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A New Way of Living: Bioeconomic Models in Post-Apocalyptic Dystopias

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A NEW WAY OF LIVING: BIOECONOMIC MODELS IN POST-APOCALYPTIC
DYSTOPIAS

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
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By

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

A NEW WAY OF LIVING: BIOECONOMIC MODELS IN POST-APOCALYPTIC DYSTOPIAS

The objective of this thesis is to explore the relationship between moralities and bioeconomies in post-apocalyptic dystopias from the Victorian era to contemporary Young Adult Fiction. In defining the terms bioeconomy and biopolitics, this works examines the ways in which literature uses food and energy systems to explore morality and immorality in social orders and systems, including capitalism and our modern techno-industrial landscapes. This work examines science fiction portrayals of apocalypses and dystopias, including *After London: Or, Wild England* and *The Hunger Games*, as well as their medieval and contextual influences. These works are analyzed in light of genre and contemporary influences, including the development of ecology and environmentalism. Ultimately, this thesis argues that authors are building a link between the types of behavior which are sustainable and morally acceptable and a person's role in a bioeconomy; specifically, those who are moral in post-apocalyptic dystopias are providers of food and care, and do not seek to profit from aiding others. This work contends that the connection between morality and sustainable food and social systems are evidence of authorial belief that our current ways of life are damaging, and they must change in order to preserve our humanity and our world.

KEY TERMS: Bioeconomy, Dystopia, Post-Apocalyptic, Ecology, Environmentalism

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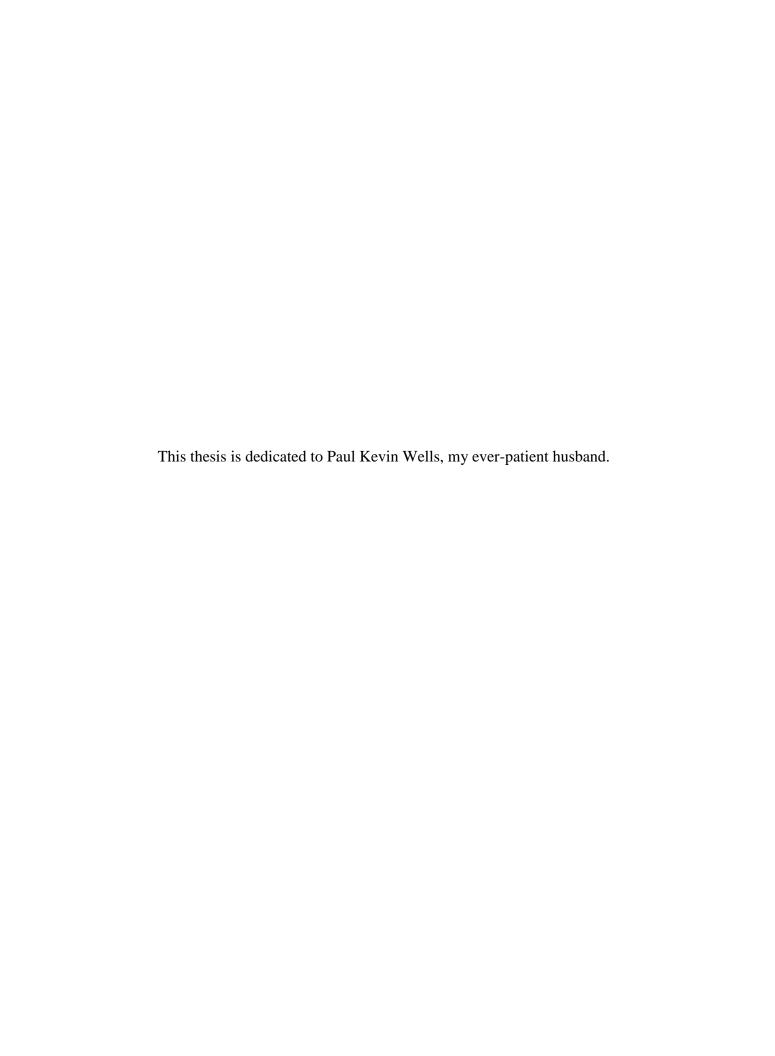

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<u>April 25, 2013</u>

This thesis is dedicated to Paul Kevin Wells, my ever-patient husband.

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Chapter 1: A New Way of Living: Bioeconomic Models in Post-Apocalyptic Dystopias

It should come as no surprise that, of the few things modern literature has inherited from medieval and Middle English verse, a fascination with the end of all things should be counted among our heritage. What might be surprising to many readers is that much modern literature, especially those works dealing with apocalypses and post-apocalypses, has also, in many cases, inherited a sense of morality found, for example, in the Middle English verse poem *Piers Plowman*. While not an apocalyptic text, Piers Plowman is religious, as many medieval works are, and the text features many examples of virtuous men and men of less savory character. The titular character, Piers the Plowman, serves as the highest example of human virtue in the world of the poem and is an example to the reader of how to live an *Activa Vita*, or active life. In our times it might be hard to imagine a plowman as a character in works of literature, let alone as the paragon of moral virtue. But Piers, as plowman and moral man, seems to be the progenitor of an idea of morality which ties man, the land, and a food production economy to the human ecosystem. In Piers we see the model of a character and a code of behavior which, in regards to both humanity and nature, has been reiterated in works of more modern character. I would like to clarify that by modern, I am including any work of literature produced in the Victorian Age and after. Specifically, one can trace the ethics of Piers as moral man and virtuous food producer through several Post-apocalyptic, dystopic novels, including *After London: Or, Wild England*, and 21st century novels like *The Hunger Games*. In these novels, varied as they are, the thematic concern of morality as it is related to food production and energy distribution plays a role in demonstrating the behaviors and societal structures man should value and preserve, in contrast to those dystopic societies and economic systems which predominate in the novels and which represent those practices which should be discarded. Those characters, such as Peeta Mellark

from *The Hunger Games* or the Baron Aquila from *After London*, follow a model much like that of Piers: they provide for their fellow man, either by tilling the soil themselves or by transmitting the fruit of the earth through food production to the rest of the populace. This alone is a moral action, as altruism and sharing often occupy a place of honor in our moral schemas (i.e. The Golden Rule). However, even aside from these acts those characters who serve as primary providers in a bioeconomy are also, always (at least in these novels) the most moral and upstanding characters. In books that span centuries and several cultures, the obvious question is why would all of these novels feature post-apocalyptic, dystopic worlds in which the only beacons of humanity and virtue are those who sit at the crux of their society's bioeconomy? Why are food producers and cultivators privileged?

There are two terms I will be using often in the following pages, one of which has already been featured. In the works I will be discussing, and indeed, in any human society in which people rely on one another, there is a bioeconomy. Bioeconomy refers to the system which provides and distributes sustenance for the satisfaction of biological need (wheat, grain, bread, etc.); however, the bioeconomic system is primarily a system of basic exchange in which fundamental demands are satisfied according to need and a system of fair and equitable exchange rather than a capitalist system of who can or cannot pay. A bioeconomy, despite its connotations, is not a system of money: a bioeconomy functions around the production and distribution of food on a level which is both sustainable and fair. Later in my discussion I will be contrasting a bioeconomy with a biopolitical system, which manipulates sustenance and food production for the greedy consumption of both food and power. Those who, like Piers, are our moral examples, serve a bioeconomy and therefore their human and natural communities. They represent the moral and sustainable model which will (hopefully) ensure mankind's future. Those who serve a

biopolitical system, much like the Capitol in *The Hunger Games*, serve an older, more destructive model, one that, as practiced in reality, has led to many of the apocalyptic fears which produce dystopic literature.

To illustrate a bioeconomy, let us revisit Piers Plowman for a moment. Piers Plowman, though not allegorically labeled as such in the poem, is a representation of the Christian *Activa Vita*, a figure who disdains those who do not work for their bread. Piers represents the active life through working and asking others to work. In *Piers Plowman* his work is agricultural—thus the name, Plowman. His role as agricultural producer gives him significance in the bioeconomic chain, in that he serves as the agrarian foundation of the system which feeds and supports civilization. Because of this he is the ideal active worker, one who works not just for himself but for others as well. What makes Piers Plowman a Christian ideal is that the bioeconomic exchanges in which he engages are motivated by the desire for social justice, the fair distribution of resources, charity, and spiritual pardon and purity.

When Will and the reader first encounter Piers, he represents the way to Truth, as only he knows how to guide the Seven Deadly Sins on their pilgrimage:

> "Peter!' quod a Plowman, and putte forth his hed,
> "I knowe hym as kyndely as clerc doth hise bokes.
> Conscience and Kynde Wit kenned me to his place
> And diden me suren hym si[ththen] to serven hym for evere,
> Bothe to sowe and to sette the while I swynke myghte.
> I have ben his folwere al this fourty wynter--
> Bothe ysowen his seed and suwed hise beestes,
> Withinne and withouten waited his profit,
> Idyke[d] and id[o]lve, ido that he hoteth.
> Som tyme I sowe and som tyme I thresshe
> (V.537-546).[1]

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[1] "'Peter!" quoth a plowman · and put forth his head,/ `I know him as well · as a clerk doth his books./ Conscience and Mother-Wit · made known his place/ And made me swear surely · to serve him forever/ Both in sowing and setting · so long as I work./ I have been his follower · all these fifty winters,/ Both sown his seed · and driven his beasts,/ And watched over his profit · within and without./ I dike and I delve · and do what Truth biddeth:/ Sometimes I sow · and sometimes I thresh…" "Piers Plowman, Passus V (Middle English, Tr. into Modern

This passage establishes Piers as both a virtuous figure and as an active worker, someone set upon his path by "Conscience and Kynde Wit" (5.539). Not only does Piers know the object of pilgrimage, Truth, but he knows him as well as "clerc doth hise bokes" (5.537), implying that they are intimately acquainted. Piers also serves the virtues of Conscience and Natural Knowledge, who have set him to work in the bioeconomic and allegorically parallel spiritual hierarchies. The virtues have set Piers to "sowe and to settle" while he "swynke mighte" (5.540), to keep working as long as he is able. This is the active life, the pursuit of good and honest work. Bioeconomic discourse shapes this active life, as the work Piers does involves "his seed" and "hise beestes" (5.543), both images of agricultural work and bioeconomic production. Piers goes on to punish the idle and the "wastours" (6.173,175,176), and to distribute bioeconomic products (grain, food, water) to those who require Christian charity because they cannot work for themselves. Thus Piers mirrors Christ himself, sowing seed to bring bread and life to his people, even those who are needy, and to punish the wicked, such as Idlers and Wastours, who would distort the bioeconomic system by manipulating it for their own selfish gain.

In more modern literature much of the Christian flavor of Piers Plowman has been lost. *Activa Vita*, or an active life, survives as echoes, especially in American literature (witness Thoreau and Emerson proselytizing a return to a simpler, more agrarian life). However, most modern, secular literature, while perhaps imbued with Christian themes, does not often function as heavy Christian allegory, and certainly does not maintain the same kinds of biblical and theological fascination as does much Middle English verse.

There do exist, however, interesting parallels between works of medieval literature and works like *The Hunger Games*. I plan to explore two major inheritances: the crux figure in a

English); The Seven Deadly Sins." *Piers Plowman, Passus V (Middle English, Tr. into Modern English); The Seven Deadly Sins.* N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Apr. 2013.

bioeconomy as virtuous man (or woman), and a fascination with the end times and with a restructuring of society after the end times. As explained earlier, Piers Plowman is not an apocalyptic work. However, it involves a restructuring of society, and also is certainly not the only medieval Christian work which explores the proper relationship between virtue, mankind, and the use he makes of his time and his land; the tie between "virtue and productive land" can also be seen in the hagiography Gutlac A (Michelet 47). An apocalyptic fascination, or even obsession, populates so many medieval works it would be almost impossible to name them all. Even the term "apocalypse" gained its current theological and cultural connotations during the middle ages:

> The term apocalypse (derived from the Greek apokalupis, meaning uncover or disclose) refers most narrowly to the revelation of John recorded in the New Testament Book of Revelation. During the Middle Ages, it came also to refer to any revelation, prophecy, or vision of the end of history and the current world order, or to the endtime events themselves (Stewart and Harding 286).

