



Cappadocia University

School of Graduate Studies and Research

Department of English Language and Literature

**REINTERPRETING HUNGER: ECOLOGICAL
ANXIETIES AND CANNIBALISTIC FOODWAYS IN
ANTHONY BURGESS'S *THE WANTING SEED* AND
JOSEPH D'LACEY'S *MEAT***

Cenk TAKIM

Master's Thesis

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ÖZET

TAKIM, Cenk. Açlığın Yeniden Yorumlanması: Anthony Burgess'in *The Wanting Seed* ve Joseph D'Lacey'nin *MEAT* Romanlarındaki Ekolojik Kaygılar ve Yamyamlık Kültürü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Nevşehir, 2023.

Bu tez, İngiliz edebiyatının yirminci ve yirmi birinci yüzyıl distopya romanlarından Anthony Burgess'in *The Wanting Seed* (1962) ve Joseph D'Lacey'nin *MEAT* (2008) adlı romanlarını analiz eder. Tezin temel odağı anlatıların kullandığı yamyamlık metaforudur. Seçilen romanlar arasında yamyamlık metaforunun kullanımında dikkate değer bir tezatlık ortaya çıkar: *The Wanting Seed* akut durumların bir sonucu olarak insan eti tüketimini ele alıp yiyecek kıtlığı, aşırı nüfus ve ekolojik bozulmayla yüzleşirken ilkel bir yamyamlık tasvir eder. Buna karşılık *MEAT* geniş çaplı ekolojik yok oluşu yansıtır ve yamyamlık ile kapitalizmi birbirini tamamlayan iki unsur olarak sunar. Yamyamlık metaforu endüstriyel bir form alır, insan bedenleri fabrika çiftlik endüstrilerinde olduğu gibi üretilir ve işlenir. İngiliz edebiyatı bağlamında, yamyamlık metaforunun çeşitli toplumsal endişeleri ve kaygıları yansıtmak için kullanıldığı birçok örneğe karşın, bu seçilen distopya romanları yamyamlık metaforu kullanarak yirminci ve yirmi birinci yüzyılın ekolojik kaygılarını taşır. Yirminci yüzyıl ekolojik kaygıları aşırı nüfus artışı ve kaynak kıtlığı olarak temsil edilirken, yirmi birinci yüzyılın önemli ekolojik endişeleri arasında geniş çaplı ekolojik yok oluş korkusu bulunur. Ekolojik tahribatın ve bozulmanın özellikle yirmi birinci yüzyılda artan bir şekilde yaşanması, günümüz ekolojik kaygılarını daha da yoğunlaştırır. Seçilen romanlardaki yamyamlık temsilleri arasındaki ölçek değişimi, artan ekolojik bozulma ve dolayısıyla şiddetlenen ekolojik kaygıların radikal bir tasviri haline gelir.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Eko-kaygı, *The Wanting Seed*, *MEAT*, yamyamlık, ekolojik yok oluş, fabrika çiftçiliği

ABSTRACT

TAKIM, Cenk. Reinterpreting Hunger: Ecological Anxieties and Cannibalistic Foodways in Anthony Burgess's *The Wanting Seed* and Joseph D'Lacey's *MEAT*, Master's Thesis, Nevşehir, 2023.

This thesis delves into the analysis of two dystopian novels from twentieth – and twenty-first-century English literature: Anthony Burgess's *The Wanting Seed* (1962) and Joseph D'Lacey's *MEAT* (2008). The primary focus is on the cannibalism metaphor employed by the narratives. A notable contrast emerges in their use of the cannibalism metaphor: *The Wanting Seed* employs man-eating as a response to acute circumstances, portraying crude cannibalism in the face of food scarcity, overpopulation, and ecological degradation. In contrast, *MEAT* reflects vast ecological annihilation and presents cannibalism and capitalism as the two complementary facets. The cannibalism metaphor takes an industrial form, with human bodies being produced and processed akin to factory farming industries. In the broader context of English literature, where the cannibalism metaphor has been employed to project various societal concerns and anxieties, these selected dystopian novels specifically reflect the ecological anxieties of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries through their use of cannibalism. Overpopulation and resource scarcity were prominent eco-anxieties in the twentieth century and continue to be pressing concerns in the twenty-first century; however, emerging issues such as species extinction, the sense of ecological annihilation and fear have become more prominent. The gradual increase in ecological degradation, particularly in the twenty-first century, intensifies contemporary eco-anxieties. The magnitude shift observed in the representation of cannibalism and industrialised cannibalism parallels the shift in eco-anxieties, offering a radical response to the escalating ecological degradation and heightened sense of eco-anxiety.

