader with a vision of how their life might change, if their current carbon habits do not. Through Laura, she chronicled the increasingly restricted life of one of teenager told to 'endure, so that the future can be saved', and how that kind of messaging can appear more and more hollow as the ones arguably most responsible for the drastic measures, the grownups, show their incompetency throughout the novel. I further argue that none of these elements have lost their relevancy with the passing of time. Six years on from 2015, Lloyd's gloomy vision arguably seems more likely than ever. Thus, teachers could engage students to consider a range of questions. Would the pupils consider the novel to be science fiction or realistic fiction? Further, pupils could be asked to identify certain weather phenomena that appear in the novel and look for similar events in their own world. They could try to come up with their own carbon budget, and compare it with Laura's, as well as with other pupils. They could compare the protests taking place across the world these days with the ones in the book and discuss whether the means taken by some of the protesters in the novel are justifiable or not.

What helps distinguish *The Carbon Diaries 2015* from other works of climate fiction is the blend of young narrator, diary format, its sense of humour and realistic descriptions of a world affected by climate change. The text never ventures too far into the realm of the impossible or unrealistic, serving as both as a fun and interesting read that gives the young adult food for thought about climate change, and what kind of regulations could be put on their lives in the future. As stated by Weik, 'losing our habitual lifestyle may be painful (…) but it may also lead to new solidarities, new value systems, and new modes of agency, all propelled by the hope that a different and in some regards ecotypian society will be possible' (70). At the very least, Lloyd's novel makes a good choice for anyone wanting to inspire young adults, to think about their place in a future that looks set to be heavily affected by climate change. In the next chapter, I discuss both why we should and how we could teach climate change in the classroom. I then suggest approaches to teaching the two texts analysed in chapter two and three, before concluding the thesis.

4 The why's and how's of teaching *The Road* and *The Carbon Diaries 2015*

4.1 Introduction

The two previous chapters have been dedicated to the analysis and interpretation of two important pieces of climate fiction. I have sought to highlight how each text comments upon the Anthropocene, and what value each text holds for the young adult reader. In chapter two, I claim that McCarthy's *The Road* asks us to pay attention to all that we hold dear, which would surely be lost in a world without a functioning biosphere – and how this strongly resonates with the wording in the Norwegian Core Curriculum. I also highlighted that although some critics are reluctant to call it climate fiction, the text comments a great deal on the attitudes and mechanisms that accelerate global warming and climate change, such as consumerism and what Huebert identifies as 'ecological cannibalism'. In chapter three, I claimed that Lloyd's *The Carbon Diaries 2015* offers the young adult reader a glimpse into the life of an increasingly climate changed teenager, and how its relatable main character, its sense of realism, its narrative structure, and its style of humour distinguishes it as a highly teachable work of climate fiction. In this chapter, I aim to discuss how these two texts could be thought. I start by explaining two key questions:

1. *Why* we should teach climate change using fiction

2. *How* we could teach climate change using fiction

Answering the first question will require us to return to the Norwegian Core Curriculum, Beach et a., as well as a look at the Curriculum for the English subject in Norwegian schools, known as ENG01-04. Some language teaching research will also be examined. The second question will be answered by looking at approaches to using fiction in the classroom, climate fiction specifically. Towards the end of the chapter, I suggest approaches to teaching Lloyd and McCarthy's texts, before I conclude the thesis by summarizing my findings. I argue that both texts can be thought in a way that allows pupils to showcase and develop a range of skills, from digital literacy to literary analysis. I end by proposing a five-week course for each text that aims at deepening pupil's knowledge of climate change, which is achieved by engaging with a range of sources while remaining rooted within the worlds presented in the novels.

4.2 Why teach climate change with fiction?

Answering this question requires connecting a few dots. First of all, as made clear in the introduction; teaching climate change is not a choice for teachers in the Norwegian school system; it is an expectation. As made clear in the Norwegian Core Curriculum, 'the pupils shall develop awareness of how our lifestyles impact nature and the climate, and thus also our societies. The school shall help the pupils to develop the willingness to protect the environment'. Second, textbooks and non-fiction are not the only mediums that hold value from an educational viewpoint. Elizabeth J. Marsh et al. explain that 'there is another educational tradition with an even longer history— learning from fictional sources that blend the real and imaginary in a narrative form' (449). On the issue of literature and reading, the curriculum in English states:

> Working with texts in English helps to develop the pupils' knowledge and experience of linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as their insight into ways of living, ways of thinking and traditions of indigenous peoples. By reflecting on, interpreting and critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society. Thus the pupils will develop intercultural competence enabling them to deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns. They shall build the foundation for seeing their own identity and others' identities in a multilingual and multicultural context. ('Curriculum In English (ENG01-04)')

Applying fiction in the classroom serves a great deal of purposes, as pointed out by Marsh et al. in their 2012 review of the science into 'benefits of using fiction to help students learn accurate information about the world' (449). Some of these purposes include helping pupils 'visualize course content' (…), stimulating discussion (…), and teaching perspective taking (…). One of the main reasons is to promote student interest in course content' (450). They further highlight that 'fiction is a powerful tool for engaging students and teaching veridical content, even if it also has the potential to transmit false knowledge. Fictional sources are frequently encountered in everyday life and may influence learning more than traditional sources (e.g., textbooks) that are unlikely to be encountered outside of formal educational contexts' (464).

Further, the curriculum states that at the end of the first year of high school, pupils are expected to be able to 'read, analyse and interpret fictional texts in English'. Thus, two facts

are made clear: pupils in the Norwegian school system are expected to learn about how humans impact the environment, and they are expected to read in order to gain 'knowledge of culture and society' and enable them to 'deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns'. As highlighted by Beach et al., 'ELA students can explore creative utopias and dystopias, climate fiction, and film to imagine the social consequences of the climate crisis as well as different futures and a safe, healthy, just, and environmentally sustainable world' (20). Taking this into account, it does appear harder to argue against utilizing climate fiction in the classroom, rather than in favour of it. One might argue that we should teach literature that 'covers more ground' than literature focusing on the climate, steering us away from climate fiction. But as I have shown through my analysis of two such text, the focus is never solely on the climate. An abundance of themes are on display in both *The Road* and *The Carbon Diaries 2015,* such as empathy, humanity, cruelty, intimacy, and loneliness. Thus, pupils learn about more than just climate through these texts.

4.3 Approaches to using climate fiction in the classroom

While there has been an increase in the publication of climate fiction, and indeed works of ecocriticism by scholars, publications that explore using fiction to teach climate change have been somewhat lacking. Climate change has for many years permeated subjects such as the Natural sciences, but only in the last decade or so do articles and books about utilizing climate fiction in the English subject classroom become more frequent. That is not to say English teachers have been uninterested in teaching climate change, but rather that there is much still to be desired in regard to sharing and promoting ideas about teaching climate fiction. Luckily, there are many signs that things are moving in the right direction.

For instance, Maria Lindgren Leavenworth and Annika Manni investigate how speculative fiction 'assists when re-thinking current structures and patterns by letting readers encounter possible scenarios in a safe space, in this way broadening discussions regarding future sustainability'. They 'identify a number of contact points between our materials and suggest how findings point to bright spots when re-thinking the role of literature in education for sustainable development (ESD) and, conversely, the importance of young learners' voices within ESD for literature studies' (727). There are websites that offer a great deal of resources for teaching climate fiction. One such is The TROP ISCU project ('Curricula'), funded by The International Council for Science (ICSU), led by the International Union of Biological Sciences (IUBS), and co-led by the International Union for Quaternary Research (INQUA). It offers a complete lesson plan that aims at teaching pupils about climate fiction, ways to

perform literary analysis on such literature, and how they could be the centre of classroom discussion. Another resource is InTeGrate, 'Interdisciplinary Teaching about Earth for a Sustainable Future. Supported by the Geological Society of America, among others, they offer a module that

> is designed to be completed in introductory natural science classes where literature is not typically included as well as in humanities classes where climate change science is not normally addressed. Students will engage in activities that address both climate change science and climate change literature, including graphing data, working in groups to analyze and interpret data, creating a concept map, conducting rhetorical analyses, and writing and responding to a blog. ('Cli-Fi: Climate Science In Literary Texts')

This is indeed a great resource for attempting to 'bridge the gap' between the humanities and subjects that concern them more with natural sciences, and I believe it could be highly beneficial for teachers of different disciplines to explore how they can assist each other for the benefit of their pupils. At the same time, it is highly understandable that many educators would feel that such an undertaking might be too big of an ask in an otherwise hectic school year. Approaching climate change in such a way demands sufficient planning and engagement. Therefore, I find it highly important to investigate ways for teachers to teach climate change on their own, and I argue that using fiction is a good option to do so. But I would also strongly recommend all teachers to engage in discussions about how best to explain and approach concepts, especially those more historically discussed by other disciplines.