The Apocalypse, most narrowly interpreted as the events foretold in the Book of Revelation, gains broader meaning in medieval literature, expanding to include the decay of any society, and not merely the finality of the biblical end times, and that meaning extends into works of Victorian and modern literature, such as *After London*, and *The Hunger Games*. While most often, when discussing apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic works, modern readers and critics are not referring to biblical prophecies, "the Christian apocalyptic model…has 'contaminated' modern thinking" (Heffernan 12). The medieval focus on the end times and the life hereafter have survived into modern literature, and have bred a certain destructive mindset: that of "modern thinking and…rampant individualism, the worship of capital, and contempt for the body and the earth" (Heffernan 12). Medieval apocalyptic thinking promises a definite end and

freedom from the earth and the body, and many writers and thinkers over many centuries have interpreted this final freedom as license to abuse both body and earth, so long as the soul is safe.

It is strange and even ironic that medieval literature would produce both a view of the end which enables selfishly destructive behavior in the present and a view that those who work and maintain the land for the sustained but measured benefit of their fellow man are moral paragons. We are allowed to use and consume with abandon, but our moral models are those who refuse to do so. This behavioral and ideological conflict, if modern literature is to inherit both paradigms, must be resolved. In modern ruminations upon the apocalypse, this reconciliation is often accomplished by looking to a world which exists after "the end", to a post-apocalyptic world which has suffered a catastrophe, though perhaps not of biblical proportions. In *After London* an unknown event decimates urban centers and alters the geography of the entire island of Britain, and in *The Hunger Games* nuclear war and environmental destruction have similarly reshaped the United States (now Panem). None of these apocalypses are The Apocalypse, to a medieval mind, but they do represent a continuing fascination with the end times, and with life thereafter. These works of modern literature abandon "an ultimate ending" and this move "is an ethical move that breaks down the binary of the Christ and Antichrist model as it allows for a world that remains open in its direction, available to other headings" (Heffernan 13). By preserving the apocalypse but abandoning Christian theology, modern post-Apocalyptic worlds are able to ethically critique the consumptive mindset inspired by Revelation and to create societies and models which see beyond heavenly possibilities to earthly restructurings of humanity; though dystopias, these new societies allow for critiques of modern ideologies which simply would not be possible were literary characters to all inhabit Heaven or languish in Hell.

Thus, in post-apocalyptic dystopias, a sense of a moral bioeconomy can be retained and even privileged, while models of biopolitical overconsumption, often inspired by ideologies of man as inheritor and sole beneficiary of the earth, can be critiqued. New centers may replace profit, money, and gain. Energy distribution and agrarian cultivation, for humanity, focus on a center that mankind has never been able to escape: food. What is the significance of food? Some meanings are obvious: food gives life, it enables the survival of the individual and the species, as well as insuring the stability of human systems if in abundance. However, in novels which feature post-apocalyptic bioeconomies, it is also a sign of the warmth of humanity, of altruism and sacrifice, and of the bonds between man and his fellows, as well as a recognition of the interdependence of man and land. Peeta gives bread, tended by his own hands, to save the life of Katniss and her family (*The Hunger Games* 32). Rue, an agricultural worker, refuses to kill in *the Hunger Games* and instead helps when she can (*The Hunger Games* 184). The only people who help Felix on his journey through a new Britain are those who farm the land and herd sheep (Jeffries XXV). In these novels, all post-apocalyptic and all dystopic, a virtuous bioeconomy, modeled much after Piers and his half-acre, survives through those characters who are altruistic, and virtuous and who demonstrate this altruism through their distribution of bioeconomic product.

It should be noted that while bioeconomic structures necessitate a certain return to the land, these models do not privilege a complete return to "nature." Bioeconomies are focused upon a sustainable relationship between human members and animal or plant members in any ecosystem. This does not necessitate a savage abandonment of human societies; it instead requires a certain mindfulness of others, the land and its nonhuman inhabitants included. In fact,

these novels evince a certain fear of returning too far to nature. Those who abandon agricultural

cultivation and the cultivation of human virtue and connections altogether are dangerous:

> Like the black wood-dogs, the Bushmen often in fits of savage frenzy destroy thrice as much as they can devour, trapping deer in wickerwork hedges, or pitfalls, and cutting the miserable animals in pieces, for mere thirst of blood. The oxen and cattle in the enclosures are occasionally in the same manner fearfully mutilated by these wretches, sometimes for amusement, and sometimes in vengeance for injuries done to them. Bushmen have no settled home, cultivate no kind of corn or vegetable, keep no animals, not even dogs, have no houses or huts, no boats or canoes, nothing that requires the least intelligence or energy to construct (Chapter III).

In the arena of the Hunger Games, those who become completely savage, like the boy who

becomes a cannibal when pushed to his extremes during the games (*The Hunger Games* 143), are

eschewed even by the Capitol and its Gamemakers. In the above quoted passage from *After*

London, the Bushmen who exist entirely outside of culture and who run feral among the wild

woods, are no better than "black wood-dogs" (III). They have intentionally dissolved all ties to

settlement and cultivation, and thus have lost humanity. They are pictured as worse than beasts,

with a "thirst for blood" and a tendency towards mutilation. This is because they have no "settled

home" and no cultivation of those products which sustain human society and morality. The

bioeconomies in these novels, then, consist of a balancing act between a rejection of modern

consumptive values, a return to simpler relationships between man and the land, and a renewed

connection with the natural world, natural systems, and mankind's place within them. However,

to go too far is to lose all good within humanity, just as to go too far into advanced technological

society is often to do the same.

The balance was perhaps not so precarious in Piers Plowman, as visions of the world would

have been limited by the technology available, as well as the assumption of a mostly Christian

society. However, maintaining virtue and a bioeconomy in the modern mind seems much more

complex. Why, then, has a bioeconomic model, now much more complex and challenging to

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maintain, resurfaced in both Victorian and contemporary post-apocalyptic literature? One reason

could be the freedom and abilities granted to writers through the advent and subsequent

popularity of science fiction. Science fiction is a modern phenomenon, though not many agree

upon its specific birthdate:

> "The debate over the history of science fiction itself contains many perspectives,
> but Harris-Fain separates scholars into two groups: those who stretch the ancestry
> of science fiction back to ancient literatures and those who believe the genre is a
> recent phenomenon brought on by the "industrial revolution and the theory of evolution"
> (Burford 2).

However, as a discourse model not available to medieval writers, like the author of Piers

Plowman, science fiction opens models of dialogue for modern authors. Ursula K. Le Guin, a

prolific and prominent science fiction author of the 20th century, claims that the "the unique

aesthetic delight of SF" is "the intense, coherent follow-through of the implications of an idea,

whether it's a bit of far-out technology, or a theory in quantum mechanics, or a satirical

projection of current social trends, or a whole world created by extrapolating from biology and

ethnology" (Burford 22). Objects and ideas simply unimaginable in earlier eras blossom in

science fiction, followed to fantastical conclusions and consequences. New societies can be

shaped, tested, and discarded in the course of one novel, and that society can take whatever

fantastical shape best suits the mind of the author. Another prominent science fiction author,

Isaac Asimov, puts it this way: "science fiction arose as the literary response" to people

wondering "what life would be like in their grandchildren's time" (Burford 27).

So, then, science fiction allows a measure of freedom and imagination which enables authors

to explore and evaluate any possible model of society. But why would they want to do so, and

why a bioeconomy specifically? Why a post-apocalyptic bioeconomy? Americans, especially,

are often acknowledged to evince a certain "tendency towards 'apocalypticism'" (Stewart and

Harding 289). However, this fascination, especially in modern literature, does not stem merely from a morbid fascination with death and destruction. For a modern world wracked with myriad controversies and terrors, many suggest that "the 'catastrophe has already occurred' and that" disasters, especially environmental disasters, "have allowed us a glimpse of what the end might look like" (Heffernan 6). The cliché of "the end is nigh" seems to some no longer the words of a crazed madman, but like the Biblical apocalypse, becomes again rather a sure promise of decimation if we continue our modern ways.

Thus post-apocalyptic dystopias assume an air of reality, of possible futures that we could witness if we were to live long enough and to make enough mistakes. In this way post-apocalyptic dystopias also assume the air of fables, or allegories, cautionary tales which thinly veil our world in a science-fiction future so that we may look upon ourselves and despair. Utopia, the "Renaissance ideal" of the "height of human achievement" (Camb. Comp. 4), while opposite in outlook to a dystopia, precedes the idea of dystopia and yet creates a model for its functionality. In a Utopia we see the realization of all of the best tendencies and ideas in our society, the fruition of all our hopes. Like dystopia, utopia utilizes what already exists to picture what might exist. "Literary dystopia utilizes the narrative devices of literary utopia," acting as a "presentation of projective images" (Vieria 17). However, while "incorporating into its logic the principles of euchronia (i.e., imagining what the same place—the place where the utopist lives—will be like in another time—the future)," a dystopia "predicts that things will turn out badly; it is thus essentially pessimistic"(Vieira 17). While opposed on the glass half-full, glass half-empty dichotomy, both utopia and dystopia utilize narrative ideology and structure to aim "at social and political criticism and alternatives" to a current society which is not functioning ideally (Burford 145). Utopic scholars like Greenberg and Olander mention Plato's *Republic* and

More's *Utopia (*Burford 145*),* which both could serve, along with Swift's *Gulliver's Travels,* as ancestral models of both modern utopias and modern dystopias, all which serve similar critical functions. All in all, both utopia and dystopia, especially in science fiction, serve one mistress: a striving for peace, if not perfection: "hope" (Claeys 7).

"Hope," however, while persistent, is small and battered in dystopias. The word itself does not inspire much positive thinking, as it comes from the "Greek *dus*, and means bad, abnormal, diseased" (Vieria 16). The rhetoric of dystopias mainly consists of a "strategy of persuasion or coercion that interrupts routine and acquiescence with a call of alarm" (Stewart and Harding 290). Dystopic literature, especially that predicated upon an apocalyptic catastrophe, intends mainly to disturb, not to soothe. However, in its function as fable or allegory, as an opportunity to indulge in childish "escapism", to "try on" various models of a society, and eventually to choose one and discard others, it allows us to both experience the terror of a dystopic future while also presupposing a hopeful choosing our most desirable future. While "dystopian science fiction acts 'as a barometer for humanity's technoscientific dangers to itself'" (Burford 67), it is also the genre which "allows the essence of human nature to become the focus by removing the blurry confines of strict reality" (Burford 39). This sharpening of vision opens the door to an understanding of humanity which would not be possible without dystopian science fiction, as it, "perhaps more than most genres, is suited to exploring the integrity, fallibility, and frailty of human nature" (Burford 39). This "social dreaming" as Lyman Tower Sargent terms it, allows us not only to see what pollutes our current systems, but also to see what "alternative" there might be for a "more just or ethical society" (Otto 48). Dystopia shows us a mirror of what we both love and despise in ourselves, of those tendencies which enact moral justice for an entire society and those which destroy or corrupt it.

If dystopia can do so much for our forward vision, it seems then irrelevant to add an apocalypse into the mix at all. There seems to be no need, then, to focus on novels which are both post-apocalytpic *and* dystopic. In one way, this is true. In the novels I examine the apocalypses themselves are vague, explained passingly at best or unexplained at all, at worst. In *After London* "the source of the disaster is never revealed," making it almost just a narrative device, and "foreclosing the possibility that it might have been averted had another course been taken*"* (Heffernan 5)*. The Hunger Games*, for another example, dedicates only the following passage to explain the collapse of the known world: The mayor of District 12 recites "the history of Panem, the country that rose up out of the ashes of a place that was once called North America. He lists the disasters, the droughts, the storms, the fires, the encroaching seas that swallowed up so much of the land, the brutal war for what little sustenance remained" (Collins 18). Our America has not only been wiped away by what appears to be environmental catastrophe but is also swept away carelessly by the unfeeling recollection of a Panem who cares little for what happened then, as long as they can survive now. What matters is not what happened, but that it happened and that now a new society has arisen.

There are several reasons why the nature of an apocalypse matters less than the nature of the a dystopia. "As every good apocalypse proves, the ultimate goal is always what comes next: The Fresh Start" (Ryan). Visions of the end, from the medieval to the present, *"*have increasingly given way to visions of after the end" (Heffernan 6), mostly because in a genre primarily concerned with critiques of society, the manner of the apocalypse is not always important, but the manner of our rebirth always is. As discussed earlier, dystopian fiction should serve as an alarmist mirror of ourselves and should give us models for the change and progress of our current society: "dystopian literature…concerns itself with rebellious characters who fight

against an overwhelming force in a decaying, problem-riddled, often technology-influenced world that mirrors current political, sociological, economic, environmental, and/or technological issues during the time it was written" (Burford 33-34), and by fighting infuses the work, and hopefully the reader, with that little light of hope. These works, while necessitating an end, and therefore a beginning, function by focusing on neither, and instead by focusing on "the middle" (Heffernan 13). In the middle, "practice" can emerge "by way of mistake" (Heffernan 13). By focusing on the function of a new society rather than the technical and gory details of the catastrophe which preceded and enabled it, an author can focus upon the existence and survival of a dystopic society that consists mainly of mistakes, but which, by those mistakes, can engender something better, something more sustainable, something more moral.

