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**Teaching climate change with young adult fiction: Raising awareness with  
Alexandra Kleeman's *Something New Under the Sun***

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## Abstract

This thesis focuses on Alexandra Kleeman's novel *Something New Under the Sun* (2021), a work of climate fiction, and explores ways to teach it. The thesis investigates how capitalism and privatization are drivers of climate change in light of the novel, and how the issue serves as ideas for integrating climate change into the English curriculum (ENG01-04). The thesis asserts that teachers of all disciplines are responsible for raising pupils' environmental awareness and that English language novels are well-suited to fulfill this curricular requirement. Furthermore, English teachers have a valuable role to play in understanding and addressing the climate crisis through their area of literary expertise. Through an ecological lens, the thesis examines Kleeman's novel and highlights its potential to engage young adult readers with its realistic interpretation of a world impacted by climate change. Overall, the theory emphasizes how works of climate fiction, including *Something New Under the Sun*, have the capacity to effectively address environmental issues and help cultivate a deeper understanding of the urgent need for sustainability.

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# 1 Introduction

This thesis will investigate how teachers in upper secondary schools can use climate fiction to educate pupils about climate change. I will focus on Alexandra Kleeman's novel *Something New Under the Sun* (2021), a work of climate fiction, and explore ways to teach it. Climate change, privatization, and dystopia are essential keywords in *Something New* and all of these will be further investigated in this thesis. I would like to answer the question: How can climate fiction be used to educate pupils about climate change? Moreover, how can we use the literary genre climate fiction to increase pupils' environmental awareness? In the first chapter, I explain how the Norwegian Core Curriculum emphasizes the importance of recognizing humanity's impact on the environment in all subjects, not just the natural sciences. Additionally, I define key terms relevant to the later discussion of the novel, such as climate fiction, young adult literature, dystopia, the Anthropocene, capitalism, and privatization. Moving on to the second chapter, I expand upon the theoretical foundation established in the first chapter. Specifically, this chapter analyzes the novel and highlights the unique characteristics that make it a significant work in the genre of climate fiction, also known as cli-fi. Finally, in the third chapter, I provide suggestions for teaching portions of the novel to upper secondary-level pupils.

The earth is heading in a direction where climate catastrophes get worse each year; drought, wildfires, and higher ocean temperatures are only some examples of why this is an important topic that needs to be included in more than just natural science in schools. Climate change is an urgent matter and cannot be highlighted enough. Therefore, I want to argue why climate fiction should be taught and show how it can be used as a tool for enlightenment and education in the classroom. Favier et al. argue that "climate change education can contribute to developing the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes so that students can become agents of change, as future consumers, policymakers, and social influencers" (596). In this situation, teachers will be crucial in producing future generations of inquisitive, knowledgeable, and forward thinkers who will protect the environment.

Climate change tends to be sugarcoated in the West. Amitav Ghosh, an acclaimed Indian novelist, discusses climate change in an interview about his critical book, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. He questions, among other things, whether literature has shied away from addressing the climate situation. Ghosh discusses which words are being left out when we talk about climate change because words have a lot

of power. The phrases “disaster” (used only once) and “catastrophe,” which can obscure the issues the globe is currently confronting, are avoided in the Paris Agreement from 2015, according to Ghosh. One hundred ninety-six nations joined the Paris Agreement in 2015, a global agreement on mitigating climate change. Its goal is to pursue efforts to keep temperature increases to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to keep them even lower, at 1.5 degrees Celsius. The wording in the Norwegian curriculum is no different from the Paris Agreement. The terms “issue” and “difficulties” are frequently used, but climate change, how it has caused disasters and catastrophes, and how we must act to avert these effects are not emphasized. This intrigues me, and it makes me wonder if views regarding climate change are too relaxed. Not enough emphasis is placed on the effects of climate change. We have to act now, and we must engage the coming generations to fight the horrors of climate change.

## **1.1 LK 20, The Norwegian Core Curriculum**

The Norwegian Core Curriculum from 2020 provides the fundamental approach for pedagogical practices in lower and upper primary education (Core Curriculum). According to the curriculum renewal, one of the interdisciplinary topics 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” (Udir). This quote sends a solid message to the teacher, and the teachers are provided a critical role by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. The curriculum renewal emphasizes the importance of the teacher’s role in educating the pupils in shaping a sustainable world where human civilization can thrive without harming the planet. Teaching climate change is not limited to a specific subject, but rather becomes a collective responsibility for all subjects. Incorporating a more sustainable environment and focus on climate change in Norwegian schools is a big step from the earlier curriculums from the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. In Kunnskapsløftet 06, it was not demanded that teachers other than natural science teachers in the Norwegian school system should include in their pedagogical practice the goal of teaching the pupils about the significance of environmental problems and climate change.

Since the curriculum renewal has a broader focus on climate change in all subjects, English literature can be an efficient tool to teach the pupils about sustainability and climate change. One of the aims of the curriculum for pupils in upper secondary school is to “read,

analyze and interpret fictional texts in English” (Udir). Introducing the pupils to fictional texts that present the issue of climate change and the effects of human impact on the environment can engage the pupils’ desire to learn. According to Carroli (1), literature serves as a genuine and captivating setting for language acquisition. It enables learners to enhance their vocabulary, grammar, and communication skills while exposing readers to various cultures and viewpoints. Through literature, learners are challenged to comprehend the complexities of the world, and reading allows them to expand their knowledge beyond their own experiences. The pupils will be introduced to more than the interdisciplinary topic “sustainable development” if the teachers incorporate climate-focused fiction in the classroom; they will be introduced to several other competence aims required by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training.

Ensuring effective facilitation of climate change education is a critical step towards achieving a more sustainable environment, and schools bear a significant responsibility in this regard. Ricardo Römhild advocates that climate change should be a “key aspect of quality education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (23). Römhild presents SDG 4 (Sustainable Development Goal Number 4) from the UN, where it is stated that we must “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UN). If we dig further into the fourth goal, 4.7, it makes clear the significance of: “providing everyone with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to become change agents for sustainable development” (UN). The Norwegian Curriculum, LK 20, has successfully included this goal in the interdisciplinary topic, and it is in the hands of the teachers to manage this task in the classroom.

## **1.2 Climate Fiction, dystopia, and young adult fiction**

Climate fiction, or cli-fi, is a subgenre of fiction that deals with the impact of climate change on the natural world, societies, and individuals. The term “cli-fi” was coined by journalist Dan Bloom in 2007 and has since gained popularity among scholars and writers (Cranston 137). Climate fiction can take various forms, including novels, short stories, films, and TV series. It explores environmental degradation, social inequality, and human resilience in the face of disaster. Heather Houser defines climate fiction as “a narrative genre that addresses climate change, often in relation to other environmental and social issues, through speculative or realist means” (Houser “Climate Fiction” 3). Houser argues that climate fiction is a distinct genre that has emerged in response to the urgent need to address climate change and its



impacts. She notes that while climate fiction can take many forms, it is characterized by its focus on the social, political, and environmental issues associated with climate change and its use of narrative to explore the complex challenges and opportunities of the Anthropocene. Houser's definition emphasizes the importance of climate change as a central theme in climate fiction and the genre's use of speculative or realist means to address this theme. While *Something New* portrays the devastating effects of climate change through raging wildfires and drought in California, the realist approach lays the foundation for a more profound sense of fear by accurately portraying the true nature of these climate catastrophes.

Literature has always dealt with critical issues in the human condition. In the last decade, climate fiction has become a significant trend. The growth of interest in artistic and academic works on climate change is not only due to its increasingly evident effects, but also due to the belief that literary creations, including plays, novels, short stories, poems, and children's stories, may raise awareness of the issue and inspire a more comprehensive understanding of climate change, ultimately leading to more progressive environmental policies and politics (Schneider- Mayerson 474). Climate fiction has been written for decades, but not necessarily with the same intentions as today. Works of post-apocalyptic cli-fi, such as *Something New Under the Sun*, can be interpreted as a warning for the future as the reader is able to relate to the themes and critical issues presented in the texts.

Climate fiction explores themes related to the social and environmental impacts of climate change (Houser *Infowhelm* 169). Many works in the genre portray the displacement of people and communities due to rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and other effects of climate change. Other themes that commonly appear in climate fiction include the loss of biodiversity and the disruption of ecosystems, the challenges of adaptation and resilience in the face of environmental change and the political and economic structures that can either worsen or reduce the impacts of climate change. These themes are current affairs, and Ghosh (27) describes the extreme weather events that often occur in climate literature as "highly improbable occurrences" that are "overwhelmingly, urgently, astoundingly real." Further, Ghosh argues that the unusual weather events happening in reality are not like those found in surreal or magical realist novels. While these events may seem unlikely, they are not surreal or magical; they are happening and are highly urgent and impactful. It would not be helpful for a writer to approach these events as magical or surreal because that would take away from their urgent and compelling nature - they are happening in the real world right now. As a growing genre in young adult fiction, climate fiction has attracted the attention of scholars

such as Matthew Schneider-Mayerson, who conducted a survey to explore the impact of this literary genre on its readers. Climate fiction can serve as a “positive ecopolitical influence,” according to Schneider-Mayerson (1), because of its ability to portray possible climate futures.

Fictional works in the dystopian genre portray a society or a world where there is oppression, misery, and frequently a totalitarian or autocratic regime. These civilizations are often shown as being dehumanizing, with a focus on the loss of personal freedoms and rights. Norledge describes dystopia as a “displacement of our reality” (2), where dystopian literature often presents a warning of what the future could hold if current trends in society are not addressed or mitigated. It is frequently used to address modern social and political issues such as governmental surveillance, social inequity, environmental degradation, and power abuse (Norledge 3). *Something New Under the Sun* serves as a notable example of criticism directed towards capitalism and the ideology of the free market, particularly in relation to the increasing influence and dominance of corporations. The novel explores the ways in which corporations have come to exert significant control, highlighting concerns and raising questions about the impact of this corporate takeover on society.

The modern form of dystopian literature emerged in the 20th century, particularly in the aftermath of World War I and World War II (Fitting 139). The horrors of these wars and the rise of totalitarian regimes such as Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia gave rise to a new type of dystopian literature focused on the dangers of authoritarianism, government surveillance, and the loss of individual freedoms. Some of the most famous works of dystopian literature were written during this time, including Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell’s *1984* (1949) (Norledge 3). These novels represented a critical reaction to the shortcomings and instability of post-First and Second World War society. As a result, these 20th-century stories became recognized as “classic” examples of dystopian literature and continue to rule the public perception of the genre today (Norledge 3). Since then, dystopian literature has continued to evolve and remains a popular genre, particularly in young adult literature. Dystopian writers aim to change readers’ perceptions of the natural world by presenting plausible future worlds that offer changed views of the author’s surroundings. The often satirical reflection of recognizable present-day referents regarding particular objects, characters, and more significant thematic concerns achieves this (Norledge 11). Our understanding of the impact of cli-fi is limited due to the scarcity of surveys conducted on the genre (Schneider-Mayerson 473). However, it is reasonable to assume that pupils and young

adults, who are coming of age in a world significantly affected by climate change and are exposed to abundant information on the subject, would find dystopian cli-fi stories particularly relatable to their own experiences and perceptions of the world. Dystopian literature has often faced criticism for its perceived excessive pessimism. However, considering the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports, it becomes clear why pupils tend to adopt a distinctly dystopian perspective on their own current reality. The IPCC reports present scientific evaluations of the status on climate change presented by the UN. The sobering realities presented in these reports understandably contribute to their outlook. According to Schneider-Meyerson's survey on cli-fi, it was discovered that readers of this genre generally belong to a younger demographic, hold more liberal viewpoints, and exhibit greater concerns regarding climate change compared to nonreaders of cli-fi (478).