Summed up, there are many resources available that offer educators ways to teach climate change through the use of fiction. However, examples of teaching climate change using the two specific texts under consideration in this thesis are harder to come by. For instance, researching examples on how to teach *The Road* as climate fiction was fruitless. There are many examples and lesson plans detailing how to teach the novel, but none that utilize an ecocritical perspective. I propose a way of teaching the novel with such a perspective in the next subchapter, which builds on my findings in the second chapter of this thesis. Unlike McCarthy's novel, people have proposed ways to teach *The Carbon Diaries 2015*. For instance, Beach et al. suggest that pupils 'could examine their own locations in a future world similar to that portrayed in the novel' (ch.4). But while there is a lack of articles on how to approach *The Road* with the intention of teaching it as climate fiction, teachers

shouldn't be afraid to task pupils with reading it through an ecocritical lens. The next subchapter suggests how to teach each novel as part of a five-week programme for pupils at the upper secondary level. – four weeks dedicated to the novel in question, and one week dedicated to a final assignment.

4.4 Teaching Lloyd and McCarthy's texts.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, I argued that these two novels are very different in terms of tone, characters, but that they both envision a climate changed world worth discussing in the classroom. Where *The Road* implores pupils to consider all that stands to be lost and what it would mean to live in a world without a biosphere, *The Carbon Diaries 2015* challenges pupils to consider their own carbon habits and what part they themselves might play in bringing about a sustainable future. Beach et al. describes a way one teacher decided to teach this novel – by tasking pupils with writing their own carbon diaries on the back of reading the novel:

> In writing their diaries, students decided for themselves what experiences to include. Next, they used their diaries to create short stories addressing, among other things, the energy use of household and personal appliances, portable devices, computers, gaming, lighting, transportation, heating, etc. In discussions of their diaries and stories, students expressed concerns about the impact of reduced sources of energy for future generations and the costs of saving energy. They identified barriers to making any changes in their use of energy: their own familiar, habitual lifestyle; being detached from the problem; not having to pay energy bills; and, the design of appliances—for example, televisions that are left on. (Ch.4)

With this approach, Lloyd's world transcends from being merely fictional into something more tangible. Having just read how tough it was for Laura and her family to cope with carbon restrictions, pupils might be more attuned to their own carbon habits, and the kinds of liberties they have. Further, pupils could be tasked with investigating their own carbon footprints, for example by utilizing the WWF Footprint Calculator ('WWF Footprint Calculator'). Through a questionnaire, the website calculates a personal carbon footprint. Results could be debated in the classroom, and pupils could set a goal of reducing their own footprint, detailing it throughout a few months or a whole year.

I freely admit that my suggestions are only possible ones, and not necessarily the *right ones*. I also want to underline that I have not taught these novels myself, and that these are merely suggestions of how one *could* do so. But they are suggestions based in thorough investigation into each novel and their interaction with the Anthropocene, and on the intended learning outcome of the English subject and the Norwegian Core Curriculum. Each lesson plan accounts for three lectures each week: two 90-minute sessions (including a 15-minute break), and one 45-minute session. At the end of the plan, pupils are to either submit a paper, hold a presentation, perform scenes from the novel, submit a video or a podcast (details in Appendix A and B). Pupils are expected to read in-between lectures but can use each of the 45-minute sessions on the third day to read on their own. The teacher will spend the first ten minutes of these 45-minute sessions reading aloud from the novel, alternatively accompanied by pupils, before assisting pupils with their reading or answer questions about their assignment.

The intended outcome of each lesson plan is for the pupils to have a sustained engagement with a work of climate change and go beyond the world of the novel by engaging with the very real subject of climate change in their own world. By the end of the five weeks, the pupils will have approached a diverse blend of mediums – from films and documentaries to science reports and political activism. They will have approached the material individually, in groups, and as a class, and they will have had the opportunity to showcase their own skills. And while one can never guarantee that all pupils are left with a stronger desire to protect their environment, I feel confident that the suggested lesson plans will deepen each pupil's knowledge about how humankind impact the environment, how Governments, communities, and activists are trying to tackle it, and how to approach a literary text through an ecocritical lens.