However, the fact that an apocalypse has occurred, and sometimes even the very nature of that apocalypse, cannot be discounted in my analysis. While the apocalypse allows for a new slate or *tabula rasa* on which to construct both a dystopic world and, alternatively, a model bioeconomy, the apocalypse itself resonates with modern fears and concerns, much like the dystopia. The works I feature often show an "improvement" or "rejuvenation" of the world rather than simply a dying off, probably because they are all post-apocalyptic, which means those technological threats which held sway over the environment have been wiped away or, at least, partially destroyed by catastrophe, often of their own making. Those aspects of our world we both fear and desire are ameliorated: *The Hunger Games* still has elements of a destructive technocratic society, but certain areas have been left to "seed", i.e., left to thrive as a natural environment. The woods outside of District 12 are almost untouched, rarely encroached upon by anyone with technology more sophisticated than a bow and arrow. However, the technological threat which perhaps precipitated the apocalypse and supposedly wiped out the desolate District

13 remains a faint, if constant threat; the forest which thrives beyond 12 is bordered by an electric fence.

Before any significant societal or natural rejuvenation can occur, though, the world must be wiped away. An apocalypse, however vague or undefined, is necessary, not only because old societies and insitutions must be wiped away, but also because our culture, and many cultures over the course of time, have both feared and been fascinated with their own ends. And in certain times, like the Victorian age and the first big boom of the city, and in contemporary America where environmental narratives seem predominantly apocalyptic, those fears manifest in fiction as apocalypses that are not, but might yet be.

Post-apocalyptic and dystopic novels are concerned with contemporary concerns and issues, and serve as an extension of present problems and fears into their possible, and in some rhetoric probably, disastrous consequences. "Depending on the anxieties and preoccupations of the time, a dystopian" or post-apocalyptic novel "might speculate about" anything from reality television to the failure of the world's fresh water supply (Miller). Let us take Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* as a case study. When asked what inspired her to such a gruesome and dark tale, Collins often tells the tale of cruising through television stations:

> One night, I was lying in bed, and I was channel surfing between reality TV
> programs and actual war coverage. On one channel, there's a group of young
> people competing for I don't even know; and on the next, there's a group of young
> people fighting in an actual war. I was really tired, and the lines between these stories
> started to blur in a very unsettling way (Margolis).

This "unsettling" feeling, prompted by reality television and news coverage of a war, prompted Collins to write one of the best-selling Young Adult series in contemporary America. Millions have read the books, millions have seen the movie, and its popularity has yet to wane. Why? Well, on the surface the books address two very real and often concerning trends in American

culture: our obsession with fame and with watching and scrutinizing the lives of others, and our glorification of war and American honor as won through battle. The Capitol represents the worst of these tendencies in that it preys on young adults for entertainment and enjoys the bloodshed with nary a pang of conscience. Many would argue that our multimedia society is not much different. Thus, *The Hunger Games*, in its reordering of the world, highlights some of those parts of modern culture which most disturb and upset the author.

However, a book can be read in many ways. Collins may see one set of concerns in the novel, but a young audience may see more. In *The Hunger Games*, and in life, "children…don't run the world, and teenagers, especially, feel the sting of this" (Miller). Yes, *The Hunger Games* can be seen as "an indictment of reality TV," but it can also be seen as a "fable or a myth" representing the stormy adolescent mind, always struggling for control, always struggling to overtake the world of parents and adults (Miller). What connects these two interpretations of the novel, and what matters between them, is the function of the dystopic world itself. Books like *The Hunger Games* serve as "conduits for universal experiences" (Miller), channels for us to theoretically act out our fears, our hopes, and our desires, however dark. Post-apocalyptic worlds give us the chance to enact a sense of the "bleak fantastic" (Burford v), to see what path the world could follow, whether we want it to or not.

The entire post-apocalytpic genre "is rooted in forlorn futures" and acts as "commentary on contemporary difficulties" (Burford 21). Indeed, the worlds are futuristic and often fantastical (if not phantasmagorical at times), but they are real in the sense that they could be produced from our habits today. The visions of apocalypse and dystopia are "disapproving, apocalyptic visions of misused technology" as well as examinations of the human condition itself (Burford 26). Post-apocalyptic dystopias, both through the event of the apocalypse and through the societies which

form after, explore the consequences of *our* society's behaviors, of the reader's life choices themselves. And these novels do it both to critique and to warn. Post-apocalyptic dystopias find "its most useful purpose" in "social commentary intended to warn through the use of extrapolation" (Burford 26). Not only are authors exploring the degradation of our world as caused by the society we now live in, but they are also often warning us against those very same dangers, made terribly manifest in their fiction. This kind of fiction often "comments on perceived modern threats" (Burford 36), such as the voyeurism of reality television or the bloodlust of modern war.

Science fiction, the progenitor of both post-apolypticism and dystopia, has often been hailed not only as an effort to warn us away from certain behaviors and technologies, but as a way to introduce the reader to new advancements, to warm them to the thought of technological progress and all of its promises (Burford 33). However, with the overwhelmingly negative tone of a post-apocalyptic dystopia, the science-fiction genre can no longer really be said to solely promote technology and advancement. Frederic Jameson, a postmodern scholar, has argued against the idea that these texts have "the social function of accustoming their readers to rapid innovation, of preparing our consciousness and our habits for the otherwise demoralizing impact of change itself" (151). They now, rather, "defamiliarize and restructure our experience of our own present" (151), and in so doing act as cautionary narratives, warning us away from a possibly apocalyptic cliff's edge. Similarly, according to Brouillete, post-apocalyptic dystopic novels are not about fantastical, impossible futures, but rather show readers "the future they are already living in" (205). The dystopias in *The Hunger Games*, and *After London* are, in a sense, our own worlds.

Unlike utopias, which (as discussed earlier) seek to educate through positive examples, when "the present world is portrayed as exhausted" in post-apocalyptic worlds, "there is no better world that replaces it" (Heffernan 5). In fact, to many of us reading a zombie comic or a novel in which children kill each other for sport, the world seems a lot worse. Remember that a dystopia is meant to disturb, rather than to soothe; it shows us the worst aspects of ourselves and our cultures. But being hit by a switch behind us is often just as inspiring as being baited by a carrot dangling before us, if not even more so. Post-apocalyptic scenarios have shown upsurges in time periods when the dangers of societal and technological "advancements" have most threatened certain ways and necessities of life. For example, the post-apocalyptic, dystopic novel flourished for a time in Victorian England, as a means of inspiration, as a means of avoiding "the end" which has so changed the world in these fictional narratives. "The main aim of this sub-genre," according to Vieria, "is didactic and moralistic: images of the future are put forward as real possibilities because they go either right or wrong, depending on the moral, social and civic responsibility of its citizens" (17). We are students when reading post-apocalyptic dystopias, and our teachers "expect a very positive reaction" (Vieria 17). The future we are shown is one we are meant to avoid, and this need to change is caught up with our strange "desire for apocalyptic narratives" (Heffernan 151). Frank M. Robinson says that "science fiction writers are 'our early warning system for the future'" (Otto 112), and the future seems dire. However, no matter how dire, these authors seek to avoid the worlds they show by trying to inspire "sociopolitical change by means of the aesthetic representation of a paradigm shift" (Otto 50).

If the most useful function of this genre is to take the most destructive tendencies of contemporary societies and restructure them into terrifyingly dystopic model futures, then it is necessary to understand the overwhelming concerns of the contemporary societies which

produce these novels, in order to understand what the novels are trying to convey, and thus accomplish. In the modern America which produced *The Hunger Games*, published in 2008, we do not have to look far to see what concerns might produce novels with post-apocalyptic dystopias which show the abuse of technology, the corruption of the city, and the moral fortitude of those who sustainably cultivate the land and take care of their human ecosystem by becoming bioeconomic providers. Heffernan credits Kermode with the idea that we desire to see the world end, and to continue badly, because we also "need to understand ourselves and find meaning in relationship to a community that is larger than the individual self" (151). The communities that *After London* and *The Hunger Games* seek to connect us to are not just human communities, but natural communities as well.

A predominant theme of dystopia is "the relationship between humans and their surroundings," and "technological, environmental, and biological concerns are paramount" (Burford 34), often because they either dominate the model societies being formed, such as technology in the Capitol, or because their abuse and our disregard for them have led us to a dystopic future. When our relationships to each other, to our societies, and to our ecosystems begin to change, we seek to understand and often to halt those changes. Perhaps such a dramatic shift in the structure of life explains Richard Jeffries's *After London*. Pfaelzer, as quoted in Burford, discusses the historical example that might account for the popularity of dystopian literature during the final decades of the 19th century, during which *After London* was created: "dystopian works addressed a newly literate readership that faced city life and mass unemployment without housing, schools, or sanitation" and the "mass demands for the vote, the eight hour day, and a loose currency suggested that the bourgeois revolution had failed to deliver the good life" (Burford 68). *After London*, whose title suggests its most interesting feature, a

London which has been almost literally wiped off of the map, was written in a time of great

social movement and turmoil. In such times there exists always a "state of unease that comes

with the end of an era or a century," especially when such a shift, already significant, is

accompanied by "rapid social and cultural change" (Stewart and Harding 290). Many of these

rapid shifts in Victorian England centered around the migration to and growth of the city of

London.

While much of the rhetoric of the new city was positive, boasting progress and profit,

much of it was also overwhelmingly negative. There was, on the part of many, a sense that "great

cities are the uncontested homes of progress; it is in them that ideas, fashions, customs, new

needs are elaborated and then spread over the rest of the country. When society changes, it is

generally after them and in imitation" (Banks 111). The city promised many things to many

people: jobs, money, the arts, technological innovation, but no vision of Victorian London would

be complete without an examination of the insidious fears of corruption which accompanied the

promises of the great city.

Frederich Engels, in *Condition of the Working Class in England*, acknowledges the

certain pride British citizenry can take in the achievements of London, but this brief

acquiescence to the city's pleasures is followed immediately by an indictment:

> But the sacrifices which all this has cost become apparent later. After roaming the streets
> of the capital a day or two, making headway with difficulty through the human turmoil
> and the endless lines of vehicles, after visiting the slums of the metropolis, one realises
> for the first time that these Londoners have been forced to sacrifice the best qualities of
> their human nature, to bring to pass all the marvels of civilisation which crowd their city;
> that a hundred powers which slumbered within them have remained inactive, have been
> suppressed in order that a few might be developed more fully and multiply through union
> with those of others. The very turmoil of the streets has something repulsive, something
> against which human nature rebels. … The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of
> each in his private interest, becomes the more repellent and offensive, the more these
> individuals are crowded together, within a limited space. And, however much one may be

aware that this isolation of the individual, this narrow self-seeking, is the fundamental principle of our society everywhere, it is nowhere so shamelessly barefaced, so self-conscious as just here in the crowding of the great city. The dissolution of mankind into monads, of which each one has a separate principle, the world of atoms, is here carried out to its utmost extreme (Engels).

London is wondrous, but at what cost, what "sacrifices"? To Engels mankind has predominantly surrendered its very nature, its dignity, to produce a city which cares no more for its citizens than it does a cockroach. The entire cityscape is pervaded by "a brutal indifference" which reduces man to "monads,"[2] uncared for, unconnected, and repulsive in their "self-seeking" and "unfeeling isolation."