Dystopian narratives transport readers to worlds that are familiar in some ways yet fundamentally different, using fantastical or non-real elements to highlight political, social, or cultural concerns. These narratives communicate underlying messages through world-building and conceptual mapping by connecting the text world to the reader's reality. Dystopian narratives aim to create cognitive estrangement and defamiliarization by challenging expectations and evoking emotional responses. In addition, these narratives encourage readers to draw parallels between the text world and their own experiences by making the familiar seem strange, and the unfamiliar feel familiar (Norledge 205-6). Dystopian literature has gained popularity among young adults, mainly as it addresses relevant issues of adolescence in relatable ways. At the beginning of the 1970s, young adult fiction had its first "golden age," portraying realistic challenges teenagers face. In more recent times, young adult fiction has tackled contemporary concerns, such as friendship, romance, and personal growth, and also utilized the backdrops of terrorism, war, and technological dangers. These themes often fall within the fantasy, science fiction, and dystopia genres. Examples of young adult fiction such as *Harry Potter* and *The Hunger Games* have gained worldwide recognition. *The Hunger Games* explores the consequences of war and falls into the dystopian genre. Young adult fiction shares standard features with adult fiction, including depictions of socio-political instability, disillusioned societies, the devastating aftermath of wars, dictatorial regimes, ecological decline, gender politics, and fertility issues. Young adult novels often take a hyper-realistic form, highlighting adolescents' everyday struggles, such as sexuality, substance abuse, violence, rebellion against authority, and societal pressures. These

issues take center stage within young adult dystopian narratives, developed by the restrictive social constraints and oppressive controls of the story's world (Norledge 198-99).

### **1.3 Climate Change and the Anthropocene**

Climate change is an urgent issue in the 21st century and is a challenge threatening the Earth and everything living on it. Climate change is a more urgent concern than previously thought. Its effects are already showing in the form of rising sea levels, melting glaciers, ocean acidification, harsh weather, and desertification (Parenti 6). Climate change became a widespread debate in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Some critics argue against climate change being “manmade” by emphasizing a distinction between natural phenomena and human activities. They contend that this separation between what is considered part of nature and what is attributed to human influence challenges the idea of human-made climate change (Chakrabarty 200-1). Reports like the IPCC report paint a bleak future for our planet, leaving little room for denial about the human impact on climate change. These reports provide compelling evidence that reinforces the understanding of human activities as significant contributors to the ongoing climate crisis. The first report was published in 1990 and served as the basis for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The sixth report was published this year. According to the latest and final installment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report (IPCC AR6), the planet is expected to experience a 1.5C increase from pre-industrial levels in the near future. This could result in increasingly irreversible losses, as cautioned by the world's leading scientists. However, the concern was not taken too seriously until the 2000s, as the effects of climate change became visible through the melting ice caps, wildfires, and drought. World politics and the economy needed to act because of climate change (Chakrabarty 199, 206). As a result of the continual burning of fossil fuels, which raises the atmosphere's temperature and warms the Earth, global warming threatens everything living on Earth. The primary source of greenhouse gases that cause climate change is the annual emission of more than 30 gigatons of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. The use of fossil fuels, the production of energy using non-renewable resources, and pollution-causing human activities are the primary sources of these gases (Climate Trade). Burning fossil fuels releases carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) into the atmosphere. Parenti states, “Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> functions like the glass in a greenhouse, allowing the sun's heat in but preventing much of it from radiating back out to space” (5). Global warming causes the ice caps in Greenland and Antarctica to melt faster, reducing the amount of solar radiation reflected into space and causing the Earth to warm up even more quickly (Parenti 6).

Scientists estimate that by 2050, more than 700 million people will have to abandon their homes due to sea level rise brought on by the melting of the ice caps, which is expected to increase by 5 feet over the next 90 years (Parenti 7).

Parenti presents two important watchwords in the discussion of climate change: mitigation and adaptation. To mitigate climate change, greenhouse gases, including CO<sub>2</sub>, methane, and chlorofluorocarbons, must be produced at a lower rate. Mitigating climate change can be accomplished by switching to sustainable energy sources like wind, solar, geothermal, and tidal power and closing coal-fired power plants. Investments in carbon capture and storage technology are also required to address carbon emissions. On the other hand, adaptation is preparing to deal with the consequences of climate change, which is currently occurring and will continue to do so. The technological and political problem of adaptation requires getting ready for the effects of climate change (Parenti 10). Naomi Klein challenges these watchwords in the climate debate and describes them as the “grim language of the United States” (7). She argues that we must act collectively and move away from fossil fuels, leaping into a future that is better than the one we are making now. Vast swaths of humanity might be lifted out of poverty by the resources needed to quickly transition away from fossil fuels and prepare for the impending severe weather. We must provide resources like clean water and electricity that are currently critically lacking (Klein 7).

According to the climate plan from the Norwegian Government from 2021 to 2030, Norway, like nearly all nations worldwide, has pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with the Paris Agreement. This agreement, along with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, forms a robust framework for global efforts to address climate change. The goal is to keep the global average temperature increase well below 2 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels and strives to keep it below 1.5 degrees Celsius. Countries should enhance their ability to cope with the impacts of climate change, and financial flows should align with low-emission, climate-resilient development. Norway has committed to reducing emissions by at least 50-55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, a critical step towards achieving a low-emission society by 2050 (Stortinget). The Norwegian school systems, as outlined in chapter 1.1, reflect the government’s climate plan by placing significant emphasis on climate concerns within our current geological era, the Anthropocene.

The Anthropocene is a term that often occurs in the discussion of climate change. According to Moore (“The Capitalocene” 169–71), the Anthropocene is a historical period

sparked by coal and steam power in England at the end of the 18th century. The Industrial Revolution marks a shift where humans started increasing our carbon footprint and becoming a driving force of the climate. Chakrabarty argues that “humans have become geological agents, changing the most basic physical processes of the earth” (206). Humans have developed technology powerful enough to trigger a new mass extinction on Earth. In other words, we consider humans “geological agents” because we operate within nature and modify nature with human constructions, including the human impact of industrialization, population growth, and urbanization (Moore “The Capitalocene” 170-71). The unintended consequences of human choices have led to the Anthropocene (Chakrabarty 210). Desires drive humanity, and the Anthropocene reflects human desires and excessive consumption in our culture. Ghosh argues that the carbon economy has made us complicit in climate change, dating back to the history of imperialism and capitalism. Nice cars, meat, and houses with beautiful gardens are all examples of desires which give us a sense of freedom. “The artifacts and commodities that are conjured up by these desires are, in a sense, at once expressions and concealments of the cultural matrix that brought them into being” (Ghosh 10). Humans manufacture desires and our needs of superficial material, and we frequently satisfy them without even considering the environmental impact of our actions. As a result, we are heading in a direction where the human impact on Earth will soon be irreversible. Chakrabarty, therefore, makes a valid point when he states that the Anthropocene needs the Enlightenment’s ideas more than ever, such as reason, rationality, and scientific inquiry (Chakrabarty 211). Some scholars argue that rather than the Anthropocene, which is the “age of man,” we are in the Capitalocene, the “age of capital” (Moore *Capitalism* 3) Moore argues that the Capitalocene makes a case for placing the emergence of capitalism spatially and historically within the web of life. The Capitalocene is the world ecology of capital, power, and re/production as a placed, multispecies system, not an economic one (Moore *Capitalism* 15-16).

## **1.4 Capitalism and Privatization**

In the book *This Changes Everything*, Naomi Klein discusses the indistinguishable relations between capitalism and the climate crisis and shows how empire and power is the dominant driver of climate change. The only thing we must do to keep the emissions and temperatures rising is nothing. If we continue as we are today, the oceans will keep rising, people will be driven away from their homes because of drought and extreme weather, and there is nothing we need to do to make this our future (Klein 4). Based on this knowledge from scientists, why

are we not doing more to stop carbon emissions from rising? Klein states: “We deny because we fear that letting in the full reality of this crisis will change everything” (Klein 4). We do not act because we are afraid of altering our way of life to do so. In addition, we do not act because it is simple to argue that we are too small pieces of the puzzle and that our choices have no bearing on the greater picture. We do not have to change anything if we do not act and keep our eyes closed on global warming. Not acting is likely going to change everything. Klein argues that we must change everything to avoid a future disaster through our ways of living and the functions of our economy (Klein 4).

Although they are not typically thought of as environmental regimes, the international economic organizations that regulate trade, production, and finance (such as the World Trade Organization and World Bank) are crucial to the possibility of effective environmental governance. Despite this, these organizations have significant environmental profiles regarding their authority over resource access, use, and environmental impact. Chakrabarty argues that climate change is influenced by global capital and is likely to worsen existing inequalities inherent in the capitalist system. As a result, some individuals may experience temporary gains at the expense of others. Parenti states that “climate change acts as a threat multiplier for instability in some of the most volatile regions of the world. Many governments in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East are already on edge in terms of their ability to provide basic needs: food, water, shelter and stability” (Parenti 16). These regions in the Third World lack access to technology and resources to produce clean energy to mitigate climate change. In contrast, wealthier countries and regions in the West have greater access to renewable energy sources and are therefore less situated near polluting industries. However, it is crucial to recognize that the climate crisis cannot be simplified as merely a result of capitalism. Unlike in previous capitalist crises, there are no guaranteed safe havens for the wealthy and privileged. Recent events like the drought in Australia or the wildfires in wealthy neighborhoods of California demonstrate this, as we see in the novel. The anxiety surrounding global warming is comparable to the fear experienced when a global nuclear war seemed imminent. Nevertheless, there is an important difference between the two. A nuclear war would have been a deliberate decision made by those in power. In contrast, climate change is an unintended consequence of human actions. Its effects on our planet and species are only revealed through scientific analysis, highlighting the importance of understanding and addressing our collective impact (Chakrabarty 221).

Climate change is taking many forms, and people most vulnerable to its worst effects are not always the ones who contribute the most to global warming. In the West, people are immersed in a sea of flashy possessions like smartphones, expensive vehicles, yachts, private jets, and other mundane items, as we see in the novel. The Western lifestyle is very damaging and is contributing to unnecessary pollution on the environment. Schwartz and Randall state that “nations with the resources to do so may build virtual fortresses around their countries, preserving resources for themselves (Schwartz and Randall 2). This perspective reflects a potential response to resource scarcity driven by climate change, where nations prioritize self-preservation and resource preservation within their borders, potentially leading to greater global inequalities and disparities in resource access. It is no secret that developing countries in the Southeast struggle more with climate change than Western countries, and according to Ghosh, “the rich have much to lose; the poor do not” (Ghosh 148). If we do not mitigate climate change, a potential future scenario can include consequences, such as famine, disease, and extreme weather events, that will overwhelm the capacity of many countries to cope. This situation creates a sense of desperation and imbalance, which could lead to offensive aggression as nations seek to regain stability and resources. Europe would face internal struggles due to a large number of refugees seeking shelter, and Asia would encounter serious crises related to food and water scarcity. Disruption and conflict would become pervasive and persistent elements of daily life in this context (Schwartz and Randall 18-22).

One of the main causes of climate change is privatization. According to Klein, “Communal forests around the world are being turned into privatized tree farms and preserve so their owners can collect “carbon credits”” (Klein 8). People concerned about climate change are challenging practices like purchasing carbon credits in exchange for a clear conscience while continuing to fly, purchase diesel vehicles, and use fossil fuels to power their homes. Concerns about how polluters have been using carbon offsets as an excuse for inaction have begun to be raised by scientists, environmentalists, and concerned individuals. The purpose of carbon offset programs is to enable the biggest polluters that exceed the number of allowable emissions to pay initiatives that lower atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), thereby balancing their emissions equations. Additionally, offsets risk creating the terrifying illusion of a “fix” that will allow our threatening emissions to keep rising (UN Environment Programme). This is just one example of how the economy is linked to climate change. Klein presents an example of how the global reinsurance businesses are gaining billions of dollars, partly by selling new protection programs to developing countries whose



infrastructure is highly vulnerable to the effects of the climate problem despite having done virtually nothing to cause it. Floods and droughts generate economic opportunities. Our existing system is designed to find new methods to privatize the commons and profit off tragedy; left to its own devices, it cannot do anything else (Klein 9).