4.4.1 Teaching *The Carbon Diaries 2015*

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Day 1 (90 minutes)	Introduction to five-week course and the assignment. What is cli-fi? Brief introduction. **Classroom discussion:** What do we know about climate change? Introduction to *The Carbon Diaries 2015.* Read-along of the first ten pages.	**Diary entry from the year 2100:** Use the NRK climate tool to investigate the weather conditions in your municipality in the year 2100. Then, you can either: a) write a short report (1 page) based on your findings. b) write a fictional diary entry (1 page) from the year 2100, describing the weather conditions in your home town.	**Climate rebels p.1:** Investigate an environmental group, such as Exctinction Rebellion or the Sunrise movement. Write a short report (1 page) on their organization and the means they use to get their message across. **Classroom discussion:** What actions can be justified in order to guarantee a sustainable future?	**Climate rebels p.2** We watch the documentary 'I am Greta' (2020) while taking notes. The documentary will be discussed on day 2.	**Climate change in films:** In the novel, the characters go see the fictional film 'Icebreaker', but rather than liking it, they laugh at it. Try to think of movies you've seen that depict climate change or big natural disasters. Watch the video 'Scientists Fact Check Natural Disasters In Movies' on Youtube. **Classroom discussions:** Do we think climate change will be as spectacular as seen in movies? What does the science say? Are there any problems with the Hollywood depictions of climate change?
Day 2 (90 minutes)	Recollection of January-March – what has taken place in the novel? Use WWF's carbon calculator to examine your carbon habits. Compare with your classmates. **Classroom discussion:** Are our carbon habits sustainable? What can we do to change them?	Recollection of April – June. What has taken place in the novel? **Private carbon regulation?** In the novel, citizens in the U.K cannot spend their carbon freely. Investigate the climate policies of the political parties of Norway to check whether anyone are advocating similar regulations. **Classroom discussion:** We share our findings and ask: should we tax private carbon spending?	Recollection of July-September. What has taken place in the novel? **Extreme weather:** Focus on one or two of the extreme weather events described by Laura in the novel, and explore whether you can find a similar event happening in the real world. Write a short report (1 page) on your chosen event, where you compare it with the novel and detail the damage it caused.	Recollection of October-December. What has taken place in the novel? **Classroom discussion:** We discuss the 'I am Greta' documentary: Why does Greta go on strike? Are her actions justifiable? Why do we think she inspire other young people? **Addressing world climate leaders:** We watch her keynote speech at the Youth4Climate Pre-COP26. Do we think her message effective? Why do we think some people react negatively to her rhetoric?	**Evaluation:** How do we sum up the last few weeks? Did we enjoy the novel? What did we learn? What was challenging? How do we view our carbon habits after reading the novel? How could we improve the lesson plan? You are free to spend the remainder of the lecture minutes on your assignment. Those who choose to hold presentations can do so in this session.
Day 3 (45 minutes)	Read-along in the classroom, followed by individual work.	Read-along in the classroom, followed by individual work.	Read-along in the classroom, followed by individual work.	Read-along in the classroom, followed by individual work.	You are free to spend time on your assignment. Those who choose to hold presentations can do so in this session.