To Engels the city of London, as the greatest exemplar of Victorian English city life, was a place of moral degradation. Many behaviors shunned elsewhere flourished in the dark corners of the city, prostitution being perhaps the most famous example. However, it was not just what you did in the city, but the space itself that "was the cause of social ills" (Banks 107). Engels, in his continued examination of cities like London and Manchester, visited many of the slums that perpetually developed in the hearts of these great cities. These slums represented the worst human and spatial elements of London:

> It is a disorderly collection of tall, three- or four-storied houses, with narrow, crooked, filthy streets, in which there is quite as much life as in the great thoroughfares of the town, except that, here, people of the working-class only are to be seen. A vegetable market is held in the street, baskets with vegetables and fruits, naturally all bad and

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[2] Interestingly, the term "monads" is defined by the OED not merely as "The individual human subject, esp. when viewed separately from society" but also as "*Biol.* A single-celled organism, *esp.* a protozoan; *spec.* a flagellate protozoan of the genus *Monas*, the former family Monadinidae (or Monadidae), or the former order Monadina." In many contexts the "monads" have been viewed historically as the lowest level of the biological and ecological hierarchy, and by using this term, however consciously or unconsciously, Engels connects man to nature at is most base when understanding man within the city. This use could also signify Engels's understanding of man as just another organism rather than as the inheritor of the earth or as the pinnacle of evolution.

hardly fit to use obstruct the sidewalk still further, and from these, as well as from the fish-dealers' stalls, arises a horrible smell. The houses are occupied from cellar to garret, filthy within and without, and their appearance is such that no human being could possibly wish to live in them. But all this is nothing in comparison with the dwellings in the narrow courts and alleys between the streets, entered by covered passages between the houses, in which the filth and tottering ruin surpass all description (Engels).

Ironically, Engels spends most of the rest of his text then trying to describe for his reader the real levels of filth and degradation lurking in the great cities. "These narrow courts and alleys," so plagued and clogged by human, biological, and moral refuse, infected not only those who occupied them, but the city at large, and certainly carried the infection into people's view of the city. For many, these conditions and the space of the metropolis itself seemed to cause "grave social damage" because any family dwelling in an industrial town found itself not only "divorced from nature" (a point to which we will return shortly), but also "from the particular place of its origin," in this case the country, and "from other families" (Banks 107). This passage hints at many concerns: the move from the country to the city, the loss of a connection to a larger ecosystem, but perhaps most predominantly the decay of proper familial and moral connections. In the city "family life" was "decaying" (Banks 110), and for many, like Tonnies, "ninetheenth-century city life was dominated largely by relationships that were impersonal, cold, morally indifferent, socially alienated, and transient" (110).

The corruption and failure of human connections cannot be completely separated from the fear that natural and agricultural connections to the land were failing as well. As in Banks's quote, people were becoming "divorced from nature" when living in the city. Not only were they living in filth and decay, and not only were the traditional familial structures being threatened by the new structures of the city, but man's connection to the natural world which sustains him, and, although distant, sustained the city itself, was being lost completely in the wasteland of a modern, industrial cityscape. The density of the city "became fixed" in the mind of its

inhabitants as a social phenomenon which "spelt death and depravity on his own doorstep" (Dyos and Reeder 370). Not even the pleasant suburbs, stranded liminally between country and city, were safe, as "the convulsions of the city became symbolic of evil tendencies" (Dyoes and Reeder 370), and those evil tendencies infected the space and the people. Engels echoes these "evil tendencies" in his descriptions of the moral lassitude of the men of London and in his depiction of the slums, but perhaps the best representation of what fears lay at the heart of city life was inherent in the city's own topography: many sections of the city "included a septic lake covering an acre, open sewers and stagnant ditches galore" (Dyos and Reeder 372). The skeleton of London was a series of toxic, fetid waterways, carrying infection and corruption to all corners of humanity and the city itself. The Victorian city represents a closed system, breeding and feeding moral, physical, and environmental degradation in a sustained loop.

The realities of London inspired a great many narratives, many of which showed dystopias or dystopic elements, narratives which displayed the dark side of the progress of the Industrial Revolution and the growth of the city: "a fetid, violent urbanism in the periphery is the future of modern capitalism, with collapsing cities and open sewage, vast migratory populations, and the retreat of secular and state forms" (Sundaram 241). Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, as one such dismal portrayal of London, shines light into the dark recesses of the city, with its dystopic underbelly of figures like Fagin and Bill Sikes. Occasionally other authors dreamt of a different London, a different England. A vision of London in which "there was no waste, no spoilage, no pollution (the Thames was clear) and much green space" seemed a far off ideal, but it was an ideal shown by many in both utopias and dystopias of the time (Roemer 95). However, to authors like Dickens and Jeffries, cities such as London seemed morally and physically unsustainable, and these beliefs led to narratives much like *After London*. Instead of envisioning

a clean Thames and a green city, Jeffries rather strikingly foretells "ecological catastrophe" (Claeys 112).

Fear of the city breeds many environmental concerns, motivated by the pollution of waterways, the loss of connection to the land, the deforestation of thousands of ancient stands of trees which eventually changed the face of Britain, etc. Jeffries lived and wrote in a time in which these concerns were just beginning to be voiced and understood. In America, George Perkins Marsh, one of the young nation's first environmental writers, and his political party the Whigs, were "certain" that "material and moral progress could not be found in big cities" (Dorman 15). Like many in England watching the growth of London, Marsh watched the degradation of the environment due to industry and feared where such wanton destruction would lead. Marsh and the Whigs tried to imagine a" utopia" which "was a domestic idyll writ large, a middle-class world that was tended, nurturing, and bountiful, overseen by upright breadwinning fathers and virtuous bread-making mothers" (Dorman 17;); this favored bioeconomy, notably centered around "breadwinning" and "bread-making," and thus the fair distribution of bioeconomic capital, was also to be made possible by conservation and stewardship of the wilderness which so represented America at the time. "Restoration" became a key word for Marsh, and in his book *Man and Nature* he argued for "the restoration of nature's harmonies through the agency of human cultivation" (Dorman 31), or, in other words, the saving of nature through a responsible bioeconomy which took both man and land into account. Marsh, much like Jeffries, anticipated "an environmental apocalypse" (Dorman 35), and sought to avert it by writing a book, much like Jeffries attempted with *After London*.

While Marsh was American, and therefore across the pond from Jeffries, they were writing in the same era (Marsh published in 1864 and Jeffries in 1885) and in much the same

philosophical and environmental contexts. In fact, in that era, "conservation and reclamation" were "more prominent in Europe" (Dorman 38). Joseph Fourier (who lived from 1768-1830 and was thus roughly contemporary with both Marsh and Jeffries) "predicted the benefits of massive reforestation long before 'global warming' became a household phrase" (Roemer 83). Ecology, as a science, was coming into its own in the Victorian era (Fowkes Tobin 49), and its development, much like the development of post-apocalypticism and dystopias, was "infected" and "haunted by the imagery of disaster and the festering anxieties that lie at the core of dystopian romance and satire" (Stableford 263). Literature and ecology, at the "Fin-de-siecle…made much of the symbolism of Pan, the Graeco-Roman god of Arcadia, who was widely employed as a figurehead of nature" (Stableford 266). Romantic utopianiasm "routinely featured the nostalgic imagery of Arcadian pastoral existence" (Stableford 266), while dystopias like *After London* used that same pastoral existence as a counterpoint to the continued corruptions embodied in city life, which survived into Jeffries's dystopia even after the city was no more. Jeffries's concern for nature and the burgeoning fears of environmental degradation are evident in the understanding that "Wild England's coming, though disputed in an age of barbarity and confusion, is a natural one" (Suvin 164); the apocalypse which shapes Jeffries's novel is a natural apocalypse. At the turn of the century, when writers like Marsh and Jeffries were active, there was a circulating concern about the health of the earth as nature was assaulted by the progress of industry and mankind, and combined with the fear of the degradations of the city, and an overwhelming concern for humanity, both her health and morality, it should not be surprising that the era produced a work like Jeffries's *After London*, which features not only an abandonment of cities, but a return to a more agrarian lifestyle and a moral privileging of a

bioeconomy in which those who tend the land and each other are the morally superior human beings.

Jeffries's depictions of London most acutely show his rejection of the city. He describes the collapse of the great city, which "after all was only of brick" and its partial surrender to the forces of nature (ivy and the waters of the Thames) (location 516). However, perhaps more significantly, Jeffries chronicles the evolution from city to toxic swamp. The city, overrun by water and pollution and sinking down into the mire, corrupts not only the land and the water but all life:

> There exhales from this oozy mass so fatal a vapour that no animal can endure it. The black water bears a greenish-brown floating scum, which for ever bubbles up from the putrid mud of the bottom. When the wind collects the miasma, and, as it were, presses it together, it becomes visible as a low cloud which hangs over the place. The cloud does not advance beyond the limit of the marsh, seeming to stay there by some constant attraction; and well it is for us that it does not, since at such times when the vapour is thickest, the very wildfowl leave the reeds, and fly from the poison. There are no fishes, neither can eels exist in the mud, nor even newts. It is dead (location 526).

The city, almost alive in its seething toxicity, literally breathes death into the air, and has sunk into "putrid mud." This fatal corrosion pollutes a landscape once only partially degraded by slums and industry. The entire city, which cannot even be reclaimed by nature, has sunk into poisonous ruin, and "is dead." Entirely. And this death, this utter destruction of not only the city but anyone who dares enter, is fueled not just by environmental catastrophe and apocalypse, but by the actions of the men who once lived there:

> They say the sun is sometimes hidden by the vapour when it is thickest, but I do not see how any can tell this, since they could not enter the cloud, as to breathe it when collected by the wind is immediately fatal. For all the rottenness of a thousand years and of many hundred millions of human beings is there festering under the stagnant water, which has sunk down into and penetrated the earth, and floated up to the surface the contents of the buried cloacæ (location 527).

London, which before the apocalypse in Jeffries's novel had stood for centuries, is now infected and ruined by "the rottenness of a thousand years" and the lives and actions of "many hundred millions" of men and women leave not only their bodies beneath the toxic slime, but also the evidence of their own poisonous ways of life.

These images of London, which become even more terrifying when Felix inadvertently enters they city in the second half of the novel, are dire echoes of those images which populate accounts of the city like Engels's. The "corrosive urbanization" of "the great machine of the city" has led to its most dire end (Claeys 113), in which London has literally sunk into corrosion so profound that it poisons the very air. The great stink of the 1850s seems a mere whisper of inconvenience next to Jeffries's vision, and the dystopian aspect cities have always possessed becomes terrifyingly fatal (Stableford 262). Rousseau's notion of "technological development as a process of intrinsic spoliation" is explicit with Jeffries (Stableford 262), and people in Felix's time not only distrust the city but fear and avoid it in order to save their very lives.

Pollution, which destroys London and turns it into a deadly, toxic miasma for Jeffries, has always "had a moral and spiritual context, referring to defilement or desecration" (Stableford 263), and nowhere is that etymology more potent than in an apocalyptic London. The great city, due to the pollution and corruption of thousands of years of human habitation, has "been reduced to a bleak scar of ineradicable pollution" (Stableford 265), and there is no hope of restoring its quality of life, even in a society which has enacted a technological retreat from those very habits of industry which has created the swamp of *After London*. However, the pollution of London in *After London* is not merely physical. London, as she did before, still inspires greed and desire in humanity. "Many scores of men have, I fear, perished in the attempt to enter this fearful place, carried on by their desire of gain" (Jeffries 535). Morally and spiritually, the city of London still

carries the power to lure men to their destruction—in this case, literal destruction. "Untold treasures," products of the age of man and of industry, "lie hidden" in the putrid remnants of the city, and despite "certain death" men still plunge into the dark depths of the city to satisfy their own greed (Jeffries 532-535). It is this tendency, this model of society, so marked and motivated by gain, that destroyed London initially, and Jeffries disdains it, punishing characters who seek it by reducing them to ashes in an apocalyptic landscape: "Felix suddenly stopped, having stepped, as he thought, on a skeleton. Another glance, however, showed that it was merely the impression of one. The ribs, the skull, and the limbs were drawn on the black ground in white lines as it if has been done with a broad piece of chalk" (Jeffries 2699). Those who venture to gain still from the cities of the past find themselves only remnants of the past, chalky outlines in a phantasmagorical landscape due to their own foolishness.

The "terrible oozy mass and the miasma of marshes covering what was London" signals a radical break with "the Victorian political system" in almost a complete "obliteration of bourgeois civilization" (Suvin 163). This London, the representation of financial wealth (as it still holds gold, diamonds, and the promise of fortune), seems to be an "intellectual's loathing of capitalism" and the fruits of that economy (Suvin 163): the dirty slums of London, the degradation of familial and human ties, and the environmental pollution. Richard Jeffries's' revulsion towards London and the societal systems it represents seems understandable when regarding his background. "His father was a financially unsuccessful small dairy farmer" (Suvin 165), which perhaps explains his privileging of a bioeconomy over other types of economies, and his mother "came from a London artisan family" (Suvin 165). Jeffries then seems to encapsulate the souls of two classes: "the small working farmers" and the skilled city laborers (Suvin 165). He is at once sensitive, intellectual, and yet dedicated both to the fear and hatred of the small

farmer towards "the power of the city", and to the desire for land, a "small homestead" much like

his father had owned (Suvin 165-166).