One of the methods that can profit from tragedies, where the state and society work toward the market's needs, is neoliberalism. Brown describes *Neoliberalism* as a concept that is closely associated with a radically free market ideology. It involves maximizing competition and free trade by implementing economic deregulation, removing tariffs, and adopting policies that benefit businesses while showing indifference towards poverty, social displacement, cultural erosion, long-term depletion of resources, and environmental destruction. Neoliberalism is often seen as a negative concept, as we see in the novel. It is viewed negatively because it is perceived to sustain or worsen local poverty and reinforce the dominance of core nations over minor nations. Additionally, it is believed to be compatible with, and at times even conducive to, the emergence of authoritarian, despotic, paramilitary, and corrupt forms of state power, as well as enabling such elements within civil society (Brown 38). While neoliberalism is primarily focused on economic liberalism, limited government involvement, and free-market principles, neoconservatism is more concerned with foreign policy, national defense, and traditional values. Brown describes the United States as neoconservative and highlights various aspects of its agenda. These include reinforcing military strength, asserting global dominance, dismantling social welfare programs, restricting civil rights, limiting reproductive rights and affirmative action, promoting Christian influence in governance, deregulating corporations, weakening environmental protections, implementing regressive taxation, cutting education funding, and expanding the prison system while perpetuating inequality. Brown argues that while a neoconservative project with interconnected objectives is acknowledged, a broader political rationality is at play that underlies both the Clinton era and the Reagan-Bush years and into the present. This rationality is described as "neoliberal" and extends beyond specific issue positions. It operates as a form of governmentality, influencing subjects, citizenship, behavior, and social organization in ways that go beyond traditional state governance (Brown 37-8).

## **2 *Something New Under the Sun***

*Something New Under the Sun* is a novel by Alexandra Kleeman, published in 2021. The story is a blend of science fiction, mystery, and literary fiction, set in a near-future California where the climate crisis has led to severe water scarcity. The protagonist, Patrick Hamlin, is a novelist-turned-screenwriter who comes to Los Angeles to oversee the production of his book's film adaptation. As he navigates the disorienting world of Hollywood, he becomes entangled with the production's enigmatic and alluring lead actress, Cassidy Carter, who is making a comeback after a brief hiatus. Patrick soon discovers that the water shortage has given rise to a synthetic water substitute called "WAT-R," which is being manufactured and distributed by a powerful corporation. While WAT-R has become a vital resource for the drought-ridden region, it carries sinister implications, as it is revealed to have mysterious and dangerous side effects. As Patrick and Cassidy delve deeper into the conspiracy surrounding WAT-R, they uncover a web of deceit, corporate greed, and environmental devastation. The novel raises questions about humanity's relationship with nature, the consequences of our reliance on technology, and the ethical boundaries we cross in pursuit of survival and profit. *Something New Under the Sun* is a thought-provoking and timely commentary on the climate crisis, exploring the potential consequences of our actions in a world where resources are dwindling and the lines between reality and fabrication become increasingly blurred.

### **2.1 Dystopian cli-fi**

The central action of the novel takes place in California and concentrates on the grim future of our planet. Because it portrays a depressing and unpleasant picture of the future, *Something New Under the Sun* is categorized as a dystopian novel. Kleeman makes it challenging for the reader to draw a distinction between the novel and reality because the California wildfires are happening today, just as they are depicted in the novel. Kleeman also presents this novel to be close to the present, as one of the new directors of Patrick's film has worked on an "acclaimed foreign film in the 1980s" (Kleeman 201). Except for residing close to a burning landscape and consuming synthetic water, the individuals in the novel are likewise portrayed as "regular" people dealing with the same issues we face today. The novel examines issues including the power of corporations and environmental degradation, which are common issues in dystopian novels. It depicts a society in which the goal of making money has come at the expense of everything else, and human life has been reduced to merely existing. A warning about the dangers of corporate greed and the necessity of environmental care,

*Something New Under the Sun* paints a grim picture of a potential future. This chapter examines the novel's dystopian aspects and how its depiction of climate change's influence places it in the cli-fi category.

The novel's portrayal of weather patterns reflects the impact of climate change and how it affects the lives of the main characters as they witness shifts in weather conditions throughout the narrative. The sun is always shining, and it is bright outside at the beginning of the novel. When you realize why the sun is always beaming, though, it is not as nice as it first appears to be. Climate change has caused drought to take over California's landscape. The only times it is "raining" is when the firefighters try to put out a fire with WAT-R. In the novel, the sunshine symbolizes hope for the future and creates a positive tone, even amidst the terrible events that unfold. However, towards the end, clouds on the horizon foreshadow the coming darkness. Those afflicted with the disease ROAD begin hallucinating about clouds in the sky. The clouds can symbolize death, a stark contrast to the natural process of rainfall that sustains life and keeps the natural world in balance. Through this powerful imagery, the novel underscores the fragility of life and the instability of our existence in a world subject to forces beyond our control.

In California, there always seems to be a fire nearby, yet the characters in the book do not seem to be concerned by it. In a conversation between Cassidy and Patrick, they are forced to take a detour to get to the film studio. Cassidy says, "There's a fire in North Hollywood – so we can't take the road you came in on" (Kleeman 70). Cassidy is obviously used to the fires, and how they control her days and where she can go. The people in California don't seem troubled by the burning environment they are driving through, and the novel portrays taking diversions because of fire as commonplace. The burning landscape is described with alarming words: "orange scraps of flame dulled by the sunlight" (Kleeman 105) and "bright wound of light on the hillside" (Kleeman 89). The weather is always sunny and "nice," but the sun is also causing the problem. Patrick sees the fires as "Terrible, definitely. But it's not really an emergency – if you can drive around it. An emergency would be everywhere you looked, inescapable" (Kleeman 105). Living for themselves, their needs, and their aspirations, the characters in California are blind to global warming. In Patrick's example, he relocates to California despite the horrible wildfires and climatic catastrophes there. Despite the raging fires and worsening climate disasters, he remains steadfast in his pursuit of turning his book into a film, viewing the challenges as mere obstacles to be overcome. Blinded by his own ambition, he fails to acknowledge the gravity of the situation

and the impact of his actions. Meanwhile, Nora and Alison, Patrick's daughter and wife, aware of the dangers posed by the fires and drought, express concern for his safety and opt out of accompanying him. Alison and Nora seem to be worried about him, knowing that he risks being caught in the fires that threaten to consume everything in their path. On the other hand, they are not too interested in picking up the phone when he calls, and because they are so far away from California, it seems difficult for them to understand his situation. They are staying at Earthbridge, a small commune in Upstate New York, mourning the destructions of climate change and doing "right" for the earth, while Patrick is chasing self-realization and desires in California. Through this contrast, the novel highlights the tension between personal ambition and social responsibility and the need to consider the broader implications of our choices and actions in the face of a changing climate.

The novel portrays the grim reality that fighting against climate change is daunting and seemingly impossible. The devastating impact of climate change has reached a point where individuals and communities feel powerless and helpless in the face of its horrors. Despite some characters' efforts, the challenge's scale is overwhelming, and the damage already inflicted is irreversible. In a phone call with Alison, Patrick expresses his desperation after returning back to Cassidy's house and seeing it burned to the ground. "I can't do anything. Alison, the house burned. The water burned in the basement, the swimming pool was on fire. I saw the bunnies fleeing from the scorching fields into the Kmart lot to huddle beneath parked cars. It smelled like a barbecue restaurant" (Kleeman 273). This excerpt from the novel depicts a scene of absolute devastation and hopelessness as Patrick witnesses the destruction done by the fires caused by climate change. The description of the burning house, the water in the basement, and the swimming pool on fire highlight the extent of the damage caused by the flames. The fact that even the bunnies are fleeing for their lives, seeking refuge in a parking lot, adds a heartbreaking touch to the scene, underscoring the impact of climate change on all living beings, not just humans. The metaphorical comparison to a barbecue restaurant's connotations of cooking and consumption adds a disturbing layer to the already unsettling image. The implication is that nature is being consumed and demolished by the flames of climate change and that humans are complicit in this destruction. Patrick's sense of helplessness in the face of this disaster is unmistakable, as he is powerless to prevent or mitigate the damage. His words, "I can't do anything," sum up the feeling of misery and acceptance that many people feel in the face of climate change.

We, humans, have different attitudes towards climate change, and many different factors affect these attitudes. How media choose to present climate change has a severe impact on humans and can downplay or strengthen our beliefs on this issue. Our level of understanding is also evident in how we understand climate change, where those who are more informed may have a greater sense of urgency and concern towards climate change. People living in areas where climate change is visible through extreme weather events and loss of biodiversity will have a more urgent and personal connection to the issue. People who do not experience these events firsthand may be in denial about the scale of the problem, while others can be too afraid to confront the issue. As Kleeman makes evident, Alison and Patrick respond very differently to the climate crisis. The following passage discusses Alison's concern for the rest of humanity and her daughter Nora's future. This passage also clarifies how strongly Patrick disagrees with Alison's perception of the issue, as he states that Alison needs treatment and that what she sees is only a figment of her imagination.

“I don't know if you can understand what it's like,” she says, her voice growing quieter, taking on a pale tone. “I know I've said this before. But I look out the back window of our house and I don't see the park or the trees. I see all of it dying. Part of me knows it's not— ‘dying’ is the wrong word for it— but another part can look out and see a place that's already dead. You see? I look at Nora and I know there's no future for her, and it tears my heart in two. And what makes me feel crazy is that all around me, everywhere, people are driving cars and buying pro-pane grills and eating double cheeseburgers, and not one of them acts like they're dying, even though they are. Not one of them sees what I see, and that means we have no chance.” “Listen,” says Patrick, tense and urgent, “just listen to yourself. If you heard someone else saying this, your sister or Nora or me, what would you tell them? You would tell them to get help. To go see someone.” (Kleeman 27)

This section depicts a dismal future, and Alison is visibly worried about it. With individuals utilizing pro-pane grills to cook their meat and driving about, carelessly endangering the environment, she is addressing issues that are prevalent in today's world. The parks and trees Alison used to see in her backyard are no longer there, and she speaks of the environment as though no one is concerned that it is dying. Furthermore, Alison claims that these trees are not dying; instead, they are already dead. As a result of the death of nature, Alison does not believe there will be any hope for the next generation. Regarding how people choose to respond to climate change, Alison experiences the same problem that Klein makes clear.

Alison discusses how people are doing nothing and suggests that this is what will cause them to die, much as Klein contends that inaction is the only thing that will keep climate change an ongoing problem. This extract highlights Alison's pessimistic views on society and how, rather than receiving support from her partner, she is made to feel like something is wrong with her. Patrick perceives her as being extremely theatrical and delusional and as someone who needs therapy. To persuade her that something is wrong with her, Patrick encourages her to consider what advice she would have given to anyone with similar "problems." He is playing on her conscience in this way. Alison does not appear to give much thought to her husband's viewpoints; instead, she engages him in conversation by presenting proof that something is gravely wrong to affect his perspective on climate change.