4.4.2 Teaching *The Road*

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Day 1 (90 minutes)	Introduction to five-week course and the assignment. What is cli-fi? Brief introduction. **Classroom discussion:** What do we know about climate change? Introduction to *The Road.* Read-along of the first ten pages.	**Diary entry from the year 2100:** Use the NRK climate tool to investigate the weather conditions in your municipality in the year 2100. Then, you can either: a) write a short report (1 page) based on your findings. b) write a fictional diary entry (1 page) from the year 2100, describing the weather conditions in your hometown.	**All we might lose:** The novel asks us to remember all the things that could be lost in a disaster: society, friends, family, and of our interest: nature. In this lecture, you can either: a) write a poem where you imagine walking in a forest with no life, or on a beach with no birds in the sky b) write ½ to a full page where you discuss what elements in your life your most frightened might be taken from you in a climate changed world.	Recollection of pages 200-307. What has taken place in the novel? **Climate rebels:** Investigate an environmental group, such as Extinction Rebellion or the Sunrise movement. Write a short report (1 page) on their organization and the means they use to get their message across. **Classroom discussion:** What actions can be justified in order to guarantee a sustainable future?	**Climate change in films:** In the novel and in the movie adaptation, we are shown a world where the world has been reduced to grey by some unknown event. Try to think of movies you've seen that depicts climate change or big natural disasters. Watch the video 'Scientists Fact Check Natural Disasters In Movies' on Youtube. **Classroom discussions:** Do we think climate change will be as spectacular as seen in movies? What does the science say? Are there any problems with the Hollywood depictions of climate change?
Day 2 (90 minutes)	Recollection of pages 1-50. What has taken place in the novel? **The IPPC:** Investigate the latest report from Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Try to figure out what the worst case scenario looks like, and some of the steps recommended to avoid it. **Classroom discussion:** What would happen if we aren't able to stop climate change? Why do we think not everyone believes in climate change science?	Recollection of pages 50-120. What has taken place in the novel? **Climate change and cannibalism?** In the novel, people resort to cannibalism. Investigate the claim that early climate change drove some Neanderthals into cannibalism. **Classroom discussion:** We share our findings and discuss the impact of climate change on: family, economy, food, private luxuries, and safety.	Recollection of pages 120-200. What has taken place in the novel? **Dead biosphere:** In the novel, nothing grows (apart from a few mushrooms) and nature seems all but dead. Try to illustrate how such a world would look like. You can either: a) draw a scene from the novel. b) create a slideshow with images from areas suffering from environmental degradation (deforestation, polluted rivers etc). Include where the images were taken, and what caused the environmental damage. Share your illustrations/slideshow with your classmates.	**From book to screen:** We watch the movie adaptation of *The Road* (2009), taking notes along the way. We bring the notes with us on day 3.	**Evaluation:** How do we sum up the last few weeks? Did we enjoy the novel? What did we learn? What was challenging? How do we view our world after reading the novel? How could we improve the lesson plan? You are free to spend the remainder of the lecture minutes on your assignment. Those who choose to hold presentations can do so in this session.
Day 3 (45 minutes)	Read-along in the classroom, followed by individual work.	Read-along in the classroom, followed by individual work.	Read-along in the classroom, followed by individual work.	We discuss the movie adaptation. Did we find it faithful to the novel? How would we describe the landscape we saw in the film? Was it different from what we imagined when we read the novel?	You are free to spend time on your assignment. Those who choose to hold presentations can do so in this session.

5 Conclusion

This thesis has explored why we should teach climate fiction, which novels could be appropriate, and how we could teach them. In chapter one, I started by examining the wording of the Norwegian Core Curriculum, which clearly states the role schools have in instilling an environmental sensitivity in pupils. I highlighted how all teachers, English teachers included, are responsible, and I went on to detail the special qualities of the English subject that are needed to fully implement the Norwegian Core Curriculum. I then progressed to explain certain concepts that would be necessary in analysing *The Road* and *The Carbon Diaries 2015* from an ecocritical perspective. I touched upon both the history of ecocriticism, dystopian literature, as well as different ideas about the Anthropocene and the definitions of climate fiction. I explained that I would utilize Buell's perspective of ecocriticism in my analysis. I share Buell's appreciation of ecocriticism as the 'study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis', and I highlighted how this is exactly what the Norwegian Core Curriculum is imploring teachers to commit to. Dürbeck's questions about how literature comments on the Anthropocene proved central in that quest. This established a base on which to start examining the novels.

In chapter two, I argued that *The Road* is indeed a work of climate fiction, refuting claims made by Johns-Putra. I highlighted the ways in which nature and climatic change are absolutely central in the novel, before moving on to describe the ways in which the novel criticizes extensive consumerism, and how the novel can act as a form of protomourning for the environment, as argued by Huebert. In this way, the novel asks us to remember all we might stand to lose if are unable to ensure a sustainable future and depicts a world almost entirely devoid of nature. This strongly resonates with the Norwegian Core Curriculum's message of raising awareness of how our lifestyles impact the environment, which I argued made a strong case of why we should teach the novel. In chapter three, I highlighted how *The Carbon Diaries 2015* challenges the young adult reader to think about their own carbon habits, and how its combination of young protagonist, realistic portrayal of climate change and diary style helps make it highly approachable for teachers. Lloyd's critique of top-down climate messaging was commented upon, and that she seems to suggest that such messaging could appear more and more hollow as adult decision makers appear unable to solve the climate crisis, handing over the task to the next generation.

In chapter four, I examined the why's and how's to teach climate fiction. I again advocated for the importance of teaching fiction in general and climate fiction specifically and

highlighted a few teaching resources that have been assembled to assist teachers. I also mentioned approaches to teaching *The Carbon Diaries 2015*, while remarking that few have suggested ways to approach *The Road* through an ecocritical lens. I then suggested a five-week lesson plan for each novel. Each lesson plan involved pupils going beyond the limitations of the novels, exploring the state of climate change through online sources, and discussing their own thoughts and feelings about the subject. This allows for an interdisciplinary approach to climate change, where the pupils will utilize and develop knowledge in English literature, Natural science, and Social science. In each plan, pupils are allowed to both highlight and showcase different skillsets, ranging from digital literacy to dramatic performance. This interdisciplinary and multi-skill approach is also reflected in the assignment each pupil is to hand in at the end of the five-week course (Appendix A, B).