This desire for a homestead, a small piece of land to call one's own and on which to build

one's legacy, is hyperbolized in Felix's search for a "royal fort" (Suvin 165). In fact, Felix's

entire journey, which comprises the entirety of Part II of *After London*, is in fact a search for a

balance between maintaining some independence and power in the form of landownership, while

also searching for human connection and a place peaceful and remote enough to safely house a

wife and begin a family. Throughout this journey Felix encounters and rejects many places and

many modes of civilization, as we have already seen through his nightmarish journey into Old

London.

The new cities (if feudalistic towns deserve the name) that Jeffries describes in Part I and

that Felix encounters in Part II are no less sites of "decadence and hubris, of volatile masses"

than their larger, industrial predecessors were (Kaes 18). The social system which emerges after

the mysterious apocalypse is unmistakably feudal, with a leading class of aristocrats (those left

over from a mass exodus who can still read and write) and lower classes of peasants, and even

slaves. This social system of "stifling petty feudalism," most evident in towns and cities, shows

many "traits analogous to industrial capitalism in as much as it de facto means slavery for the

overwhelming majority of people," just as industry and technological progress in places like

London essentially equaled slavery and servitude for the poorer classes (Suvin 164). Even the

nobles are overwhelmingly rotten to the core, interested more in war and petty squabbles over

castles than they are in reading, writing, or bettering the lives of their people (Suvin 164).

Overall it seems as if the world has not improved, that the apocalypse which wipes away modern

civilization gives rise to just another kind of dystopia (though one significantly less populated).

Take, for example, Felix's endeavors to join a King's army and to gain fame. In a chapter appropriately titled "The City," Felix cannot even gain entrance into the King's domain because "his common dress and ordinary appearance did not inspire" any of the townspeople "with any hope of payment", and without some kind of compensation they are simply unwilling to let him in, or even to speak to him at all (Jeffries 2024). The people of the city are paranoid, greedy, and "utterly indifferent", and it is only when Felix leaves and encounters a Shepherd much later in the narrative, a figure who embodies a bioeconomy and connection with the land that the city does not, that he gains any help at all (Jeffries 2025). Trudging onwards towards an encamped army he again encounters the "mean and petty world" of the city but (Jeffries 2025), not having been exposed to many other forms of society or treatment, he thinks nothing of it and trudges on until he finally encounters the noble seat and center of this feudal domain, the King's army. Here he hopes to gain wealth and power, notoriety enough to claim the hand of his beloved.

However, he meets only violence and prejudice. Almost immediately upon entering the camp he sees:

> "By a rope from the collar, three dead bodies were drawn along the ground, dusty and disfigured by bumping against stone and clod. They were those of slaves, hanged the preceding day, perhaps for pilfering, perhaps for a mere whim, since every baron had power of the gallows.They were dragged through the camp, and out a few hundred yards beyond, and there left to the crows" (Jeffries 2185).

Felix assumes these men, slaves of the wealthy, all of whom have originated from the cities Felix just left, have been killed for little or no reason, to satisfy the whims of their baron. And Felix accepts this, without question or protest. In fact, Felix does not think to question or protest the violence and corruption which surrounds him until it affects him personally. Thinking to join the King's levy, Felix approaches the center of this mobile city:

"With as humble a demeanour as he could assume, Felix doffed his cap and began to speak to the guard at the gateway of the entrenchment. The nearest man-at-arms immediately raised his spear and struck him with the butt. The unexpected blow fell on his left shoulder, and with such force as to render it powerless. Before he could utter a remonstrance, a second had seized his boar-spear, snapped the handle across his knee, and hurled the fragments from him. Others then took him by the shoulders and thrust him back across the open space to the camp, where they kicked him and left him, bruised, and almost stupefied with indignation" (Jeffries 2225).

Without knowing protocols or social standards, Felix has been remonstrated physically and violently for violating unknown rules, and it is only when the cruelty of the men around him becomes personal that Felix becomes "stupefied with indignation." His society and way of life, this cruel feudalism which echoes all too closely the indifference of London city dwellers in contemporary accounts from authors like Engels, Banks, and Tonnies, have created in Felix a kind of benign acceptance of injustice and indifference towards others, and a desire only to gain fame and wealth. This unceasing desire again rears its head when, even after being beaten cruelly, Felix stays on, working his way up the proverbial social ladder until he finally meets the King. However, one mistake in front of the leader of this camp (who will not even save his men or join their forays into battle) and he is to be "beaten out of camp" (Jeffries 2462).

The aristocrats of the novel are, quite obviously, proud, barbaric, and heedless of the lives and welfare of their retainers. This class of ruling elite represents a reproduction of city values in a feudal system—the wealthiest and brightest are always the most privileged as they are able to leave behind catastrophe and take over rule of the land. Felix must escape the literal and figurative taint of these people to find the "perfect" land and more accepting people. After his experiences with the city and its people, Felix eschews civilization for most of the rest of his journey, staying so far away from the violence he has already encountered that he strays into the toxic remnants of the city that represents, in its concentrated toxicity, the culmination of all of the evils that still thrive in Felix's world.

In fact, it is only after his brush with death and the insidious pollution of Old London that Felix encounters anyone willing to help him. His canoe now useless, Felix is stranded on a strange shore, and wakes to find "a stranger with a long spear" looming (Jeffries 2890), and naturally assumes the worst. However, this stranger, clad in "a tunic", and who "wore a hat of plaited straw" immediately speaks to Felix and offers him help and shelter with his tribe, who are all shepherds (2890). The straw hat, reminiscent of pastoral scenes of shepherds guarding their flocks, and the man's easy and almost immediately friendly demeanour distinguish him from the cruel elite Felix has met thus far. The shepherd and his tribe "on the march with their flocks" invite Felix to join them, and after only a few hours of his company demand nothing of him but to hear "his history" (Jeffries 2909). In fact, they most noticeably insist not only on sheltering him, but on feeding him as well: "Finding that he was hungry they ran to the baggage for food, and pressed on him a little dark bread, plentiful cheese and butter, dried tongue, and horns of mead" (2909). When Felix encounters denizens of the city and their ruling classes, he is offered only derision and violence. However, when Felix encounters shepherds, rulers only of the land they travel and the sheep which provide for their welfare (and now Felix's), they offer him aid, warmth, and sustenance. Their food is "plentiful" and freely offered, and is a physical manifestation of the care they extend to their new friend, still essentially a stranger.

These shepherds, tenders of a bioeconomy reliant not upon grain but upon animal husbandry (noticeably still closer to nature than the warfare of the King and Felix's own privileged life), may seem like simple barbarians to Felix. Over the course of their encounters he becomes a kind of "God" to them, and is even offered "to stay with them altogether, and to take command of the tribe" after he demonstrates to them his resilience and intelligence (Jeffries 2928). Felix introduces them to the bow—they had only spears (Jeffries 3051)—and shows them

how to fortify their homes (3051). These simple men and women, unable to read and write and certainly not learned aristocrats like the men Felix has met previously, are, in Jeffries' account, simple creatures with basic desires and passions. They seek to live peacefully, to cultivate the land, and to live together, providing for friends and family. In fact, the only time they engage in warfare is against "the gipsies" who seek to steal, without work or cultivation, the profits of the bioeconomy the shepherds work so hard to maintain (Jeffries 2938). The majority of their time is spent maintaining their flocks and their land, and when we encounter them, caring for Felix as one of their own—which is markedly different from the treatment Felix meets in more economically and feudally based systems like the cities. If "civilization is doomed to destruction," as it in Jeffries' novel, there is at least a type of "joy" in thinking of how so-called "barbarians once more" may flood the world and that "real feelings and passions, however rudimentary" might "take the place of our wretched hypocrisies" (Suvin 166). The base passions of the shepherds—to care for their flocks, their lands, and each other—because true and honest, are morally superior to the hypocrisies of the modern world for which Jeffries writes; therefore, even Jeffries' faulty feudalistic state contains a type of virtue that Victorian London simply does not. While Jeffries's world demonstrates a certain type of classist hierarchy that lives even unto the end through Felix (who never quite embraces the bioeconomy of his saviors), the shepherds, lower socially than Felix, are yet the most moral characters of the novel and are certainly the most productive. Felix, while an aristocrat and certainly intelligent, cannot function elsewhere and is only useful in their presence and while living their lifestyle. While Felix never breaks with the "underlying world view or structure of feeling" within his aristocratic upbringing (Suvin 165), and is therefore not much of a moral figure himself, his saviors are.

There is one aristocrat, much earlier in the book, that foreshadows these moral shepherds and their bioeconomy. Felix's father, uniformly disdained by Felix and his brutish brother Oliver, is a failed aristocrat who is "rich in flocks and herds…[but] had but little coin" (Jeffries 1157). Favored by the now dead father of the current feudal ruler, he has been ostracized from court by the son, and now sits on his lands, still an aristocrat but not of any standing; he has "so long abnegated the exercise of his rights and privileges, sinking the noble in the mechanician" that he is no longer even addressed properly (Jeffries 817). Because of his aristocratic failures, his sons and the nobility at large shun him. However, Sir Contans has his virtues:

> The common people were notoriously attached to him. Whether this was due to his natural kindliness, his real strength of intellect, and charm of manner, or whether it was on account of the uprightness with which he judged between them, or whether it was owing to all these things combined, certain it is that there was not a man on the estate that would not have died for him (Jeffries 974).

While reviled by his sons, Sir Constans is loved by the "common people" and is held to be an upright and moral man. Significantly, Sir Constans is not just renowned for his "natural kindness," but also for his cultivation of fruits and other produce upon his land: "Sir Constans was famous for his gardens" (Jeffries 1064). Retainers are sent to him to purchase some of his lush strawberries and cherries for the court, and the Baron Aquila (Sir Contans) is a man at ease in the field, with his "sleeve rolled up" and at home in his orchards and surrounded by the fruits of his labor (Jeffries 1056). This labor is dismissed by Felix, Oliver, and the courtier come to call for strawberries, but it is this labor which makes Sir Contans moral (like the shepherds) and beloved of his people. He is an honest man who works the land and provides for others, both by caring for his retainers and feeding the court. Like the shepherds, his cares are few and basic, but he is far more of a moral example than his sons or any other courtiers.

So, in *After London*, we meet two truly moral examples, the Baron and the Shepherds, and both are key figures in a bioeconomy which cultivates the natural world in order to provide, without profit, for the society of men. This moral bioeconomy, not seen in the London of Jeffries time and only rarely encountered in his novel, is a cure to many of the social ills feared in Victorian London. Banks and Tonnies discuss the idea that families are losing their connections to one another because of their residence in the city and because of new social spaces which force them to be concerned with themselves in a dangerous landscape rather than the health of others (Banks 107), and even less for the health of nature. However, bioeconomic production and providence is a social tie in *After London* which connects person to person and person to earth, allowing Felix to make new friends and connections, to find a society in which he fits and enables him to (hopefully) begin a new, productive life with his future wife. The cure for the social ills of London in *After London* is not only London's complete destruction, but an abandonment of its social systems as well, and an adoption of a way of life inspired by earlier, agrarian social systems which featured a bioeconomy motivated by need and human connection rather than profit, greed, and desire. Capitalism is not anathema to a moral bioeconomy—in fact production in a bioeconomy is still necessitated by consumers—but profit, either in terms of money or social mobility, becomes less important than the literal and metaphysical sustenance which maintains human bonds.

The drive for capital, the growth of modern civilization in cities, concerns for the degradation both of mankind's humanity and the natural environment: all of these societal concerns and trends can be discerned both in Victorian England and into today's Western societies, especially America. At first similarities between novels published more than 100 years apart may seem tenuous; after all, the contexts which produced them must be drastically different

in many ways. And the contexts of *After London* and more modern works like *The Hunger Games* are, indeed, very different. Cities have become, arguably, cleaner and healthier, many of the migratory shifts between rural and urban areas have settled (or at least slowed), and the factories which produced so much of the grief in Engel's account of English cities have become more humane, regulated work spaces. However, while the surface of a time may change, the past and the present are linked in many fundamental ways. Jeffries's England and the America of Suzanne Collins share many of the same cultural fears that led to the publication of *After London*, and in our time to the publication of similar post-apocalyptic dystopias, such as *The Hunger Games*.