Keywords

Eco-anxiety, *The Wanting Seed*, *MEAT*, cannibalism, ecological annihilation, factory farming

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INTRODUCTION

“This isn’t cannibalism, Abel. It’s only cannibalism if we’re equals.”

—*Hannibal*, Season 3, “Antipasto”

The TV series *Hannibal* (2013-2015) is based on Thomas Harris’s novel *Red Dragon* (1981) and adapted to screen by Bryan Fuller. The series not only depicts gory and violence but also conveys messages that problematise the concept of morality. In other words, it questions and challenges ethical values, and society-centred moral standards by portraying graphic scenes of cannibalism. Dr. Hannibal Lecter, who is a successful but an unorthodox psychologist, adopts the ‘always eat the rude’ motto. In a sense, his ethical values and morals exclude him from society, further letting him justify consuming the worthless, the unintellectual, and the rude. Moreover, human and pig meat have no difference for Dr. Lecter. It is therefore safe to say that the borderline between non-human and human animals is arbitrary to Dr. Lecter’s mind, as he conceives the ‘rude’ as the ‘other,’ and thus, edible. Lecter, apart from the few friends of his, sees other people as sub-human, or to put it differently, less than human, and this creates his moral justification of cannibalism that falls outside the spectrum of society-centred thinking that understands his actions as monstrous. In her dissertation, Kristi Michelle Pierse addresses the question of morality in contemporary culture centred around the TV series *Hannibal*. She notes that social norms and the concept of normativity, i.e., what is “right or wrong is defined differently in [Hannibal’s] own world and justified by his own terms” (20). If eating people is wrong, then claims about Dr. Lecter’s actions—immoral, vicious, or perhaps monstrous—are normalising claims pertained to cultural norms. In this regard, it may be interpreted that Bryan Fuller’s character Dr. Lecter is a violator of cultural boundaries, a criminal in society, and a human monster that needs to be subjected to punitive sanctions.

Cannibalism is a taboo subject in civilised societies. A taboo subject refers to a practice that is considered unacceptable or off-limits by societal norms and traditions. Geoffrey Sanborn defines cannibalism as “the limit that humanity requires in order to know itself *as itself*” (194). In human societies, therefore, cannibals are psychopaths and monsters that cannot be tolerated. Hence, real accounts of cannibalism evoke

deeply unsettling and uncanny feelings. In a case in Ankara, Turkey for instance, Özgür Deniz was captured after killing and eating a man in 2007. In his confession, he stated that “I adore the taste of human blood and flesh. I chatted for a short time [with the victim], who was drinking alcohol in a van at the Mamak Dump ... I took out my gun and shot him twice ... then I cut the corpse into pieces ... It had a nice taste” (Çiğdem 290). Deniz therefore represents the mentally ill monster and becomes the ‘other’ in society. Like Deniz, Jeffrey Dahmer, who was an American serial killer and cannibal, murdered and ate people. In September 2022, Netflix aired a mini-series on his life story. In this mini-series, it is hardly surprising that Dahmer is named as the ‘monster.’ The title of the mini-series emphasises his monstrosity: *Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* (Berlinger). Because eating human flesh is a taboo subject, just as incest or necrophilia, the cannibalistic practices are considered as inhuman and vile.

From a different perspective, professor of biology and novelist Bill Schutt gives critical insights into the history of cannibalism, and its significance in modern society. He emphasises that atavistic urges such as cannibalism are inherent in human beings, but “suppression of such forbidden behaviours signalled the birth of modern human society” (235). Within this scope, the very idea of cannibalism threatens civilised societies in terms of breaking down the boundaries of defining the modern, sane, and moral human. In this regard, cannibals are also viewed as monsters that threaten the modern and civilised societies.