This thesis is not without its limitation. For instance, some would argue against reading *The Road* as climate fiction at all, raising questions about it's potential to teach pupils about climate change. Choosing to focus solely on climate change and how the two novels comment on the Anthropocene could also be described as somewhat narrow, and there are certainly a range of topics and issues at display in Lloyd and McCarthy's text that are left in the dark with this approach. Also, the suggested approach to teaching the texts has not been put to the test, and there is no guarantee that the approach is the most applicable in every classroom. Many questions can be raised as to whether the time-schedule is too optimistic, whether the tasks are constructed in an overly complicated manner, or whether this approach relies too heavily on pupils being 'hooked' by the novels. And there are certainly obstacles as to procuring a sufficient number of copies to each pupil.

Thus, it is important to underline that this suggested approach is indeed that, *a suggestion*. The thesis suggests a *way* to read these two novels in light of climate change, and how they *could* be taught, not necessarily how they *should* be taught. Teachers should always think about how they can improve a lesson plan and adjust it to their specific group of pupils – extending deadlines, developing new and improved task descriptions, and engage in discussions with their pupils about what they're doing and how they should do it. Nevertheless, my intention has been to employ an ecocritical not only in reading literature, but in teaching it. My hope is that more English teachers will recognize the power they have to empower their students with environmental sensitivity and awareness, and that they use it whenever they can.

Appendices

Appendix A: Assignment for *The Carbon Diaries 2015*

For the next five weeks, we will be reading and discussing the novel *The Carbon Diaries 2015*, written by Saci Lloyd. You are expected to read the novel between lectures. Throughout the five weeks, you will work on ***one*** of the assignments below. You can work on task B, C, D and E as a group. Groups shouldn't be larger than four people. The assignment will be graded with a score ranging from 1 to 6.

Task A)

You can: Write a 2–3-page essay where you imagine that you're given a carbon card. Discuss how carbon restrictions would impact your life, and whether such restrictions should be adopted to combat climate change.

Or

Write a 2–3-page report where you detail your own carbon habits throughout the five weeks reading the novel. Discuss what kind of luxuries you would be willing to give up in order to ensure a sustainable future.

Task B)

Prepare and hold a presentation where you identify the similarities between the novel and what is happening in the world right now. Discuss whether we should be concerned, and what you as young people can do to achieve a sustainable future. The presentation should be between five-ten minutes, with three minutes added per person to the group.

Task C)

Dramatize a scene from the novel that you find says something important about human impact on the environment or climate change. Begin by telling the class why you chose that specific scene, and why it stood out to you. You can use costumes and sound effects for dramatic effect. Write 1 ½ pages about your choice.

Task D)

Submit a podcast or video presentation, in which you either:

Detail the five most important steps young adults can take to combat climate change

or

Interview an environmental scientist or a young environmentalist about the current state of the climate debate, and what they think needs to be done to ensure a sustainable future.

If you choose to deliver the task as a group, you must add tree minutes per person added to the group. In both cases, the file should be at least five minutes long, but no longer than 20 minutes.

Appendix B: Assignment for *The Road*

For the next five weeks, we will be reading and discussing the novel *The Road*, written by Cormac McCarthy. You are expected to read the novel between lectures. Throughout the five weeks, you will work on ***one*** of the assignments below. You can work on task B, C, D and E as a group. Groups shouldn't be larger than four people. The assignment will be graded with a score ranging from 1 to 6.

Task A)

You can: Write a 2–3-page essay where you discuss whether you think climate change could lead to a scenario such as the one in the novel.

Or

Write a 2–3-page short story from the perspective of the boy, five years after the end of the novel. You're free to write it as a diary or in a third-person perspective.

Task B)

Prepare and hold a presentation where you identify similarities between the novel and the real world when it comes to environmental degradation. Discuss whether we should be concerned, and what you as young people can do to achieve a sustainable future. The presentation should be between five-ten minutes, with three minutes added per person to the group.

Task C)

Dramatize a scene from the novel that you find says something important about human impact on the environment or climate change. Begin by telling the class why you chose that specific scene, and why it stood out to you. You can use costumes and sound effects for dramatic effect. Write 1 ½ pages about your choice.

Task D)

Submit a podcast or video presentation, in which you either:

Detail the five most important steps young adults can take to combat climate change

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