The crisis of nature, and the first signs that man was a serious threat to it, began to coalesce in Jeffries's time. However, this concern, though it has ebbed and flowed in strength over the years, has never truly disappeared. In fact, in the 20th and 21st centuries it has resurfaced with more strength. "Our era," after decades if not centuries of mild concern for the degradation of the environment, has finally "discovered that nature is finite" (Michelet 1). Our wonderful industrial growth, our stretching towards that golden "progress" which has motivated western civilization for the better part of two centuries, has bumped against a wall, commonly known as the "limits to growth concept," discussed by both many environmentalists (Sprout 135). If nature is finite, so too is the possibility for human growth and consumption, and this realization leads to a sister epiphany that spells the collapse of modern capitalist society.

Margaret and Harold Sprout, prolific environmental authors and thinkers, puzzled on the politics of environmental concerns when fears for our planet and future survival experienced a resurgence in America in the 1960s and 1970s. While during the intervening decades some of their concerns waned in the public eye, many of the constructs they discuss are once again

relevant (if they ever truly lost relevance) in today's 21st century climate. After all, within the last

decade The *New York Times* has published hundreds of articles concerning climate change,

species extinction, pollution, and other environmental concerns not much discussed since the

Sprouts were writing: "Climate Change and the Politics of Fear", "Violent Weather Battering

Globe in Last 2 Years Baffles Experts", and "CHRONICLE ENVIRONMENT: Be Afraid; Be

very Afraid" were all published in the span between 1994 and 2007. The Sprouts, then, lay out

for any modern reader a series of concerns and political policies which remain relevant even

now.

The "politics of environmental concern" color much of the discourse of the 20th and 21st

centuries, including literary publications (Sprout 5). While different, and perhaps more complex

than the environmental concerns of the Victorian age, they echo many of the same fears and

serve as the matrix from which post-apocalyptic desires arise. The knowledge that "some

organism or population is surrounded, or encompassed, by some combination of conditions

judged to be significant for that organism or population," a.k.a an environment and ecosystem,

was not new when the Sprouts were writing (Sprout 3). However, just as in Jeffries' time, the

inconvenience of admitting man's connectedness with his surroundings prevented many from

accepting what seems a basic ecological fact. Thus, human progress continued (and continues

now) to cause "depletions and pollutions in countless combinations," degradations of our

environment which "disrupt interrelations among humans, and between them and nonhuman

nature" (Sprout 4). To the Sprouts and many other authors (among them E.O. Wilson and

Michael Pollan) the crisis of the 20th and 21st centuries is not merely that the environment is

failing, and that our cities and societies can no longer greedily progress and consume, but also

that our connections to the land and to nature are being interrupted, physically and spiritually.

This issue is amplified by the acknowledgment that "environmental depletions, pollutions, and disruptions have become critical in scale and in rate only within the past century or so" (Sprout 15). While Jeffries and Engels and other Victorian authors struggled with the environmental concerns of their city, modern thinkers and readers must extend environmental fears not just to a local ecosystem, but to the world at large.

If these concerns are now global rather than local or even national, it seems natural to assume that the world, and certainly the American society which produced *The Hunger Games*, would resolve to make a different kind of progress towards a different kind of society and a different way of living, so as to save the earth and ourselves. The problem with this assumption is that it is "complicated by the fact that almost anything we do about the environment is likely to have considerable effect on the distribution of income and wealth" (Boulding via Sprout 83). What we must remember is that the "old order" of capitalism and industry which was wiped away in *After London* was only wiped away fictionally, and that in fact the economic and social systems which drove Victorian London still drive America today. This is proven by the fact that the environmental concerns of Jeffries's age are still concerns at all, and that they have in fact worsened over time rather than being addressed. The roadblocks to environmental and societal change are many and varied, perhaps most prominent among them a refusal to abandon societal ideals and the fact that we live upon a "fragmented earth" of many nations and beliefs and ecosystems, and it is almost impossible to "make any headway at all with global problems" in such a politically divisive atmosphere (Sprout 5). How are we to solve anything if we cannot even agree within one nation that global warming exists, let alone that we must do something to stop it?

This political struggle over power and capital, among other things, is why thinkers like Carl Sauer, quoted by the Sprouts, claim that "what we need more perhaps is an ethic and esthetic under which man, practicing the qualities of prudence and moderation, may indeed pass on to posterity a good earth" (18). Because the "argument and counterarguments regarding the state and prospects of the physical habitat" as well as "the quality of life attainable therein, are permeated with" culturally conditioned and "personally variant criteria," we must strive to form not a political system or philosophy, but an ethical philosophy which demands of each of us in a culture those actions which will preserve our environment and henceforth ourselves (Sprout 36). This premise, which I believe is also laid out in *After London* and its later descendants *The Hunger Games* trilogy, is that a human ecosystem must, in order to survive, function on two levels: energy and bioeconomic flow, and morality.

But how, in such a divided world, can we hope to reach such a system of thought and belief? This question haunts many environmental treatises of the modern age, and the only plausible answer seems to be that any progress towards such a goal must rely on two things: an emphasis on "seeing things whole" (Sprout 65), and on the realization that any "live political issue" becomes so only when it is "widely shared" (Sprout 35). The mere acknowledgement, mentioned earlier, that man lives in a surrounding on which he thus depends for survival, is not enough. For Sprout, and others, man must study and accept a "human inclusive ecology" which emphasizes the study of an entire ecosystem, man included: "of this system man is not just an observer and irresponsible exploiter, but an integral part" (Paul Sears via Sprout 58). This ecology calls for us to accept that "man is a dependent heterotroph" (Sprout 66), and that thus he must, in order to survive, accept Barry Commoner's ecological generalizations that "everything is connected to everything else" and that there is, therefore "no free lunch" (58-59). Humanity

must acknowledge that, just as in an economy and an urban society, everything we do in the world impacts everything else, and that the industrial and capitalistic progress we reap for ourselves causes detriment to others, both human and nonhuman.

In order to live this belief, and for it to have any substantial impact, Sprout argues that "more than anything else, Americans desperately need a less exploitive philosophical posture" (Sprout 182), one that includes the realizations of Sears and Sauer that man is merely a cog in a system, not the operator of said system. But again the question resurfaces: how are we to encourage such beliefs and thus to perpetuate a "less exploitive philosophical posture"? The answer to this concern lies in making an ecological awareness "live" and in promoting it to an entire culture so that it becomes belief and ethic, rather than just political posturing. The Sprouts, in their ruminations upon environmental politics, argue that "responsibility for defining the public interest lies in the final reckoning with those who are legally invested with such responsibility. However, they will need additional assistance from many sources—from academia…and from the all-too-few individuals who can converse with understanding and empathy across the no-man's land that divides the two subcultures" (Sprout 179). Essentially, if those beliefs necessary to save us from environmental catastrophe are to take root in our modern worlds, then they must be propagated not just by those with political power, but also by those "who can converse with understanding and empathy." It is no huge stretch to imagine that this population includes authors like Jeffries and Collins.

Modern environmental discourse is rife with the "comparison of futuristic scenarios" which disclose "conflicting philosophical postures" (Sprout 46). This idea, essentially, that one models his or her philosophical posture by enacting, imaginatively, certain futures, is the motivation behind post-apocalyptic dystopian fiction. Jeffries hated the waste of cities, and so he

wrote a future without a metropolis like London. The authors I discuss in this work all share

some level of fear concerning cities, industrialism, and "progress", and all share some concern

for the environment and its continued survival (as well as our own). Thus, all of them are

concerned with creating futures which embody a philosophical posture in which mankind refutes

his exploitive ways, at least partially, and reaches some new level of interaction with the earth

which sustains us. Thus, these novels are a "trying on" of different social and ethical models to

deduce which one leads to a better future, or at least a more sustainable one. These novels are,

essentially, "choices among values" (Sprout 132), necessitated not only by continued

environmental fears but also by the hope "that terminal catastrophes can be avoided if certain

essential changes in institutions, policies, and practices are introduced in time" (Sprout 161).

Novels reach a wide audience, especially bestsellers like *The Hunger Games*, and therefore their

concerns become live issues to a willing and entranced audience. Novels are "hopeful" works

because they show readers, who still have a chance to change things, "dark futures" which, while

disturbing, come imbued with a belief "in the possibility for change" (Bond). If these novels, in

their post-apocalyptic dystopias, can model both sustainable, desirable systems, and the follies of

continued manipulation and exploitation, perhaps that "ethic and esthetic" so necessary to real

change can begin to form in the minds of their readers.

The "current American apocalyptic 'state of emergency'" (Stewart and Harding 297),

featuring many "disasters in progress or waiting to happen" (297), is much inspired by "recent

natural disasters and fears of environmental dangers" and has thus featured an "influx of

dystoptian…fiction dealing with those themes" (Burford 69). So, dystopian literature, "growing

out of a time of unrest" (Burford 26), has once again become popular. The times of unrest which

have produced *The Hunger Games* are times of environmental unrest, similar to the period which

produced *After London*, and so account for the reoccurrence not only of catastrophe, but of the bioeconomic ethic seen in Felix's father and the shepherds.

Once again, the appeal of a post-apocalytpic, dystopic world seems understandable. For Jeffries, modern cities were unbearable, rotten places and imagining a world without them, in which man could slowly find another system of living, was eminently desirable. And in a world so fraught with political conflict and looming environmental disasters, contemporary apocalyptic, dystopic fiction holds a similar allure. What remains to be examined, however, is why, with so many different philosophical postures available for "trying on," an author like Suzanne Collins would return again to those figures who are most moral because they are also crucial figures in a bioeconomy. Why would contemporary authors create figures reminiscent of Piers Plowman? As discussed earlier, and as will be revisited soon, a bioeconomy creates a sense of connection not only with the land and the products of cultivation, but also with a human society. Caring for others, specifically by providing them the sustenance which allows them to live, forges bonds of mutual care which ensures literal and communal survival. Any "erosion of the sense of community may also weaken the will as well as the ability to cope with environmental deterioration" (Sprout 105). Therefore it is wholly necessary to cultivate bioeconomic bonds and the mutual care they engender because without such bonds, a community withers and the strength of its people, and their ability to deal with any disaster, environmental or not, is compromised. And maybe that's why we need bioeconomic producers: to maintain a cohesion between the will and the community and to prepare us not only to live better, but to live at all—to survive:

> The hypothesis here is that a national community is currently and prospectively viable—that is, capable of functioning and presumably durable—only so long as most of its members identify with it, accept the legitimacy of its public authorities, conform in the main to its legal

and other norms, and derive a sense of support and security from identifying with the community (Sprout 103).

Here, then, is the basis of dystopia. Citizens of a dystopia such as Panem in *The Hunger Games*, are forced into one system of public authority. However, especially in *The Hunger Games*, that system cannot survive because its members do not conform, do not accept, and certainly do not "derive a sense of support" from their dystopic government. These systems, which model themselves on our current exploitive societies, are failing, and must be replaced by something better and more stable, more humane. Bioeconomic systems, smaller communities based on providing for one another and for the land, have greater appeal and are easier to accept.

Bioeconomic figures, like the Baron or the shepherds, like Peeta in *The Hunger Games*, show a model of living which contrasts favorably to the dystopias in their respective fictions, because as features of "ecodystopian fiction" they hold great value as an "instructional literature of deep ecology" (Otto 49), of that sense of a human ecology which places man within a dependent system. Post-apocalyptic, dystopic works like these are "powerful" tools "for stimulating new, more ecologically and socially conscious ways of thinking and being in the world" (Otto 51), and they do so by promoting figures like Peeta, who are moral, bioeconomic producers. These bioeconomic figures, like Piers, represent a way of living, which in modern literature must be "ecologically defined," as the degradation of the environment becomes an overwhelming concern, and the morality of a way of living is "determined by" the "use values" of these individuals and how they act to "respect ecosystemic integrity" by "safeguarding and contributing to the processes of interrelated, flourishing human and nonhuman life" (Otto 117). Essentially, bioeconomic figures are necessary because they teach us how to be better citizens of our ecosystems by showing us how to provide for one another and for the life which accompanies us on this earth.