Patrick and Alison's relationship is as polarized as their views on climate change. Their geographical separation in the book—Patrick has relocated to California, while Alison and their daughter Nora are in upstate New York—can be interpreted as a metaphor for their opposing perspectives on climate change. They live in opposing regions of the nation and hold opposite opinions regarding climate change. In the novel's opening exchange, Patrick calls Allison to see how she and Nora are doing. He is worried because he has not heard from them for a while. The tone of the chat is friendly, and it is reasonable to assume that the two still have unfinished business to discuss. Patrick and Alison are clearly concerned about various issues in their lives as the chat goes on.

They fought over the cost of solar panels. They fought over whether Nora should be raised vegetarian or whether, on the other hand, she should eat her daily fill from the limbs and torsos of big, sloe-eyed animals that had never lived a day without being destined for the slaughterhouse. Why couldn't you live life the way you wanted to? Why were you always strapped to the sinking people around you, why were you held to their standard of living, why was the only choice paper or plastic, rather than being able to choose to buy nothing at all? (Kleeman 148-49)

This passage can be read as a criticism of contemporary conflicts and the challenges of surviving in a culture that prioritizes materialism and possessions. Arguments over vegetarianism and solar panels show how even small insignificant decisions can have a big impact on people and their families, as in the case of Alison and Patrick. The questions asked at the end of the extract imply unhappiness with the restrictions and limitations set by society. It is questioned why they are compelled to live by others' rules and expectations rather than

being free to make decisions that are consistent with their values and views. “Paper or plastic” refers to the cultural consumer setting in which customers in US grocery stores are asked whether they prefer to receive their groceries in paper bags or plastic ones. The comment about “paper or plastic” implies that saving the climate should not come down to a consumer choice. The conflict between the pressure of society and personal choices is shown in this excerpt. It poses crucial concerns about building a world of justice and sustainability that encourages more freedom and self-determination.

At the beginning of the novel, Patrick appears to love living a superficially excessive lifestyle and shows no care for the effects of his decisions on the environment. Patrick dreams about convincing Alison and Nora to come to live with him in California in a “modernist mansion with pools and topiary perched precariously in the brown steepness” (Kleeman 25). The dry hills of California are referenced by the brown steepness, which Patrick does not depict as problematic. When Patrick says that he wants his daughter to “go to school with the children of Kardashians” (Kleeman 26), it further demonstrates his shallow desires. However, while his wife and child reject this glorified lifestyle, Patrick keeps on living his life of chasing something that turns out to kill him. In the first chapter of the novel, Patrick is introduced as a writer who dreams of adapting his book into a film. However, he is currently on a journey of self-realization and unexpectedly becomes a production assistant for Cassidy. Despite this detour, Patrick remains focused on his ambition to see his work on the big screen while ignoring the issues and struggles around him. He seems to be blind to the problems and challenges that surround him, demonstrating that his priorities are in the wrong place.

Alison is especially concerned about climate change and how human impact has changed the world into an almost unlivable place. Because of her anxiousness, she and Nora move to Earthbridge, a commune in Oswego, New York, where people come together to live and mourn the dying planet. Alison fears what the future holds, mostly because her daughter will grow up one day. In the face of persistent climate change, the outlook for future generations seems grim. Patrick proposes a potential solution to ease the anxiety of his partner, Alison, by suggesting a move to California, which he believes would “restore her frayed nerves” (Kleeman 26). However, it is evident that Patrick does not share the same level of concern about the climate issue, as he denies its existence and disregards the significance of his actions in the larger picture. At Earthbridge, Alison worries about what other people would think of her if they knew what her husband was doing and how he feels about the climate problem.

She tells the other Bridgers, when they ask, that he's in California caring for a sick relative. She doesn't want to invite a lecture on the unsustainability of the film industry, the relationship between celluloid and peak oil, the role that Hollywood plays in celebrating the human at the expense of all else that lives and suffers. She's begun to understand what it might feel like to live a life without her husband. It's not ethical to lie to them, but the truth would make no sense in this place. (Kleeman 279)

The excerpt is taken from a later part of the book, where Alison has come to realize that something is wrong with Patrick's situation in California. She feels a sense of shame about his choices, as is evidenced by her unwillingness to tell the others at Earthbridge what he is doing. Alison shares the view held by many at Earthbridge that the film industry is unsustainable and that movies are a form of superficial entertainment that reflects our constructed way of living. Entertainment is not a fundamental human need, and given the challenging conditions in California, making a movie should not be the central focus of one's life. Patrick's worldview is why Alison chooses to live at Earthbridge instead of following him to California. This passage also shows the challenges in their relationship, as Alison seems to come to terms with living a life without Patrick.

The state of California is not reacting to climate change. In a conversation between Patrick and Alison, Patrick says, "there's so much traffic here it makes you want to crash your car" (Kleeman 25). While the state of California is burning down, the people there do not seem to care about it. The people living in California are not reacting to climate change because WAT-R poisons them. Patrick sent The Arm, one of the workers on the movie set to go pick up some loafers for Brenda, the woman in charge of the movie production. As the Arm arrived, Patrick was impatiently waiting for him. He informs Patrick that he recently had a "terrible experience" and is bewildered and afraid. But as he starts to describe his experience, he seems to be telling a completely different story.

"I was on the highway, driving," the Arm continues, as if Patrick hasn't even said anything. "Everything was normal. Traffic was almost at a complete standstill, I was just idling forward, braking when I needed to, watching the smoke from the fire rolling off the Malibu hills. It was beautiful. Relaxing, even. I know it doesn't sound like smoke should be that way, but if you just pretend they're clouds, dirty clouds, you can see all kinds of things. Big, puffy shapes crawling across the sky. Hippopotamus. Pirate ship. Half a dragon. Stuff like that." (Kleeman 96)



This passage describes a moment of harmony and beauty despite an otherwise chaotic situation. While the secondary characters, Horseshoe and the Arm, move through the same narrative as the ones in the foreground, they offer a different perspective on the events that take place. They act as a sort of running commentary, providing insight and interpretation of the story as it unfolds. Although they share the same experiences as the main characters, their unique viewpoints give the reader a more nuanced understanding of the events and themes of the novel. The Arm describes a time when he was driving on a highway, stuck in traffic, and watching the smoke from a nearby fire rise from the hills. Everything around him is romanticized, and he does not see his situation as dangerous. Despite the traffic inconvenience and the fire's danger, he finds the scene beautiful and relaxing. He imagines shapes in the smoke, making the dirty clouds random and imaginary. Because of ROAD symptoms, the Arm finds joy and beauty in these unexpected places, even in situations that might seem unpleasant. The Arm uses his imagination to avoid opening his eyes to the discomfort around him caused by climate change. This substitute poisons everyone so that they do not see what is happening before their eyes.

In the novel, California is experiencing a drought because of climate change, as we also can see in real life. Horseshoe, one of the workers on the set of the film, tells Patrick how WAT-R is different from water because WAT-R “boils at a slightly higher temperature and freezes at a slightly lower temperature. It forms stronger bonds inside the molecule, and with other molecules” (Kleeman 126-27). WAT-R is a substitute for regular water that has become necessary in California due to the drought caused by climate change, which has led to a ban on the sale of regular water in the state. Therefore WAT-R has been used in place of ordinary water. The novel depicts a civilization in which the most basic human need, water, has been replaced with a privately produced alternative, leaving water extremely expensive for the average person to afford. As a result, ordinary people are compelled to consume the water replacement WAT-R, which has led to corporate control and diseases amongst the drinkers of the substitute. According to its marketing, WAT-R is a posh alternative to water, available in countless flavors and varieties. People drink WAT-R, use it to put out fires, flush it down the toilet, and use it in the shower, among other things. WAT-R depicts various concerns, particularly the lack of possible alternatives for obtaining safe drinking water. The market has completely banned all rival water brands, leaving consumers with no choice but to use WAT-R for all situations in which they previously consumed regular water. At the novel's beginning, the use of WAT-R is limited to the California region. However, as the plot

progresses and Patrick and Cassidy uncover some questionable qualities of the replacement, they take action and work to expose the shady side of the WAT-R industry. While investigating, Patrick and Cassidy visit a WAT-R factory and uncover that the water substitute is offered in various forms to customers.

On the wall behind the bar are countless bottles of WAT-R, some with familiar labels—WAT-R Extra, WAT-R Pure, WAT-R Wildly Wet (a colorful star-shaped sticker reads “For Kids!”), and WAT-R Renaissance. But there are also labels he doesn’t recognize—WAT-R ReGenerate, WAT-R Hype!, WAT-R Misty Morning Dew, and the technicolored liquid of WAT-R Kids Only No Grown-Ups Allowed! (Kleeman 239)

These are but a few of the WAT-R variants available, and the product’s manufacturers offer one variant to suit everyone’s needs. In the story, WAT-R gives consumers a sense of choice. But, unfortunately, except for the insanely wealthy individuals who still import natural water, drinking regular water is no longer an option for “ordinary people,” leaving them with only WAT-R as a substitute. Based on the passage above, buying WAT-R resembles purchasing beverages at present supermarkets. The product comes in various flavors, with some bottles even explicitly targeted toward children. Since WAT-R is the only available “water” in stores, customers are compelled to buy it without other options. Customers find the WAT-R bottles fascinating because of the variety of names on them, and the development of new tastes with creative names like “Re-Generate” and “Misty Morning Dew” makes them eager about the various possibilities available to them. Thus, it makes sense that the characters in the narrative think WAT-R is fancier than the normal water they previously drank. Horseshoe, one of the characters working on the movie set, says about WAT-R, “It’s the same as water, just a little bit more so” (Kleeman 127).

WAT-R is more expensive than regular water used to be when the people in California had access to it, which makes it a substitute that not everyone can afford. This is not mentioned further in the novel, but it is mentioned that there are outlets where WAT-R is sold cheaper than in the stores. Because the pricing is set higher, there will be people who cannot afford to drink water, not even the substitute WAT-R. This is an effect of the capitalist society, where basic necessities are made inaccessible to people because the pricing is set to satisfy the investors and the corporations. In a conversation between Patrick and Cassidy, the value of water is being discussed. “Why would you get paid in water?” Patrick asks, finding it

hard to hide his disbelief. “Did your money person okay this?” “I forgot,” says Cassidy pertly, “you’re new to Cal-uh-forn-ya-” (Kleeman 87). The idea of being paid in water raises doubts in Patrick’s mind because it appears weird. Cassidy replies sarcastically, suggesting that he may find the concept strange because he is new to California. Since water is so hard to come by and has, in Cassidy’s eyes, a higher value than money, Cassidy is using her contacts to get hold of some regular water in order to avoid drinking WAT-R. Cassidy continues the conversation by explaining why water is so rare and how WAT-R has positioned itself in current society.

“You haven’t been paying attention, have you? Where you come from, WAT-R is just another bottled beverage product you can buy at the store. Here, it’s all you get unless you have a lot of money and a lot of connections. Brenda and Jay have great connections,” she adds, with a note of sadness. “Since you got here, every shower, every flush, every time you’re thinking of—it was all WAT-R. (Kleeman 87)

The people on the East Coast still drink pure water where Patrick is from, and Cassidy makes it clear to him that there is a water shortage in California and WAT-R is not just one option among many to choose in the store as it is on the east coast, but the only option. Regular water is difficult to get hold of; as a result, it is evident that the water supply is tightly regulated. Jay and Brenda are supplying Cassidy with water as payment because of her acting job. In this section, they are seemingly well-connected to someone higher up in the water supply corporation. Cassidy mentions Jay and Brenda with a tone of sadness. The situation of water scarcity is unfair and complex, and Cassidy is negative about WAT-R being the only option available to people. Cassidy seems to be one of the only characters who understand the impacts of WAT-R, and because she has the opportunity to avoid it, she refuses to drink it. In a conversation with Horseshoe, Cassidy gets furious when he offers her WAT-R. “Fucking assassin!” Cassidy shouts at Horseshoe, — “I don’t drink that fake water—it doesn’t touch my lips. Got it?” (Kleeman 188). Cassidy is clearly angry when she is offered WAT-R instead of regular water. Further in the conversation, Horseshoe continues telling her that it is not fake and that he got it from a dispenser with her name on it, standing on the set where they worked. Cassidy is also trying not to be controlled by the corporations, where what she believes is regular water has been switched with WAT-R. The composition of WAT-R is not the same as regular water, and the substitute can feel a little different from regular water, which Cassidy notices. “Don’t try to manage me,” she snaps. “I know the taste. I know when something’s not right. Oh my god, my heart is racing. I think I’m having a reaction, I

feel...faint" (188). Cassidy is being overly dramatic in this scene, but she still manages to make a point regarding the dangers of WAT-R.