Can eating human flesh be justifiable if there is not another feasible option for survival? Because cannibalism is a taboo in civilised societies, Roman Catholic spokesmen have created a modern dilemma. A Uruguay Air Force plane crashed in the Chilean Andes in 1972, and it is noted that thirty-nine people died with only sixteen survivors and they had to eat the remains of the deceased individuals in order not to starve to death. Spokesmen from the Roman Catholic Church subsequently stated that survivors “acted justifiably” and “[a] person is permitted to eat dead human flesh if there is no alternative for survival” (“Two Catholic Aides”). The survivors turned into cannibalism due to extreme hunger. In this case, anthropophagi, the anthropological term for cannibalism, in extreme circumstances as such as this is justified beyond the societal taboos.

Concerning hunger in acute circumstances, dystopian imagination seems to have adopted the cannibalism metaphor by asking ‘what if’ questions that push beyond societal boundaries: What if the present civilisation, societal rules, moral codes, and normative spectrums are destroyed by a possible nuclear war, ecological degradation, extinction, and hunger? What if all the food supply become extinct? Dystopian imagination engages these concerns by exploiting societal fears and anxieties, projecting future societies where humanity is corrupted and faced with ecological extinction. Anthony Burgess’s *The Wanting Seed* (1962) and Joseph D’Lacey’s *MEAT* (2008), for instance, reflect the aforementioned concerns, and embody cannibalism as a satirical solution to ecological concerns. This thesis therefore aims to analyse these works of dystopia by tracing the cannibalism metaphors the narratives employ. The cannibalism metaphor elucidates ecological concerns pertaining to the specific eras in which these narratives were written. However, there is a discernible shift in the portrayal of cannibalism within these narratives, specifically attributed to industrialism—a transformation rooted in the age of the ‘Capitalocene.’

This thesis argues that there is a magnitude shift between Anthony Burgess’s *The Wanting Seed* and Joseph D’Lacey’s *MEAT* in their employment of the cannibalism metaphor, and this shift is linked to the gradually expanding environmental decay and the heightened sense of eco-anxiety in the twenty-first century. On one end of the spectrum, *The Wanting Seed* embodies the twentieth-century discourse on the ecological concerns, such as overpopulation and resource depletion, hence cannibalism becomes the last resort. On the other end of the spectrum, *MEAT* encapsulates an industrial shift in its utilisation of cannibalism: human flesh and its by-products are industrialised and mass-produced due to massive ecological annihilation and extinction. *MEAT*’s representation of the capitalist system and the scale of ecological degradation that the novel portrays coincide with twenty-first-century ecological anxieties tied to factory farming and capitalism’s way of utilising and accumulating natural sources. In this regard, the satirical tone of the cannibalism metaphor evolves from being the last resort to an industrial practice in the face of ecological collapse. Cannibalism metaphor, therefore, emerges as an evolving literary device, which is compelled by industrialisation. For this argument, the selected novels will be scrutinised and contextualised. All in all, this study seeks to address the destructive trends in the Capitalocene age, as Jason Moore defines it, and to show that

capitalocentric relationship with ecological systems is fundamentally destructive to humanity itself. Even though the cannibalism metaphor and its representational value in English literature and the eco-anxiety as an eco-emotional state are studied widely, there is no available research on their possible intersection. This gap in research presents a unique opportunity for this thesis to contribute to the field by exploring the intersection of these concepts.

As the Greek historian Herodotus defined it around the fifth century BCE, the anthropological term “anthropophagi” refers to the act of consuming human flesh (Diehl and Donnelly 29). It is possible to view anthropophagi as a response to ecologically oriented concerns, tracing the cannibalism metaphor in the selected works of fiction. Burgess’s *The Wanting Seed* depicts a dehumanised and savage society in which hunger is dramatically escalated because of soil degradation and exponential population growth. When literary cannibalism and the underlying ecological concerns in *The Wanting Seed* are examined, the novel highlights two significant points. It reflects Malthusian ideas regarding population growth, suggesting that human reproduction will eventually outpace food production and exceed soil’s carrying capacity limit (Malthus 11). It also engages with the twentieth-century discourse surrounding soil degradation due to pesticide usage. Cannibalism, in this case, emerges as a satirical solution to address the food crisis and soil degradation, aligning with the sense of eco-anxiety.