The new way of living modeled by these bioeconomic figures must be an enacting of deep ecology, which "recognizes the fundamental interdependence of all phenomena and the fact that, as individuals and societies, we are all embedded in (and ultimately dependent on) the cyclical processes of nature" (Capra via Otto 48). However, what this definition of deep ecology does not include is that man rests his survival not only upon the permutations and patterns of nature, but also on the behaviors of other men and women who surround him in his society. "Interconnectedness," that sense of being a necessary link in the chain of life and energy in a human-inclusive ecosystem, must not include just nature as separate from humanity but must also consider our connections to other human life as nature, as often to survive we must learn to rely on others. As discussed earlier, the Sprouts often despair of making any process towards an environmentally sound ecology on the political stage because of a refusal to be interconnected; our human earth is fragmented. Wendell Berry, seeing the same challenges to action, acknowledges that "the only real, practical hope" to "remedy the fragmentation that is the disease of the modern spirit" is not one of governmental or monumental action, but rather a personal way of living one's own life which "in turn" can become a "public solution" (Berry 23). This personal ethic of learning to live with the land and with nature and with mankind is the moral ideology of a bioeconomy. Look at Felix from *After London*, for example. He goes out, alone, and finds a new way of living which he then hopes to convey to his future wife and their eventual progeny. He begins as one, learning his relations to the world and to other people, and then that one becomes two, and eventually more. Piers Plowman, as food producer and regulatory distributor, acts upon the ethic of interconnectedness, recognizing that the work he does, the work he encourages others to do, enables the survival of many, even those who cannot share in the work but are yet part of his ecosystem and need the bioeconomic produce he can

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provide. He is the model of the poem, the ideal subject one should emulate. His ethic, and the ethic of every bioeconomic model citizen I examine, rests upon "a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts" (Leopold 203). While man's dependency upon his own system is a significant philosophical underpinning of modern bioeconomies, this sense of interconnectedness is only truly evident in works of fiction in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Perhaps the shift between the relative freedom and power of Felix (once he escapes his society) and the revolutionary desperation and violence of Katniss is inherently connected to the shift between the idea that man is a "free agent of nature" (Dorman 37), much like Felix adrift on the lake, and the more modern conservationist idea that man is merely a player in the environmental tapestry, part and parcel of the natural laws that govern everything. Thus, a bioeconomy in *The Hunger Games* must rely upon man's relation to all parts of his society and ecosystem, rather than isolated relations with representative sectors.

However, this ecosystem, this model bioeconomy, is an ideal. Piers Plowman is a dream. But it is a necessary dream, as our "lust for the end…continues to infect" us and our "idea of self and will just as surely lead to the obliteration of humanity" unless we abandon our fixation with the "progress model", so bent upon the individual (Heffernan 120). To save ourselves, so it is posited, we must leave behind those drives and desires which frightened Jeffries, which created the environmental movement of the 1970s and beyond, and society and the individual must "reconnect with the cycles of nature and the cosmos" (Heffernan 120). Part of this abandonment necessitates leaving behind the "exploitation" culture of industrial agriculture and centralized food control which Wendell Berry so despises, and requires an economy and culture based more upon "nurture" (Berry 7), one which is driven by individuals like Felix's father, the shepherds, Piers Plowman, and as we are to see, Peeta Mellark and other bioeconomically central figures.

The sustainability of a bioeconomic figure is sustainability of attitude and of patterns of behavior. These characters do not necessarily demonstrate the direct environmental steps we must take to create a viable balance with the natural world, but rather demonstrate how we must think and act in regards to providing for ourselves and others—physically and emotionally—if we are ever to find such a balance.

In these novels there are two essential methods of community and control: one centered on the "old order", that of capitalism and personal profit and power of the state, and a newer, more sustainable way of life which at once harkens back to a more medieval, local community centered model and also favors a new social and environmental awareness characterized by interconnectedness. For my purposes, I label these two models as, respectively, a biopolitical system, and a bioeconomic one. Bioeconomic systems we have already discussed at length. A bioeconomic system, like any web in which organic life must exist on the bounty of its surrounding and its own labors, is a system powered by food, agricultural labor, and the equitable exchange of energy and sustenance. However, unlike a biopolitical system, a bioeconomic system is one based upon not profit or greed, but upon the humane consideration of one's fellow beings, both human and nonhuman. Like in Piers Plowman, bioeconomic distribution is then based upon making sure that every person has what they need regardless of their ability to work or to pay. A biopolitical system, however, is a society whose bonds are forged by money and the balance of power, in which energy and food are means of control rather than of connection. This world is a "world ruled by the principles of classical economics" such as ours is now (Stableford 274). However, according to much of the environmental thinking of the last centuries, any world modeled on a biopolitical system is "doomed to spoliation, and ultimately to self-destruction" (Stableford 274). This has led to the fascination with apocalypses

and the need, at least in fiction, to construct a new kind of economy, which I argue has often

been a bioeconomy which operates around those moral characters which enact its values.

Biopolitical ways of life, as we have seen in doomsday philosophies and often in recent history

"are unsustainable" and many fear that "they now face…the crises that will end them" (Mitchell

118). The "dysfunctional social order" which "condemns all images of future urban life to the

status of dystopias" not only produces said dystopias (Stableford 274) but also produces their

counterarguments: the bioeconomy.

The Hunger Games, especially, features the contrast between these two models. In these

novels, as befits the young adult genre, there is little gray area between those who are moral and

those who are not. Those figures that embody our ideal moral impulses, though not perfect, are

easy to spot: Peeta Mellark, Katniss Everdeen, and more peripherally supporting characters like

Prim and Rue. What also becomes evident, upon closer examination, is that these characters are

also lynchpins or significant figures in episodes of food exchange and bioeconomic production.

After all, Peeta's most common moniker is "the boy with the bread" (*The Hunger Games* 297),

and Katniss makes herself notorious for her hunting skills. Prim owns a goat which produces

cheese and milk not just for her family but for those she wishes to gift as well (*The Hunger

Games* 7), and Rue, who serves for Katniss as a mirror of her own sister, not only comes from

District 11 which produces food and agricultural product for the Capitol and other districts, but

also figures in a significant food exchange with Katniss (*The Hunger Games* 202). All of these

characters share in common a certain sense of morality and of likeability. But they share more

than that.

Three of my four primary examples (though I would take a moment to say that these

characters are hardly the only the only figures to whom our equation of bioeconomic importance

and morality could apply) hail from District 12. Initially this may seem odd, as District 12 is not

a food producing district, but rather the Appalachian hub of a coal industry more reminiscent of

the 19th century than the future. However, coal is energy, and in that sense, perhaps the setting

makes sense. Katniss and Peeta are born in a place where the main labor of the people is

concentrated upon providing energy, warmth, and heat for their fellow citizens. In this way, they

are adding to the bioeconomy, albeit tangentially rather than directly through food. District 12

also seems more fitting when one considers that it is the "wildest" of the districts: "enclosing all

of District 12, is a high chain-linked fence topped with barbed-wire loops. In theory, it's

supposed to be electrified twenty-four hours a day as a deterrent to the predators that live in the

woods" (*The Hunger Games* 4), those very same woods which surround the borders of District

12 and isolate it from the rest of Panem. District 12, as seen through Katniss's eyes, primarily

consists of those very woods and their promise not only of a certain type of wild freedom but of

food as well. In Katniss's favoring of the woods we find "a nostalgic regard for Nature" that the

author seems to share (Stableford 269). After all, Katniss comes from these woods. Peeta and

Prim come from this wild district, and the settings of both Hunger Games in the novels take

place in wildernesses. Wilderness is not only "Nature" but a "refuge" as well for those last

bastions of "value" and compassion (Stableford 269). In this sense, the setting of District 12

seems less strange and more fitting. Where else would revolutionary figures of a more

sustainable, natural bioeconomy come than from the edges of the woods?

   I think it is important to focus upon Katniss and Peeta, not only as primary characters in the

plot of the novels, but also as our primary figures of a bioeconomy rather than a biopolitical

system. If we look at agriculture and food production as the main activities in a bioeconomy,

then it might be argued not only that Katniss should be the most moral character, but also that

Rue should gain prominence over Peeta as central representatives of the bioeconomic models in these novels. Admittedly, agriculture and food production are central to a bioeconomy, and they represent a mitigated "mastery" of the land—an acknowledgment of the only sustainable relationship with Nature: something, when practiced well, which is both symbiotic and ecological. Rue then, should be the most central character. But she is not. And Katniss certainly is not an agrarian figure. She is a hunter, more violent and domineering than a farmer.

It might be argued that Katniss is closer to the land than Peeta, as she knows the forest, both its plant and animal secrets: "there's also food, if you know how to find it" (*The Hunger Games* 5), and Katniss knows how to find it. However, Katniss does not make or cultivate, she scavenges, and she certainly never bestows a "free lunch" except to her sister. Peeta's lack of knowledge of woodcraft complicates his role as the most central figure in a bioeconomy, centered primarily upon the ability to provide food, but in a context like *The Hunger Games*, his distance from the wilderness and from killing actually makes him better. He is closer to a farmer than to a hunter. Peeta, while not directly connected to either the cultivation of agricultural product or hunting, both makes food and repeatedly saves the lives of the starving with the work of his own hands; most prominently, he saves Katniss:

> "In his arms, he carried two large loaves of bread that must have fallen into the fire because the crusts were scorched black.
> "His mother was yelling, 'Feed it to the pig, you stupid creature! Why not? No one decent will buy burned bread.'
> "He began to tear off chunks from the burned parts and toss them into the trough, and the front bakery bell rung and the mother disappeared to help a customer.
> "The boy never even glanced my way, but I was watching him. Because of the bread, because of the red weal that stood out on his cheekbone… the boy took one look back to the bakery as if checking that coast was clear, then, his attention back on the pig, he threw a loaf of bread in my direction. The second quickly followed, and he sloshed back to the bakery, closing the kitchen door tightly behind him" (*The Hunger Games* 30-31).

This incident, our first glimpse of Peeta's character and the event which defines him for the rest of Collins's trilogy, shows two important aspects of this character. First, Peeta is a baker, and is repeatedly identified as such—again, he is "the boy with the bread" (*The Hunger Games* 297). Also, Peeta evinces not just a land ethic in which he maintains a relationship with his environment, but even more so he demonstrates a community ethic. His concern is not for his own safety, as evidenced by the "red weal" upon his cheek, or the profit of his mother and her bakery. In fact, it occurs to Katniss later that "the boy might have burned the bread on purpose" (*The Hunger Games* 31), causing himself pain merely to provide for Katniss and her family. Katniss "can never shake the connection between this boy, Peeta Mellark, and the bread that gave me hope" (*The Hunger Games* 32). Peeta demonstrates the same behavior we witness in Piers; he distributes bread (notably, the product of grain, so Peeta is indeed connected importantly to agriculture as his profession could not exist without it) to those who need it, and who need his care.

Peeta fights a system that "reduces man to a number" (Heffernan 8), as demonstrated in this instance by his mother, who dismisses Katniss because she is unable to produce money to pay for her good bread (*The Hunger Games* 29). Instead of also dismissing the lonely girl who can offer him nothing, Peeta saves her. Peeta's morality, in this moment, is undeniable, rising above the example of his parent. Peeta, throughout the novels, continues to show himself as not only a baker but a caretaker. He is not a directly agricultural model himself, but is the link between the grain and the people.

His consistently moral behavior is closely tied to a strong sense of his care for others and with a strong sense of self and of maintaining his own morality. Before entering the arena, while Katniss is "ruminating on the availability of trees" (Collins 142), Peeta has been grappling with

how to maintain his own nature as a moral person: " I want to die as myself…I don't want them

to change me in there. Turn me in to some kind of monster" (Collins 141). Here again, Peeta

proves his moral position, not concerned for his own safety or wellbeing, but for the integrity of

his ethics and his sense of self. And, in fact, Peeta has nothing to worry about, as the Games do

not change him. While "Octavia Butler piercingly questioned whether or not reason (and ethics)

could overcome a human tendency to conform to social norms" Collins creates an example that

says, resoundingly, yes they can (Roemer 101). Peeta not only retains a sense of self in the arena,

but also continues his role as bioeconomic provider and protector, not in the sense of bringing

Katniss more food, but of protecting her, again at his own expense, so that she may survive to

provide for herself. When most Tributes are already dead, Katniss realizes that Peeta has

consistently been trying to "keep [her] alive" and that he "has never been a danger" to anyone

but those who threaten what he intends to protect (*The Hunger Games* 247-248). Peeta almost

dies in this endeavor (his leg wound from Cato inflicted while protecting Katniss from the

Career's wrath) and even while dying, strives to keep Katniss safe and protected: when the

Caretakers call tributes to a "feast", Peeta wants to refuse to let Katniss go, even though they

both know it is the only hope at saving him. "You're not risking your life for me" (*The Hunger

Games* 274).