Cassidy has cultivated a flawless sense of taste from a young age. She is unafraid to establish herself and pursue what she desires, even when it may seem trivial or impersonal. She resides in a grand estate in the hills of California, complete with a pool and a garden. Yet, despite the empty pool, Cassidy appears untouched, as though it symbolizes her status and privilege. Due to the drought in California, Cassidy's pool has run dry, and despite the availability of WAT-R as a substitute, she refuses to use it. Cassidy is determined not to compromise on the quality of her water and has a strong hatred of being associated with any sort of water substitute. She is so opposed to the idea that she will not even consider using WAT-R to refill her pool. Having devoted her life to acting, she has achieved a level of success that has allowed her to live comfortably and indulge in the finer things in life. Cassidy's less-than-ideal relationship with her family growing up has led her to value her independence and disregard what others may think of her. Nevertheless, her self-assuredness and confidence in her taste and abilities have allowed her to carve out a niche for herself in the entertainment world. Her talent and charisma have made her a famous actor. However, her pursuit of success has come at a cost, and the emptiness of her pool is a sad reminder of the sacrifices she has made to get where she is today.

As the novel transitions into a detective story, Cassidy emerges as the protagonist for evident reasons. She assumes the responsibility of caring for Patrick, who is experiencing numerous symptoms of ROAD and is unable to look after himself. In this sense, Cassidy takes on the role of a caregiver as she tries to help Patrick navigate his struggles while investigating the mysterious events surrounding them. Cassidy reflects our society's demands, where people we invest in play out illusions for our pleasure. She embodies plasticity and optimism, adapting to fulfill capitalism's desires and the extractive wants of those in power. From a young age, Cassidy has been praised for certain qualities and encouraged to develop them, modifying her into what was expected. However, she now realizes this pressure has suppressed her ability to live authentically. In the novel, we see her struggle to break free from these limitations, and she is no longer the superstar child detective she once was. Cassidy can be compared to plastic because, like plastic, she is highly shapeable and capable of taking on different forms to fit the demands of her environment.

Climate change which has led to water shortage, continues to create new problems for the people in California. One catastrophe often follows another, and ROAD is a consequence of the capitalist creation of a water substitute. ROAD is a disease caused by WAT-R, and everyone who consumes the water substitute seems to get symptoms of ROAD to various extents. ROAD is a neurological disease that causes many different symptoms. Memodyne is the name given to the clinics that have been established in response to the widespread outbreak of the ROAD epidemic in California. These clinics have been designed to provide urgent medical attention and treatment to those who are experiencing symptoms related to the disease. On flyers hanging in one of the Memodyne clinics Patrick and Cassidy visit, the symptoms of ROAD are listed, and the poster also explains what you should do if you experience any of the symptoms:

ARE YOU OK? IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS:

MEMORY LOSS

SWOLLEN FINGERS

UNEXPECTED CLOTTING

HALLUCINATION OF WATER HALLUCINATION OF BIRDS

DIFFICULTY RECALLING MEMORIES

UNABLE TO CRY OR SWEAT

DENSE TEARS OR SWEAT

UNREQUITED AFFECTION

IRREGULAR OR INADEQUATE BLINKING

MAN IN SUIT

YOU MAY BE IN URGENT NEED OF TREATMENT! VISIT YOUR NEAREST  
MEMODYNE CLINIC FOR A CONSULTATION! (Kleeman 117-18)

With capital letters to engage the viewers' attention, these flyers are unavoidable to see and suggest that those experiencing the symptoms are in immediate danger and need to seek help immediately. Because of the capital letters, it is fair to assume that these symptoms are

experienced in a state of crisis, creating a sense of alarm and panic in those who read it. It is an advertisement from a Memodyne clinic, which is the clinic that takes care of the ROADies, those suffering from ROAD. The clinic is offering treatment for a range of different symptoms, including memory loss, swollen fingers, and hallucinations. These symptoms are unusual for regular diseases and are presented as if they are serious medical conditions. The symptoms seem surreal, and one of the symptoms also includes metaphors of nature: the illness may cause people to experience hallucinations about birds and water. Because birds are free animals that can fly anywhere, hallucinating about them can be interpreted as a symbol of the victim's loss of freedom. Birds can fly away from fires and find safety. On the other hand, the water hallucination symbolizes the need and desire for ordinary water, which is incredibly difficult to get hold of. Memodyne is a powerful institution that holds power over every person who experiences ROAD and enters the clinic. Memodyne represents the powerful role of medical institutions in society and how they hold power over people who are vulnerable and in need of help.

“Ashley said that business at Memodyne has spiked. When she started working, nine months ago, the place was empty, and now they're completely booked. There's a five-hundred-person waitlist for the next open bed. That's what she says. She says there are people trying to get in every day, and nobody's leaving. Except for, you know, a few of them.” “No, I don't know. What does that mean?” “Ashley says a few of them die. Four or five a week.” (Kleeman 226-27)

In the extract above, Cassidy and Patrick are visiting a Memodyne clinic on their mission to discover the truth about the corporations Jay and Brenda are working for. Cassidy gets into a conversation with Ashley, a big fan of Cassidy's TV shows, and manipulates her to tell details about Memodyne. According to Ashley, these clinics are new and are recently experiencing patients that need help. Those who get into the clinic do not leave unless they are dead. All the people who try to get into the clinic are victims of ROAD, and there seem not to be many people left in California without any symptoms of the disease. Ironically, those who own the Memodyne clinics profit from the clinics because they are also in charge of the WAT-R production. This capitalist circle of evil is making people dependent on the corporation, both to get “water” and to get the illusion of getting well from consuming it. Because the consumers of WAT-R are distant from reality and experiencing memory loss and all the other symptoms caused by ROAD, they are not seeing the problem caused by the capitalist

corporation. Corporate control makes everyone dependent on their services and keeps the consumers in a loop that is impossible to escape.

ROAD stands for “Random-Onset Acute Dementia” (Kleeman 211), and Ashley tells Patrick and Cassidy how the disease works as a “degenerative mental disease that affects a different demographic from Alzheimer’s or vascular dementia. Actually, it affects all demographics. It can basically happen to anyone” (Kleeman 211). In other words, if you get ROAD, there is no way to stop the development of the disease. Those who are diagnosed with ROAD are not likely to get well, which makes it comparable to Alzheimer’s disease. ROAD affects everyone who consumes WAT-R: old, young, and teenagers; no one is protected against this horrific disease. “The new dementia is for everybody,” (Kleeman 102) Horseshoe states in a conversation with Patrick. Further, Horseshoe tells him, “We call them ROADies.” — “They have some new kind of dementia” (Kleeman 102). The new disease has taken over the lives of the consumers of WAT-R.

After living in California for a while and drinking WAT-R, Patrick experiences symptoms of ROAD. His symptoms are mostly memory loss and thirst, and he struggles to see things clearly. In a conversation with Cassidy, he asks, “how can he miss them, his family, if he can’t even remember them clearly?” (Kleeman 105). Patrick is losing touch with reality, and he can no longer picture the faces of his loved ones. His symptoms worsen throughout the novel, so Cassidy takes care of him as they travel around trying to figure out what is happening in California. Towards the end of the novel, when Cassidy and Patrick decide to go look for Cassidy’s sister, Cassidy fails to look after Patrick. He is experiencing extreme thirst and suddenly sees himself crawling on a beach towards the sea. Patrick sees a big, misshapen tree with a narrow trunk in the middle of the beach and thinks seeing a tree like this is impossible. Nothing about the tree is right.

It belongs to some other epoch, to gigantic cats with scimitar tusks and dinosaurs grinding the knifelike leaves in their hard mouths. If he is witnessing this tree, something has gone horribly wrong. It’s impossible that he should be standing here alive to witness it, impossible that he should exist at all. (Kleeman 321)

In this passage, Patrick understands that something is terribly wrong, and it is affecting nature and animals. Patrick sees the tree as so strange and out of place that it seems to belong to a different time or world. The graphic description of creatures from prehistoric times, such as

gigantic cats and dinosaurs, helps to strengthen this idea. The animals described are robotic, eating “knifelike leaves” and chewing them with “hard mouths.” The passage creates a sense of anxiety and confusion as Patrick struggles to make sense of what he is seeing and his place in the world. He may be experiencing a kind of existential crisis as he confronts the limits of his own understanding of the world and his place in it.

Either he exists and the world is an illusion, or the tree does and he is the mistake.

Suddenly nothing seems familiar at all. The sky too blue, the air too hot, the sand too big, the ground too grainy. The world tears in half, one side all names, the other side all images, with no point of contact between them. (Kleeman 322)

Patrick is feeling extremely lost and alienated. His sense of reality has been broken because of the odd tree, leading him to wonder about the nature of both his own existence and the world around him. Patrick doubts his identity and sense of purpose, which signals an existential crisis. The phrase “the world tearing in half” suggests a fundamental breakdown in Patrick’s understanding of reality, as though the world’s familiar framework has fallen apart. He seems to have lost the ability to interact with his environment meaningfully. The image of “one side all names, the other side all images” depicts a drastic separation that can be transferred to the separation between humanity and the earth. We humans have modified the environment to serve our needs, and this results in human control over nature. The natural systems are complex, and in some cases, damage to them is irreversible, as we see in the melting ice caps. Despite our knowledge of our environmental impact, we continue overconsumption of natural resources, as Patrick experiences in his final moment.

Earthbridge has been formed as a response to the growing concern over the planet’s weakening condition, and its members have gathered to mourn this loss. Despite Patrick’s curiosity about the commune, Nora and Alison remain guarded in describing the place, leaving him to speculate about its true nature. Patrick tries to do research about Earthbridge online, but there is little information, leading him to believe that the community is more a cult than a commune. His concern for Nora and Alison is unmistakable in their phone conversations, as he expresses worry over how they are doing and the possibility that they may be involved in something dangerous. Tension and misunderstandings arise when different worldviews collide. Patrick’s skepticism about the commune reflects a broader cultural suspicion of the alternative lifestyle. At the same time, Nora and Alison’s unwillingness to share information about their community may be seen as a response to this



skepticism and a desire to maintain the privacy and independence of their communal lifestyle. The people living at Earthbridge are not experiencing climate change in their bodies. They mourn the planet every day and read reports about what is happening worldwide. However, they are not living in the problem areas, making it difficult to understand what is happening beyond their community.