In the twenty-first century, industrialisation and mass production mechanisms are being questioned more frequently due to the ecological impacts they cause. Factory farming, for instance, is one of the industrialised and mass production areas that creates ecological concerns over biodiversity loss, water pollution, carbon emissions and land degradation. Accordingly, D’Lacey’s dystopian narrative *MEAT* critiques the capitalist food industry of today’s world. The novel exploits human flesh as the ultimate raw material source for the corporate capitalism system in the face of extinction. Processed human flesh therefore becomes the raw material for production, as well as a cultural code in the narrative.

Prior to the main discussion, it is useful to mention the roots of cannibalism and its historical significance as a literary tool of social and cultural satire. The cannibalism metaphor has represented different anxieties over the centuries, and it has

become a satirical solution to address them. Thus, the rest of this introduction will first examine anthropophagi. In order to indicate that the cannibalism metaphor stands for different interpretations depending on the era in English literature, various literary representations of anthropophagi will be examined. Correspondingly, the cannibalism metaphor represents the zeitgeist of the era. In this regard, this introduction then focuses on the cannibalism metaphor and its representational value of ecologically-oriented concerns in the selected works. To focus and elaborate on the ecological concerns, and their intersections with the anthropophagi, the final part of this introduction concludes by acknowledging the term eco-anxiety.

Cannibals have been viewed as the violators of societal norms not only in the modern era, but also in the ancient times. Herodotus, also known as the ‘father of history’ is credited with initiating the discourse of cannibalism in *Histories* (Mallory 388). It serves as a record of archaic customs that provides one of the earliest ‘written’ accounts of endo-cannibalism, which means consuming “the members of one’s own family or tribe” (“Endocannibalism”). Massagetae and Issedones are some of the ancient tribes that practice endocannibalism. In Massagetae manners, for instance, “when a man is very old all his kin meet together and kill him, with beast of the flock besides, then boil the flesh and feast on it. This is held to be the happiest death....” Similarly, in Issedones customs, whenever someone’s father dies all his kin gather for a feast (Mallory 388). These pre-historic feasts can be interpreted as a window into the social organisation of a pre-historic mindset. In his article, Mallory offers new explanations for the cultural cannibalism with specific examples from Herodotus’s *Histories*. He states that *Histories* depicts the tribes that Herodotus encountered as “the most savage of all those in the region since they possess no laws” (388). In this respect, they are seen as uncivilised ‘savages.’ It is hardly unusual that even the ancient Greeks associated these customs with foreigners and saw the act of anthropophagi as something unacceptable (389). This perspective shows that cannibals are seen as the ‘other’ not only in the twenty-first century but also in ancient Greece.

Another key figure who is credited with contributing to the cannibalism discourse, this time in the age of colonisation, is Christopher Columbus, whose *Journal* (1825) narrates Caribbean people in parallel with the Herodotus’s idea of savagery. In 1493, Columbus describes islanders as daring and fierce people who “eat the people they can take.” Moreover, Dr. Chance, who was one of the voyagers

according to *Journal*, notes that they were suspicious of all Caribe islands being occupied by man-eaters (qtd. in Hulme 117). In his study, Peter Hulme analyses Columbus's *Journal* concerning the plausibility of his records about the cannibals. Although Hulme finds Columbus's accounts not thoroughly credible due to the lack of concrete evidence, speculating on the cases of cannibalism is not an objective for this thesis. Nonetheless, Columbus's accounts and Hulme's interpretations suggest that understanding of the anthropophagous (cannibals) is the same as in the ancient Greece, that is as the 'savage,' and the 'other.' To be more specific, the New World was most probably associated, among other images, with the monsters feasting on human flesh in the Western mind depending on Columbus's accounts. As Hulme states, Columbus's *Journal* introduces the people of the New World as "the man-eating monsters who so clearly represented the lower faculties of man" (Hulme 115).