This stubborn insistence on connectedness, on putting others before himself and on

caring for those around him at the cost of his own blood and his own labor, makes him clearly

the most moral character to the reader, but also to the other inhabitants of his community and

ecosystem. Katniss recognizes his superiority often, even vowing to finally put him above herself

in the second games (*Catching Fire* 177), but perhaps Peeta's role as moral paramount is best

summarized by Haymitch; he says, upon the announcement of the second games into which both

Katniss and Peeta must enter, that "you could live a hundred lifetimes and not deserve him, you know" (*Catching Fire* 178).

While Peeta serves, at the admission of his own closest friends, as the central figure of morality in the novels, he is neither the only moral figure nor the only crucial bioeconomic provider in the narrative. As discussed earlier, Katniss perhaps serves as the second most important producer, second not because she feeds fewer people or has a more distant connection to the land. In fact, Katniss is probably closer to the land than Peeta. She is, after all, named after a plant which keeps her and her family alive, a potato-like root (*The Hunger Games* 52). Katniss also hunts, able to shoot a squirrel "in the eye, every time" (*The Hunger Games* 89). Peeta remains in town while Katniss ventures off into the woods, much closer to Nature than the bakery. And Katniss does provide food for many. She sells to the Peacekeepers, to Greasy Sae in the Hobb, and even to the Mayor himself (*The Hunger Games* 13). So, obviously, Katniss fits at least two criteria for a modern bioeconomic figure: she is close to the land in ways which are not damaging to it (she never takes more than she can use), and she provides food for others. However, in a bioeconomy there must be a distinction between blood and seed. Katniss is a hunter, she takes from the land, and while she takes responsibly, she never gives back. Her food providence is based upon violence and the shedding of blood and evinces a certain kind of one-sided consumption. Agriculture, and the more agrarian cultivation of land as represented by the grain Peeta works with, is more community building than hunting and gathering. It requires a stable base, a relationship with the land, and the bonds with one's community to properly flourish. It provides for man, and if done well, for the continued livelihood of the land as well. So, Peeta's bioeconomic methods are privileged, but Katniss's are beneficial at well.

However, at what cost? The only soul for whom Katniss provides sustenance selflessly is her sister, Prim. She describes those she provides for as "customers" (*The Hunger Games* 11), and obviously engages in a capitalistic exchange of money for goods and services. This, alone, certainly does not condemn her to immorality. However, her manipulation of food and its importance at times echo the consumption models which lead so many to believe our modern economic and ecological systems are doomed. Katniss Everdeen, while undeniably a moral and admirable figure, straddles a line which, at times, puts her both in the camp of those who utilize a biopolitical system for their own gain and those who use a bioeconomic system for the care of others and maintenance of an interconnected ecyosystem. Katniss, like the wild figures of the woods in *After London*, is perhaps too close to nature. After all, writers like Berry and Leopold advocate a connection to nature, not a total abandonment to it. While Katniss never kills for fun or goes completely wild, she does seem comfortable with the act of taking life, and as we are about to examine, her closeness to the consumption and mindset of a hunter accompanies a somewhat biopolitical mindset as well.

Katniss figures primarily in several important food exchanges. As seen above, she benefits from the compassion and generosity of Peeta. However, later on in the first games, Katniss actually mirrors Peeta's behavior, sharing her hard won food with the closest thing she has to Prim at the time, Rue. "You hungry?" she asks her new ally, "Come on then, I've had two kills today" (*The Hunger Games* 208). To cement not only an alliance with Rue, but a sense of mutual care and camaraderie, Rue shares secrets she has learned as a worker in the orchards of District 11, but perhaps more significantly, Katniss shares her sustenance. Katniss and Rue share a meal to which they both contribute:

> Rue contributes a big handful of some sort of starchy root to the meal. Roasted over the
> fire, they have the sharp sweet taste of a parsnip. She recognizes the bird, too, some wild

thing they call a groosling…For a while, all conversation stops as we fill our stomachs…'Oh," says Rue with a sigh. 'I've never had a whole leg to myself before.'" (*The Hunger Games* 202).

Throughout the meal Katniss urges more food upon the little girl: "Take whatever you want" (Hunger Games 282), an attitude that not only solidifies a friendship but shows that Katniss shares in some of the same compassion which so characterizes Peeta.

However, while Katniss does care for certain people, and can obviously engage in bioeconomic food exchange, she also acts in ways which are troublingly biopolitical. While her motives are arguably always moral or at least understandable—take care of the girl who so reminds her of her sister, keep Peeta alive, keep herself alive—Katniss does not always attain these goals in a way that paints her as a paragon of bioeconomic virtue. The food exchanges she engages in with Peeta, while keeping him alive, are actually coded messages from her sponsor, Haymitch: "Haymitch couldn't be sending me a clearer message. One kiss equals one pot of broth" (Hunger Games 261). Perhaps the blame for this somewhat deceitful economy of bribery and manipulation through food should lay on the shoulders of Haymitch, or on the designers of the games themselves, but Katniss not only agrees to said system, engaging in more affection with Peeta despite a lack of understanding of her own true feelings, but she also understands it implicitly, which implies that on some level both she and Haymitch understand that food, bioeconomic sustenance, can be used also as a means of power and coercion.

While Katniss can serve both as an example of a moralistic bioeconomic figure in the tradition of Piers and Peeta, and as an example of a biopolitical player who uses food for her own advantage and gain, the most striking example of the survival of the "old order" in the dystopia of *The Hunger Games* is not Katniss. In fact, it is not even Haymitch, although, as demonstrated above, he does know how to manipulate the biopolitical system quite adeptly. Rather, the most

striking example of a biopolitical system is embodied in the Capitol itself, and in its many

quotidian citizens. Haymitch and many citizens of the Capitol serve as anti-examples of the

moralistic bioeconomic figure. The citizens and systems of the Capitol are players for power in

the biopolitical system—a system which echoes the apocalyptic thinking of many contemporary

Americans by perpetuating the wastes and follies which could lead to civilization's very real

downfall. The Capitol is "indifferent to human life, divested of history" except that history which

it devises, and almost every man and woman in the Capitol has "succumbed to the enjoyment of

the spectacle of his own destruction" (Heffernan 18). The Capitol's most popular event is the

Hunger Games, in which they pay for the pleasure of watching children kill each other. Literally,

they are watching their future, the children of their country, destroy one another. This enjoyment

of "the spectacle of [our] own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure" suggests not just the "cultural

anxiety that we have reached…the end of our species" (Heffernan 151), but also suggests a fear,

as witnessed in the other "apocalyptic narratives" we have examined, that the system is ripe for

exploitation on the lowest and most fundamental levels; our political systems allow for the

manipulation of food, of life itself, for the betterment of the few and for the power of our states.

The relationships which, in the bioeconomy Peeta represents and Katniss fights for, should be

symbiotic and connected, are twisted into "parasitism, predation, and vampirism" in the Capitol

(Stableford 265). The Capitol does not produce its own food: it preys on Districts 4 and 11. The

Capitol does not slaughter its own children, but rather takes tributes from the Districts.

And, perhaps most fittingly to this thesis, the Capitol's main figurative source of power is

entitled the Hunger Games, making its connection to food and care and sustenance nothing but

brazen. The Capitol explains their grand pageant this way:

> He tells of the history of Panem, the country that rose up out of the ashes of a place that
> was once called North America. He lists the disasters, the droughts, the storms, the fires,

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the encroaching seas that swallowed up so much of the land, the brutal way for what little sustenance remained. The result was Panem, a shining Capitol ringed by thirteen districts, which brought peace and prosperity to its citizens. Then came the Dark Days, the uprising of the districts against the Capitol. Twelve were defeated, the thirteenth obliterated. The Treaty of Treason gave us the new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games (*The Hunger Games* 18).

In this brief description of the events which shape the entire narrative of Collins's trilogy, we see several echoes of both biopolitical machinations and those fears which produced contemporary American post-apocalypses. Notice the environmental disasters "storms", "fires", "droughts", etc. which wracked our continent and forced people into brutal wars for "sustenance" (18). Here we see the concerns of the Sprouts and of the environmental movements of our century. However, a reader can also see the biopolitical system on which the world of *The Hunger Games* rests. The Capitol holds all of the power, all of the "sustenance" and its way of exercising power is to manipulate not only the distribution of food and bioeconomic produce, but to manipulate the human produce of its own system. It kills children to keep its citizens in line.

What is, perhaps, worse, is that it also uses food to force children to place themselves into even more danger. The Capitol offers "tesserae": "Say you are poor and starving as we were. You can opt to add your name more times in exchange for tesserae. Each tessera is worth a meager year's supply of grain and oil for one person" (*The Hunger Games* 13). The Capitol, which deliberately and knowingly manipulates the energy and life force of its citizens, then asks more from them in exchange for "grain and oil", for food. And all that the Capitol asks? A child must put his or herself at more risk for almost certain death in the arena for enough food to survive. The Capitol, then, is a place "without tenderness and abandon" (Sundarm 245), where even basic human compassion is abandoned for revenge and sport.

Most of the biopolitical machinations which inform *The Hunger Games* can be laid at the feet of the powerful within that system: President Snow, the gamemakers. However, what of the ordinary citizens of the Capitol? Peeta and Katniss from District 12, Rue and Thresh from District 11 (who respectively save Katniss from Tracker Jackers and spare her life), are examples of ordinary citizens (*The Hunger Games* 200, 288), with no power in a biopolitical system, creating their own bioeconomic system. What do the citizens of the Capitol do? A few rebel in what ways they can. Cinna channels his rebellious spirit into displays of fashion (*Catching Fire* 285), while Plutarch Havensbee undermines the second Games to aid a rebellion (*Catching Fire* 385). However, many ordinary citizens of the Capitol live in a city of "capitalism and commercialism" which has eroded "not only cultural integrity but also ecological integrity" (Otto 106). Much like the excesses and abandon of London in the Victorian age, the Capitol disregards any idea of moderation or care for others. In the second book, at the culmination of Peeta and Katniss's victory tour, they attend a feast in the Capitol. Katniss's description of the banquet is almost hyperbolic: "Tables laden with delicacies line the walls. Everything you can think of, and things you have never dreamed of, lie in wait" (*Catching Fire* 77). Luxury and excess dominate the scene, a show of just how much the Capitol has gained from ignoring the "elemental needs and desires of their citizens" sits upon the tables before the bewildered Katniss and Peeta (Sprout 93). While this sumptuous feast seems delightful to a pair of teenagers from a poor district, to the Capitol citizens such waste is nothing new. When Katniss expresses that she cannot eat any more, her frivolous assistants claim "'No one lets that stop them!'" and lead her to a table filled with champagne flutes of a clear liquid (*Catching Fire* 79). Much to the disgust and dismay of Peeta and Katniss, this liquid causes the consumer to "puke" (79), therefore giving them more room to consume even more food—food that they do not even digest and which obviously does

not sustain them. "How else would you have any fun at a feast?" Octavia glibly exclaims

(Catching Fire 79).

Not only does the Capitol manipulate potentially rebellious outlying citizens through food and fear, but they brazenly waste the food they gain from this manipulation, teaching their own citizens the ways of waste and excess rather than of conservation and cultivation. Unlike Katniss, who has starved before, and Peeta, who provides for others, the Capitol holds those who use biopolitical power and produce for gain, and those who just waste it for pleasure. Herein lies the "old order", that capitalistic, biopolitical system which has begun to show the fruits of its waste in our modern reality. The Capitol is that order which still survives, despite its damages. Katniss and Peeta, and Rue and Prim and Thresh, are the new order, that order which we must favor in order to survive and to maintain our own humanity.

An ideal bioeconomic model, as embodied by Felix's father and by the shepherds in *After London*, and by Peeta Mellark, Katniss Everdeen, Rue, Thresh, and Prim in *The Hunger Games*, must be motivated not by profit (as the modern food industry is, as the Capitol is, as Victorian London was) but by the nurture and cultivation of a sustainable human society which focuses not only upon a symbiotic relationship with the earth as characterized by careful hunting and careful agriculture, as well as a sense of moderation rather than waste, but also by a compassion for those human bonds which are the best measures of our humanity and our morality. Those systems which so dismay both in the factual and the fictual worlds must be abandoned not only for the sake of our planet, but for the sake of ourselves.

Would we rather live in a world like the Capitol, where no one cares for one another, or a world populated by citizens more like Peeta Mellark, who care for those who need it? We might someday be the ones who need help, after all.

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