One of the phone calls between Alison and Patrick describes Alison's conflicted feelings about life with Patrick:

“I don't know why I keep telling you that you're welcome at Earthbridge when I know it would only make both of us miserable. Every day here, we acknowledge that the planet is dying, that the life to come, the life our children will lead, is only a shadow of the life we enjoyed ourselves. Every day, I admit to myself that the way I've lived has taken from my daughter the things we taught her to love. But I never feel as bad as I do when I remember living in that house with you and Nora, watching these same things unfold, and getting ordered by you to take my handful of pills and look away.”  
(Kleeman 144)

This passage describes how Alison and Patrick's relationship is challenged throughout the novel. They are in constant conflict over the past and the future. Alison admits that they have invited Patrick to join them at Earthbridge but acknowledges that it would only make them unhappy if he did so. Patrick does not share the recognition of the planet's decline and the resulting shadow that will be cast on future generations. Alison deeply regrets how she has lived her life and how the impact of her actions has affected her daughter's future. Alison is trying to make amends for her errors and thinks living at Earthbridge will help her feel forgiven for what she feels responsible for. Alison is the only member of Patrick's circle who expresses regret for previous actions that have harmed the environment. In relocating to Earthbridge, Alison has broken free from Patrick's negative attitudes and control. The passage's last sentence is particularly striking, as Alison recalls being ordered to take pills and look away from the reality of the planet's decline by Patrick. Alison is experiencing a deep sense of frustration and anger towards Patrick, as Patrick is struggling to come to terms with the scale of the problem of climate change. The passage highlights the complex emotions and conflicting motivations that can arise in the face of a global crisis and the ways in which individual actions can have severe consequences for others.

Earthbridge can serve as a place where things are done “right,” and everyone outside of this community is seen as criminal in light of environmental damage. In a conversation with Linden, one of the speakers at Earthbridge, she tells Alison about their vision for Earthbridge. “We’re trying to build a bridge between humanity and the earth, not humanity and individual people. Individuals are kind of the paradigm we’re looking to break” (Kleeman 269). Instead of concentrating on interpersonal interactions between individuals, Linden suggests that the commune aims to build a bond between people and nature. Humanity can start to repair its relationship with the earth by moving away from a focus on individualism and materialism and promoting a feeling of communal life and environmental awareness. Linden states that the commune aims to challenge individualism as a paradigm to advance a more sustainable way of life. Alison and Nora sleep in bunk beds in a cabin with other women and children. The residents at Earthbridge can choose between different tasks throughout the day, and they are expected to participate in the community. One day, while Alison is on kitchen duty, she experiences something odd while pouring water for dinner.

She takes the first pitcher and holds it under the tap, letting the water level rise to the lip. She does the same thing again and again, and she’s about to set the last pitcher aside when she notices something odd in the water: it could be something she’s never noticed before, but are those suds gathered at the top normal? They seem to linger just a moment too long, the water goes from white to clear, but not clear enough—so she pours the whole thing down the drain and starts again. The new fill is better, calmer and less sudsy, but the water looks different—bluer than usual? Something mournful in the color? Something wrong? She pours out the pitcher and starts over. She fills the pitchers, holds each one up to the light, and starts again, over and over and over.

(Kleeman 342-43)

At first, Alison pours water into the pitchers, not noticing anything special about the water. Suddenly, when she pours the last pitcher, she becomes aware of subtle changes in the water. The mention of suds lingering too long and the water appearing bluer than usual makes Alison notice something is wrong. Alison meticulously pours the water into the pitchers, but something seems off. The color and texture are not as she expects, and her dissatisfaction is evident as she empties the pitchers and starts the process of refilling them over and over again. The water’s behavior is not as she desires, making her seek a better outcome with each attempt. She is trying to find the right water quality, but she fails. WAT-R has made its way to Earthbridge. This passage sheds light on the unsettling loss of control over the water.

Without any warning, there is a sudden and unexpected shift in the behavior of the water. This element emphasizes the significance of the situation and the consequences of lost control over natural resources. It is reasonable to conclude that WAT-R has emerged as the predominant water substitute across the United States, given its widespread presence that now extends to the East Coast. This observation points out the impact and influence of WAT-R as a universal solution in response to water scarcity issues. Regardless of the genuine mourning and efforts of the people at Earthbridge to repair the situation, the severe damage caused by the climate cannot be undone. The point of no return has been reached, portraying regrets and apologies as unsuccessful. Despite the people at Earthbridge's genuine intentions and actions, the consequences of climate change have become irreversibly severe, and climate change does not make any exemptions. The passage serves as a reminder that the time for effective action to address the climate problem is now and the fact that simple regrets cannot undo the harm already done.

Throughout the novel, Nora, Patrick's daughter, has visions she describes to her father over the phone. Nora's visions show an outstanding level of detail and accuracy, often supporting the events unfolding in the novel. One such instance occurs when she tells her father about seeing him in California, accompanied by a beautiful woman. "I saw you in the driver's seat of a white car, a convertible, with the top down. It was California, I think, with brown hills on all sides and tough little bushes clinging to the slopes. There was a blond woman next to you" (Kleeman 216). Despite Nora's conviction, Patrick dismisses her vision, discounting any connection between her description and his personal experiences. Nora's vision is a picture of what is happening in Patrick's life, but he denies it to her. Nora continues to ask if anything in the vision is familiar to him. "Are you sure, Dad? The scene doesn't remind you of anything? The vision was so clear in my mind, I could even smell the grass and the trees and something burning far off in the distance. You don't know who the woman could be or what she might represent?" (Kleeman 216). Nora's visions capture the essence of reality, providing accurate and precise descriptions of the burning hills of California where Patrick and Cassidy find themselves driving. However, despite the undeniable accuracy of Nora's visions, Patrick's response is marked by a denial of these facts, almost as if acknowledging them would diminish his freedom or control over his own life. Deep down, Patrick recognizes the striking realism of Nora's visions, acknowledging to himself that they are "too lifelike." However, he holds back from admitting this to Nora. Instead, he attributes her visions to her mother, Alison, telling her that they stem from Nora's

imagination being influenced by Alison's discussions about Patrick's life and his collaboration with Cassidy Carter. Patrick implies that Nora's visions result from her longing for him, highlighting the emotional foundation of her sixth sense. Although he tries to explain them away, Nora's visions persist and continue to serve as warnings regarding Patrick's life, foreshadowing events that unfold accurately.

In one of the final chapters, as Patrick and Cassidy search for Cassidy's sister in the desert, Patrick finds himself disoriented and lost. In this moment of desperation, he encounters a mysterious figure standing before him, a man dressed in a grey suit. In a phone call with Nora sometime before this event, she describes a vision where she sees him crawling in the desert.

"I had a vision of you, Dad," Nora begins in a serious tone. "You were out in the desert. You weren't wearing a shirt. There were some houses in the background, but they were far away and there were no people. You were crawling through the sand on your hands and knees; you had dust all over your face and your clothes. There was dust in your mouth, and you didn't seem to notice. You didn't seem to care. —As you crawled, you looked up and around you at these prehistoric trees; instead of leaves, they were covered in spikes; their trunks were shaggy like woolly mammoth legs. Trees that had arms instead of branches, arms like a person's, thick and reaching out in all different directions. You were frightened of the trees. But then you saw something before you that seemed to make you happy. You smiled a big smile, and you kept crawling forward. But this time, you were looking up at something. Something up above you. You crawled toward it, holding your hand out toward it—like, I don't know, like you were trying to invite it to come closer. And then I don't see you anymore. I don't see you in any more of my visions. You're just gone." (Kleeman 316-17)

Patrick is disoriented and dehydrated when Nora tells him about this vision and the worsening ROAD symptoms. He is not reacting or aware of what Nora is telling him. This vision carries a disconcerting tone and raises questions about Patrick's health and state of mind. Nora's vision of her father crawling through the desert and facing unusual and threatening elements can be seen as a warning for the future and is also a precise picture of Patrick the last time he is mentioned in the novel. Patrick is not wearing a shirt, and the dust covering his face and clothes symbolizes vulnerability and struggle. Patrick's crawling posture signifies struggle

and desperation. The abandoned houses with no people in them portray isolation and a lack of community. When Patrick and Cassidy go to one of the towns where they hope to find Cassidy's sister, they find all the houses abandoned, confirming Nora's vision. Climate change has made villages uninhabitable because of drought, and dangerous fires are raging too close to the residents, constantly threatening the people and forcing them to leave. The description of trees with spikes, woolly mammoth-like trunks, and arms instead of branches represents a transformed and menacing natural environment. This serves as a metaphor for the destructive consequences of environmental degradation and the impact of climate change. Nora continues to explain how Patrick suddenly becomes happy, seeing something in front of him that takes away his fear of the surroundings. Nora is not describing what he might see, but what Patrick experiences in the scene when he crawls in the desert: Patrick sees the man in the grey suit, who appears in the hallucinations of the people with ROAD. At the end of Nora's vision, Patrick disappears, suggesting an uncertain fate or a potential loss of connection with his daughter. Nora's vision can be interpreted as a warning about the potential consequences of environmental neglect, representing the future of humanity and encouraging people to pay attention and act responsibly to avoid the disappearance of loved ones and the irreversible damage to the natural world. Nora is stating the obvious, foreshadowing events that happen in Patrick's life. Nora's visions serve as a call to recognize the urgency of addressing environmental issues and finding sustainable solutions.

The man in the grey suit occurs several times throughout the novel. He is first mentioned on the poster at the Memodyne clinic, where the symptoms of ROAD are listed. In one of the Memodyne clinics, Patrick and Cassidy visit on their detective journey to figure out what is going on with WAT-R; they meet Ashley, a receptionist and a huge fan of Cassidy. Ashley tells them about one strange symptom that seems to affect all the patients at the clinic diagnosed with ROAD.

“There's just one hallucination they all have in common. I mean, not that I know, since I don't have ROAD, but it's what a lot of patients report.” “What is it?” Cassidy asks, her voice hot and curious. “It gives me the heebie-jeebies,” Ashley says, and shudders. “Tell me,” Cassidy says, like it's a tasty bit of gossip about a girl they both know. “They see a guy. A guy in a gray suit.” “A gray suit?” “They all say gray.” “What's so scary about a guy in a gray suit?” “Just that he's not there,” Ashley says, and they look at each other silently. (Kleeman 212-13)

The shared hallucination of a guy in a gray suit, as described by Ashley, is the only hallucination they all have in common. Despite not personally experiencing it, Ashley says that many individuals with ROAD are seeing this figure. Ashley is apparently creeped out by this man in the grey suit who does not exist in person since every patient keeps seeing him. What is strange about the guy in the gray suit is the fact that he is perceived as “not there.” This hallucination can be a representation of an absence from reality. The patients with ROAD are experiencing some kind of dementia and are not capable of taking care of themselves or living as normal. The man in the grey suit can also function as a metaphor linked to capitalism and privatization. He is a symbol of corporate power, as he always occurs in the hallucinations of the victims that have consumed WAT-R, the corporate substitute controlling everybody’s lives and making consumers ill. This is a symbol of a capitalist system that holds significant control over industries and the economic structures of society. The man in the grey suit is not seen in anyone’s hallucinations with a face. A faceless man can symbolize a faceless bureaucracy, such as the anonymous figures who shape regulations and policies. The novel never introduces us to those who oversee the WAT-R production. We only meet the characters working at the Memodyne clinics and Jay and Brenda, the couple in charge of the adaption of *Elsinore Lane*. Capitalist societies, as we see in the novel, are driven by profit motives and prioritize profit over the well-being of humans. The welfare of the citizens living in the areas where this product is being advertised and used has been put second to WAT-R’s unrelenting chase of profit. This is connected to the perception of dehumanization and alienation that can exist in capitalist cultures that are motivated by profit. Areas in California are vacated, and the water substitute poisons the people left because of drought and water scarcity. The man in the grey suit may also serve as a symbol of death, as perceived by the individuals sick with ROAD. This is reinforced by Ashley’s confession to Patrick and Cassidy during their visit to the Memodyne clinic, where she tells them that no one has ever left the clinic alive.