In both *Histories* and *Journal*, cannibalism is associated with savagery and becoming the 'other,' as it is a violation of the civilised norms. It is possible to draw parallels between the idea of savagery and the 'other,' and literary representations of the cannibalism metaphor in English history, starting from the Anglo-Saxon times. The seafaring Germanic tribes, i.e., the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes brought oral poetry tradition to Britain (Greenblatt 4). Written records are only produced after the tribes accepted Christianity; therefore, "the earliest records in the English language are in manuscripts produced at monasteries and other religious establishments, beginning in the seventh century" (5). Influenced by Christian values, the Anglo-Saxon poem *Andreas* tells the story of St. Andreas, a missionary sent to Mermedonians (a cannibalistic tribe living in a far-reached corner of the earth) to convert them into Christianity. Heather Blurton explores the old English poem, *Andreas*. To Blurton, the cannibalism motif articulates cultural meanings in medieval English literature, that is "cannibal narratives have in common, above all, a concern with the articulation of identity – personal, religious, and social" (2). Anglo-Saxons were aware of the anthropophagous as a geographical fact "as [it] is indicated by the insular popularity of the Marvels of the East tradition" which is an old English prose that narrates barbaric creatures living in Eastern regions in the ninth century (Blurton 15). In this regard, cultural boundaries and religious identities between Mermedonians and Anglo-Saxons show a conflict. Cannibal Mermedonians need to be altered, namely, converted into Christianity because they are otherwise savages, or monsters, which is a threatening

agency to both individual and cultural identity. St. Andreas's attempt to convert the cannibal Mermedonians may be interpreted as an Anglo-Saxon effort to maintain their cultural and religious identities in the face of this cannibalistic threat.

In another medieval example, cannibalism serves as a concurrent metaphor in the Middle English poem *Richard Coer de Lyon* (Richard the Lionheart), depicting the 'Saracen,' which is a nickname given to Muslim soldiers in the time of the Crusaders ("Saracen"). The poem, which was written around the early fourteenth century, and has different versions, represents King Richard and his crusaders as heroes who were granted spiritual rewards by papal appeals. In the poem, Christian soldiers cannibalise the Saracen. Leona F. Cordery problematises the justification for this act of anthropophagy by showing how the cannibalism motif in *Richard Coer de Lyon* articulates the meaning of "temporal and spiritual 'other'" (153). In other words, the poem positions the Saracen as consumable food for the Christian knights, while emphasising the sacredness of the Christian body, which cannot be murdered and eaten. Cordery explains as follows:

Deliberately killing a Christian, and the emphasis here must be on deliberate, means spilling the blood of Christ, and is therefore unacceptable. A Saracen, however, is a nonbeliever, an 'other-believer,' who cannot go to heaven anyway, cannot be redeemed and has no soul, therefore, justifiably ranks with the animals: thus killing a Saracen deliberately as food to save the life of a Christian king is considered permissible and wholly justifiable. (158)

Saracen body becomes the cultural and religious other, thus edible, whereas a Christian body has its sanctity. Ergo, eating Saracen flesh highlights the accumulation of Muslim identity and even the religion.

It is possible to interpret anthropophagi in the poem from different perspectives. Blurton emphasises historical parallelism by analysing the Muslim and Christian encounters in the times of the Crusades, based on the real accounts. She views the cannibalism metaphor as a dominant figure in medieval literature, namely in 'chanson de geste,'¹ signifying "the dynamic between Christianity and Islam" and "crises of invasion and conquest" (106). The poem's representation of anthropophagy, therefore, can be seen as a consequence of fears, or anxieties over Islamic invasions during the Crusaders. In this regard, literary cannibalism represents a satirical solution to an outside threat. As in the case of *Richard Coer de Lyon*, the Islamic threat is eased

¹ A medieval genre in French verse.

by consuming the Saracen flesh. This represents the idea of ‘identity consumption’ as Blurton identifies (16-18).

In both *Andreas* and *Richard Coer de Lyon*, cannibalism does not represent the act of literal consuming, or being consumed due to an inevitable necessity. Instead, the metaphorical representations of cannibals convey messages. In *Andreas*, Mermedonians are portrayed as anthropophagous savages to be tamed or civilized. This representation signifies the Anglo-Saxons’ effort to maintain cultural and religious identity in the face of a possible threat. Another example is noticeable in *Richard Coer de Lyon*, where the response to the Islamic threat involves the cannibalisation of Saracen bodies, presenting a satirical solution. All in all, the uncivilised and non-Christian individuals are depicted as the savages that cause unease, and the poems respond to these concerns in different ways. It is however possible to say that the representation of cannibalism shifts in eighteenth and nineteenth-century English literature, that is, the cannibalism metaphor indicates economic and social anxieties.