## **2.2 Privatization and Capitalism**

In *Something New Under the Sun*, privatization and capitalism play a significant role in contributing to climate change, as we see in real life. The novel portrays a future where corporations take over every aspect of life, including the environment. Privatization and capitalism have led to the exploitation and reduction of natural resources, causing irreparable environmental damage. Furthermore, corporations prioritize profit over the well-being of the planet and the people, leading to environmental disasters. Corporate interests are the only

prioritization in the novel, and the government plays a weakened or non-existent role, indicative of neoliberal policy, which emphasizes individual responsibility and advocates for free markets and privatization for economic growth. The novel portrays corporations with a monopoly over water, and the water substitute WAT-R is the driver of capitalism. The power of water is in the hands of a few, which results in limited competition in the market and a strongly reduced choice for the consumer.

In the final chapters of the novel, a crucial moment occurs when Patrick reaches for a can of cola, only to be swiftly halted by Cassidy's urgent intervention. "Don't touch that," Cassidy says. "It's the bad stuff, I checked with the hostess. Big Soda is using WAT-R now, it's in the ingredient list" (Kleeman 303). The monopolistic hold of corporations, who own WAT-R, extends to every consumable beverage, as they hold total control over the once-free market. The owners of WAT-R control all drinkable water in California; ordinary water brands like Dasani and Evian are no longer available in supermarkets. It is impossible to avoid seeing fake water billboards and commercials. "Water done right," "real, better, right at your fingertips" is inscribed on the billboards (Kleeman 109). Patrick notices that even though the citizens of California do not have a choice when it comes to their preference for drinking water, it is still advertised. "The idea that buying WAT-R is still a choice rather than a necessity?" (Kleeman 110). WAT-R has no competition, and people do not have a choice regarding which water they prefer to drink, beyond the choice of WAT-R *Pure*, WAT-R *Free*, or WAT-R *Clean*, amongst other WAT-R variations. Since there is no alternative to the synthetic WAT-R, it can be strongly assumed that government regulation enables it. The powerful characters in the book, like Jay and Brenda, are never depicted drinking WAT-R; instead, their home is stocked with normal water tapped from glaciers worldwide. Similar considerations apply to Cassidy, the only rich character in the book outside of Brenda and Jay, who is undoubtedly put off by the water substitute. The powerful corporation Jay and Brenda works for profit from climate change. Since no regular water is left, and people need water to survive, WAT-R takes its place. Jay and Brenda serve as pieces of the more giant privatized capitalist puzzle. Drinkers of WAT-R are forced to purchase the privatized water, allowing the corporations complete control over every citizen because it is just a matter of time before they become so confused and deluded that they require medical attention. The free market is taken over by one corporation and is driving the existence of humanity to an end.

A gloomy picture of the future of human civilization is presented at the end of the novel. The man in the grey suit is the last thing Patrick and Cassidy see before they vanish into the desert. At Earthbridge, Alison and Nora realize that despite their best efforts to act morally and protect the environment and themselves, they are helpless in the face of the strength of the corporations. They end up drinking WAT-R to survive, which emphasizes their reliance on others and raises the possibility that they will share Patrick and Cassidy's destiny. Jay and Brenda, who seem to have ties to the WAT-R corporation, are exploited as pawns by individuals in positions of authority and end up being poisoned by the very product they thought was premium water sourced from all the world's glaciers. All the characters in the novel are doomed to disaster since they are all taken over by corporations. WAT-R has poisoned the soil on which they live, leaving no place for the future to develop and no future for those in power. The dire consequences of climate change have presented corporations with an opportunity to monopolize the remaining water supply, resulting in the destruction of humanity. These corporations make people into dependent slaves through their Memodyne clinics, ensuring control until their eventual downfall.

Our limited awareness of the consequences associated with the production of our everyday products often leads us to perceive them as renewals rather than continued extraction and exploitation. WAT-R, a water substitute, serves as an example of such a product, which might be employed in the Western world if the water crisis worsens and if it becomes cost-effective to manufacture water. WAT-R, like other substitutions we have embraced to sustain our lifestyle, is not an exact replica of the original, highlighting the compromises we make to maintain our way of life. The impact of WAT-R extends beyond its effect on the individuals in the novel; it also permeates the landscape, giving rise to a new plant species characterized by little blue flowers that resist burning and exhibit plastic or wax-like qualities. This floral symbol represents how human activities alter the entire ecosystem, preparing it with defense mechanisms against the hazards we create.



## 3 How and Why to Teach *Something New Under the Sun*

### 3.1 Why teach climate change with fiction?

I chose to investigate the novel *Something New Under the Sun* because it echoes deeply with the current realities we face today. The challenges depicted in the story mirror the troubles we encounter in our own lives. As pupils and young adults, we have grown up in the ongoing climate change conversation. Luckily, climate activist Greta Thunberg came to the rescue and has become a front figure for our generation's fight against climate change. With each passing year, we witness a distressing escalation in temperatures, devastating wildfires, and rising sea levels. Being a millennial myself, I strongly believe that our generation, having come of age in the Anthropocene era, possesses a heightened awareness of our environmental impact and the far-reaching consequences of our actions. As future caretakers of this planet, we recognize the urgency of addressing climate change. Our increased awareness and, at times, fear of its consequences stem from the realization that we are the ones who will inhabit this Earth for many years to come. While it is tempting to feel frustrated with previous generations for their destruction of forests and reliance on fossil fuels, holding such sentiments will not help us shape a better future. Instead, we must unite and take collective action to support developing nations in transitioning to greener, more sustainable energy sources. We must also continue supporting these changes in developed nations such as Norway. By collaborating to foster the production of clean energy, we can help ease the burden on the environment and mitigate the effects of climate change. It is our duty to work hand in hand, go beyond generational divides, and build a brighter future for all.

The previous chapter investigated the various dimensions of climate change depicted in the novel *Something New Under the Sun*. The narrative masterfully captures the challenges posed by water scarcity, rampant wildfires, and the overwhelming influence of corporations. Among the characters, we encounter individuals like Patrick, who persistently denies the reality of climate change, willingly turning a blind eye to pursue his own personal desires. Patrick's portrayal as a climate denier resonates deeply in our consumer-driven society. His mindset reflects a common occurrence where many individuals, driven by the prevailing consumer culture, find themselves entangled in similar patterns of thinking. It is likely that numerous readers will identify with Patrick's perspective on this pressing issue. By shining a

light on characters like Patrick, the novel prompts us to reflect on our own actions and attitudes toward climate change. Patrick is not a character that is relatable to high school pupils, but the surroundings he finds himself in can be quite familiar to them. The novel will, therefore, serve as young adult fiction since the characters, such as Cassidy Carter and Nora, Patrick's daughter, are closer to the pupils in age. Furthermore, Cassidy and Nora experience many of the same issues young adults face today, such as ecological decline, societal pressure, and socio-political instability, which also serve as features within the dystopian genre. The novel feels both familiar and, in some ways, distinct from the reader's reality as these individuals deal with many current issues in a futuristic setting. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Cassidy becomes the protagonist by the end of the novel, illustrating how the younger generation is the future of our story on Earth. Cassidy is a representation of how the younger, more aware generation is the coming caretakers of the environment. However, because of the dystopian aspect with capitalism, corporations, laboratory water, and privatization in focus, it hits the aspects Norledge presented as popular for young adult readers who already read climate fiction. Nevertheless, I think that the problems Patrick is facing considering the environment can help the pupils get a wider understanding of climate change—especially how our attitudes and viewpoints can impact ourselves and those around us. Patrick can function as a warning from the past generation. He underscores the need for collective reflection and recognition of the societal influences that shape our thinking. Understanding the general nature of this mindset allows us to address the challenges posed by climate denial more effectively and foster meaningful dialogue to create positive change.

The Norwegian schools serve as an important institution to continue to develop the pupils' awareness and knowledge about climate change. As mentioned in the first chapter, teaching climate change is not merely an option but an explicit expectation in the Norwegian school system: "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" (Kunnskapsdepartementet). Favier et al. state that "addressing young people as future citizens and policymakers, demands that education gives them insight into the wicked problem of climate change, and develops the competencies to contribute to solving climate change" (596). The Norwegian Core Curriculum leaves no room for doubt in its stance on environmental education. It requires schools to play an active role in helping pupils develop an awareness of the impact our actions have on nature and the climate. By imparting knowledge, fostering critical thinking, and nurturing a genuine desire to protect

the environment, the curriculum visualizes a proactive and engaged generation of individuals who are equipped to contribute to the well-being of both society and the planet. Due to the emphasis on interdisciplinary learning and the significance of climate change and its relation to our lifestyle, it becomes sufficient to integrate this topic into various subjects across the curriculum. Solving climate change issues demands interdisciplinary thinking because they have multiple dimensions and are interconnected with other problems (Favier et al.). Natural and social science components can be added to the English curriculum to enhance it and give pupils a complete grasp of climate change and its effects. I will give examples of how an interdisciplinary approach can be included in a lesson plan. Feder states that “we educate to develop culture, to expand its virtues and intervene in its voices, to make the world a better place” (28). The Norwegian school system has made addressing the urgent issues of our day a priority by making climate change education a required part of the Core Curriculum. It understands how crucial it is to provide young people with the skills and morals they need to grow up to be responsible, change-making members of society.

Textbooks and non-fiction materials are valuable educational resources, but it is crucial to understand that their value is not exclusive. Feder states that “literature fosters curiosity about ourselves and others; the environmental humanities expand this curiosity, encouraging us to learn about ourselves, our species, and others sharing an evolutionary history and evolving planet” (27). I agree with Feder’s point that literature can be a powerful tool for raising creativity and increasing knowledge, especially when dealing with significant issues like climate change. Teachers can help pupils in the development of their imaginations and assist them in imagining situations and potential outcomes as a result of human actions on the climate by adding literature into climate change teaching. Building on their existing knowledge, pupils can investigate the complex issues of climate change from various perspectives. The Curriculum in English states that pupils in their first year of high school shall be

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))

I propose that working with *Something New Under the Sun* will give the pupils a wide variety of learning outcomes because it not only deals with different themes, but it also presents the genre of dystopia and climate fiction. All these aspects can be worked on further in the classroom, and the pupils can use the different angles to build on their prior knowledge to learn about more than just climate change.

## **3.2 How to teach *Something New Under the Sun***

By utilizing *Something New Under the Sun* in English education, teachers can help pupils acquire a wide range of learning outcomes. The novel's exploration of diverse themes, its classification as climate fiction within the dystopian genre, and its potential for interdisciplinary connections can offer pupils a rich educational experience beyond climate change. The novel is connected to privatization and capitalism through its exploration of the consequences of unrestricted corporate power and profit-driven decision-making in the context of climate change. By examining these connections between privatization and capitalism, pupils can develop a critical understanding of the potential implications of these systems on climate change and explore alternative approaches to create a more sustainable future. The 350-page novel can present a problem when it comes to curricular inclusion. Choosing shorter novels that pupils can finish in a shorter time can be a more practical solution to this problem. However, teachers can still use passages from the novel as starters for conversations and additional research, rather than teaching the full book. While maximizing instructional time and pupils' engagement, this adaptable approach can enable focused examination of important ideas.

### **3.2.1 Privatization and Capitalism**

The novel depicts a future where private corporations have exploited natural resources for their own gain. The portrayal of this process raises questions about the impact of unregulated capitalism and the potential dangers of prioritizing profit over environmental sustainability and community well-being. The novel can inspire discussions on these topics. I will now present some passages from the novel that can illustrate the concept of privatization and capitalism and include some questions that can be used to build a more detailed lesson plan.

“Capital is real to them. Collateralized debt obligation is real to them and requires no explanation or thought to appreciate. Loss is malleable as putty and compound interest is part of the world’s clock, as obvious as the alternation of sun and moon. To us, this makes them wizards. But the reality is even grimmer. The last mass extinction happened two hundred fifty-two million years ago, at the end of the Paleozoic, when up to ninety-six percent of all marine species went extinct. Different theories, from global warming to meteor strike, aim to explain what paleontologists call the ‘Great Dying,’ but my favorite theory holds that it was the evolution of eyes in a small, select group of organisms that enabled them to hunt their blind prey to extinction. You see, even by the old rules, those individuals who understood money had a fierce advantage over everybody else. A shift like this would mean the extinction of our kind, we simple critters who believe money is produced linearly by longer, harder work.” (Kleeman 83-84)

The passage above introduces the topic of economic systems such as capitalism, and discusses the ways in which they can contribute to inequality. This passage can also be connected to the issue of climate change and its relationship to capitalism. The pupils can investigate how economic motivation can contribute to environmental degradation and climate change.

“It’s water,” he says, “only it comes in different bottles, different markups. All a swindle, I’m sure, an everyday injustice, but not a crime under the law of capital.” (Kleeman 89)

The phrase emphasizes the impact of capital-driven laws and regulations by implying that such acts may not be legally categorized as crimes within the framework of capitalist institutions. Pupils can investigate the role of capitalism in shaping societal structures and the effects it has on different aspects of our lives, including the distribution of resources and the prioritization of profit.

“You haven’t been paying attention, have you? Where you come from, WAT-R is just another bottled beverage product you can buy at the store. Here, it’s all you get unless you have a lot of money and a lot of connections. Brenda and Jay have great connections,” she adds, with a note of sadness. “Since you got here, every shower, every flush, every time you’re thinking of—it was all WAT-R. When they first

switched over, you'd see the trucks two or three times a day delivering WAT-R in big jugs, and people were always talking about it. But now, if you pay for deluxe service, they put a tank in the basement and pump it up into the plumbing once a week. You turn the faucet and it pours out, just like in the old days.” (Kleeman 87-88)

This excerpt emphasizes the link between capitalism and the availability of necessities like water. In the novel, the privatization of water has created a situation where only the wealthiest people with connections can afford clean water. At the same time, everyone else is left with little choice but to rely on one product, WAT-R. This demonstrates how capitalism, motivated by profit and market forces, can lead to differences in access to essentials of life while highlighting the importance of wealth and privilege in determining who has access to essential resources. Pupils can explore the concept of privatization and its effects on resource distribution. They can also investigate how profit-driven capitalism influences access to clean water. Pupils can research whether privatization has any connection to water and its impact on communities in the world today.

While investigating the passages above, the pupils can work with questions to gain a better understanding of capitalism and privatization. Before analyzing and seeking evidence about privatization and capitalism in the novel, fundamental questions like the following may be crucial to answer: *What are capitalism and privatization? How can they be linked together?* After the pupils gain a good understanding of these terms, they can start investigating the novel. *Where do we see privatization in the novel? How is privatization affecting the characters in the novel?* Further, the pupils can work with tasks that require critical thinking about capitalism, privatization, and climate change. *Find solutions to mitigate the negative effects of free capitalism on the environment. Can alternative economic models balance profit, sustainability, and community well-being?* Social science-based interdisciplinary initiatives are beneficial to include while studying capitalism and privatization. Pupils can analyze and discuss literary works that explore social and political aspects of climate change, such as *Something New Under the Sun*. By studying texts that address topics such as environmental justice, activism, or the socioeconomic impacts of climate change, pupils can develop a deeper understanding of the societal dimensions of climate change.

### 3.2.2 Climate Change

*Something New Under the Sun* raises climate change as a central issue and explores the various problems that arise from it. This can provide a door opener for pupils to initiate discussions about climate change and its impact. The novel emphasizes the need to shift from individualism and materialism towards communal living and environmental awareness, as a means of repairing our relationship with the Earth. It is essential for individuals and nations to alter their lifestyles to promote sustainability and preserve our planet for future generations. I will now present a few paragraphs from the novel in order to further explore the topics of climate change and the impact of our attitudes and motivations on the environment. These passages can serve as a starting point for exploring the complex interaction between human actions and their consequences on our planet. By analyzing these extracts, pupils can deepen their understanding of the challenges posed by climate change and the importance of taking responsibility for creating a sustainable future.

They fought over the cost of solar panels. They fought over whether Nora should be raised vegetarian or whether, on the other hand, she should eat her daily fill from the limbs and torsos of big, sloe-eyed animals that had never lived a day without being destined for the slaughterhouse. Why couldn't you live life the way you wanted to? Why were you always strapped to the sinking people around you, why were you held to their standard of living, why was the only choice paper or plastic, rather than being able to choose to buy nothing at all? (Kleeman 148-49)

As mentioned in chapter 2.1, this passage can be read as a criticism of contemporary conflicts and the challenges of surviving in a culture that prioritizes materialism and possessions. Pupils can reflect on their own experiences of societal pressures and their own relations to the consumer culture. The passage also raises the question of how people are compelled to live by others' rules and expectations. The pupils can investigate deeper into the impact of the options accessible to them and their own consumer choices, and reflect on the importance of creating a just and sustainable world that respects individual freedom and self-determination. Another passage reads:

Somewhere beyond view, the brush is burning in the bright daylight, orange scraps of flame dulled by the sunlight. The sound of small life fleeing from the fire, scurrying toward more fire elsewhere. Terrible, definitely. But it's not really an emergency, he thinks, putting on his signal and shifting into the fast lane, if you

can drive around it. An emergency would be everywhere you looked, inescapable.  
(Kleeman 105)

In this passage, the characters in the novel navigate through a landscape damaged by devastating fires, little concerned about the destruction around them as they drive around the fires to get where they want. This presents an opportunity for pupils to reflect on their own perceptions of climate change and draw parallels with the characters' behavior. By examining the current environmental challenges, such as the wildfires in California, pupils can explore the potential implications and imagine whether the novel serves as a warning or foreshadowing of what the future may hold. The portrayal of the uncertain future in the novel can evoke fear and concern.

“I don't know if you can understand what it's like,” she says, her voice growing quieter, taking on a pale tone. “I know I've said this before. But I look out the back window of our house and I don't see the park or the trees. I see all of it dying. Part of me knows it's not– ‘dying’ is the wrong word for it– but another part can look out and see a place that's already dead. You see? I look at Nora and I know there's no future for her, and it tears my heart in two. And what makes me feel crazy is that all around me, everywhere, people are driving cars and buying pro-pane grills and eating double cheeseburgers, and not one of them acts like they're dying, even though they are. Not one of them sees what I see, and that means we have no chance.” (Kleeman 27)

The passage above portrays Alison's observation of people around her engaging in everyday activities without acknowledging the appearing crisis adds to her feelings of isolation. Her sense of hopelessness grows stronger as she notices the difference between her own awareness of the terrible effects of climate change and the seeming disinterest of others. Pupils can study the emotional and mental effects of climate change on people and communities in response to this passage. They can also investigate the difficulties of living in the present while facing an uncertain future, as we do today.

The examples provided serve as a starting point to explore the impact of climate change in the novel. Before delving into the excerpts, it is crucial to address some key questions: *What is climate change? What factors contribute to climate change? How do human activities affect climate change? What can we do to mitigate the effects of climate change?* The significance



of climate change cannot be highlighted enough. By combining social science into the teaching plan, pupils can acquire scientific knowledge that emphasizes the urgency of this global issue. Pupils can engage with scientific literature, articles, and research papers related to climate change. This approach allows the pupils to explore the scientific principles underlying climate change, including the greenhouse effect, carbon footprint, or the consequences of global warming. The pupils can learn to understand complex scientific concepts and communicate them through the English subject.

### 3.3 Lesson Plan

The proposed lesson plan is an example of how teachers can use *Something New Under the Sun* in their climate change education. It offers flexibility for teachers to customize and adjust elements based on the teacher’s wishes, allowing them to focus on specific angles and themes. The absence of a strict timetable allows for adaptability, enabling teachers to distribute time according to the depth of discussion and activities. Lastly, the lesson plan acts as a guide, so that teachers can tailor it to their pupil’s learning requirements and create a meaningful and effective educational experience. By including social and natural science, it is possible to create an interdisciplinary lesson plan based on the examples provided in the chapters above (3.2.1 and 3.2.2) and the following lesson plan. In the lesson plan below, I will offer possible achievable competence aims for English, social science, and natural science.

Competence aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English (ENG01-04)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- read, analyse and interpret fictional texts in English</li> <li>- read, discuss and reflect on the content and language features and literary devices in various types of texts, including self-chosen texts</li> </ul> </li>   <li>• Social Science (SAK01-01)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- explain how some environmental toxins can accumulate in food chains and assess measures to protect health and the environment</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- discuss the connection between economic growth, living standards and quality of life in a global and sustainability perspective</li> <li>• Natural science (NAT01-04) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- explain how climate changes affect evolution, the prevalence of species and biological diversity</li> <li>- explain how some environmental toxins can accumulate in food chains and assess measures to protect health and the environment</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom discussion: pupils share their prior knowledge, concerns, and experiences related to climate change.</li> <li>• Introduce the concepts of privatization and capitalism, explaining their relevance to climate change and the novel <i>Something New Under the Sun</i>.</li> <li>• Discuss the connection between privatization, capitalism, and climate change. Discuss the potential impacts of corporate power and profit-driven decision-making on the environment.</li> </ul>
Working with excerpts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read and discuss selected passages from the novel that illustrate both the themes of climate change and the consequences of privatization and capitalism.</li> <li>• Work in groups: analyze the passages, identifying the connections between privatization, capitalism, and climate change from the novel.</li> <li>• Writing task/ discussion: can climate issues from the novel be seen in reality?</li> </ul>

Discussions and reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom discussions: climate change, focusing on its causes, impacts, and the urgency of addressing the issue.</li> <li>• Introduce scientific evidence, including data, charts, and graphs, to help pupils understand the scale and effects of climate change. Example: IPCC report</li> <li>• Explore the connections between climate change, privatization, and capitalism. Discussing how profit-driven decisions can worsen environmental degradation.</li> <li>• Discuss the collective responsibility to address climate change. Include the role of individuals, corporations, and governments, that can provide sustainable solutions.</li> </ul>
Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils can write their own cli-fi imagining possible futures. Be creative. The pupils can use the novel as inspiration, the IPCC reports, and other information they have explored.</li> </ul>

## 4 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is not to spread fear, but rather to raise awareness about the critical issue of climate change. Addressing climate change is not only the responsibility of teachers and governments; it is a collective challenge that requires action from various stakeholders, including private corporations, schools, governments, and individuals. Each of us has the potential to become a hero in the battle against climate change, and the question at hand is how much we are willing to sacrifice to ensure a livable future for future generations. Climate change has gained widespread attention, with an increasing number of people personally experiencing its effects. It is crucial that we work together to achieve the climate goals set by the United Nations and take the reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) seriously. Mitigating our carbon footprint necessitates strongly emphasizing

transitioning to green energy sources. Additionally, it is essential to extend support to those who are already facing the devastating consequences of climate change. Climate change does not discriminate based on greenhouse gas emissions or geographic location; it affects us all. Regardless of our backgrounds or past actions, we must acknowledge and confront the reality of climate change. If we fail to do so, the consequences will affect every one of us. It is crucial that we take this issue seriously and unite in our efforts to combat climate change, safeguarding the well-being of current and future generations.

In education, climate fiction, including the novel *Something New Under the Sun*, presents a powerful tool to deepen pupils' understanding of climate change. Today's pupils have grown up within ongoing discussions about climate change and witnessed its devastating impacts across the globe. Climate change affects everyone, although its severity varies. Engaging with climate fiction provides an entry point for essential discussions surrounding the Anthropocene and the influence of consumer culture, privatization, and capitalism on climate change. Teachers play a fundamental role in this process as they have the opportunity to inform and spark curiosity among pupils regarding their own environmental footprint. By exploring the themes presented in climate fiction, educators can encourage discussions about the long-lasting effects of our decisions on future generations and the overall path of the Anthropocene.

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