The idea of superiority and savagery takes a different turn in Jonathan Swift’s satire *A Modest Proposal* (1729), or in full, *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from Being a Burthen to their Parents, or the Country, and for Making Them Beneficial to the Publick*. Swift’s proposal is an offer for the poor to sell their children to the rich, promising that the poor can also benefit making some sums of money as *quid pro quo* for the bargain. Thus, the rich can benefit from both the flesh and the skin of the children that “will make admirable gloves for ladies, and summer boots for fine gentlemen” (8). Regarding the dire circumstances, that is, the weakening economy of eighteenth-century Ireland, Swift satirically states that no one can object to this proposal (12). Indeed, the Irish economy was severely weakening due to English control over the trade, which resulted in poverty and hunger. Because of the legislative control that the English parliament imposed on the Irish to restrain trade, agriculture and livestock supply deteriorated (MacNeil 16). Most of the poverty-stricken people had therefore nothing valuable left to sustain their lives (17). In this regard, Swift brilliantly depicts the economic and political anxieties of his era (Larsen 41). In a sense, superiority over savages is still viable. In the case of Swift’s satirical work, savages become the poor and the anthropophagous are the rich. As Swift explains the justification of the satire, “these children are seldom the fruits of marriage,

a circumstance not much regarded by our savages” (7). In a way, cannibalism in *A Modest Proposal* serves as a lens for understanding the zeitgeist in the eighteenth-century Ireland, the acute economic concerns. Swift’s satire manifests ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots,’ representing the socioeconomic disparities of his era. Cannibalism is projected onto the haves. Similarly, in the Victorian era, *The Time Machine* (1895) by H.G. Wells depicts haves and have-nots, and portrays two futuristic societies, namely the Eloi and the Morlock. Eloi live in an idyllic pastoral area where living conditions are pleasant and food sources are plentiful, whereas Morlocks live in dark, and underground, as if mine workers, and consumes Eloi. From a socioeconomic context, they may be interpreted as representing upper and lower classes. In *The Time Machine* cannibalistic urges are projected onto the Morlocks, in other words, have-nots. Morlocks prey on Eloi at night, as if they were nocturnal animals. From the Victorian frame, as Hume emphasises, the cannibalism metaphor in *The Time Machine* may be interpreted as an “interplay of ideology with its symbolic distortions,” in other words, ideological assumption towards class differences (236).

The examination of the cannibalism metaphor across various literary works spanning different historical periods reveals its multifaceted metaphorical significance. In medieval literature such as the Anglo-Saxon poem *Andreas* and the Middle English poem *Richard Coer de Lyon*, cannibalism serves as a metaphor for cultural and religious otherness, reflecting anxieties over identity, invasion, and conquest. These texts depict uncivilised or non-Christian individuals as savages to be tamed or consumed, offering satirical solutions to the anticipated threats. However, in later works such as Jonathan Swift’s *A Modest Proposal* and H.G. Wells’s *The Time Machine* cannibalism is employed as a lens to critique socioeconomic disparities and political concerns of their respective eras. Swift’s satire highlights economic anxieties in eighteenth-century Ireland, while Wells’s novel explores class divisions in Victorian society. Throughout these literary representations, cannibalism serves as a powerful and evolving metaphor to interrogate issues of identity, power, and inequality, reflecting the evolving concerns of each era. When the literary representations of cannibalism in *The Wanting Seed* and *MEAT* examined, it is seen an instrument of survival against ecological decline, scarcity, and extinction. It unravels the intricacies of how the selected works employ cannibalism as a projection of the consequences of ecological deterioration, tied to the ecological realities of their own eras. *The Wanting*

Seed for instance reflects concerns about overpopulation, resource decline, and soil deterioration, deriving from neo-Malthusian theory. *MEAT*, on the other hand, illustrates a wide-scale extinction and annihilation, reflecting upon the capitalocentric systems. In this regard, both novels illustrate the environmental discourses specific to their own time and employ anthropophagi as a satirical solution.

Linking cannibalism to the implications of environmental degradation shows the “collective shadows,” which means acknowledging the “tremendous environmental, psychological, and sociological destruction that [human agency] caused over the last few centuries” (Barton 5). In “Dystopia and the Promethean Nightmare,” Riven Barton examines dystopian narratives from the early twentieth century to the present as the reflections of cultural fears. She points out the unconscious and innate fear of human ‘progress’ and ‘advancement’ that dystopias portray. Similarly, as Louisa MacKay Demerjian argues in *The Age of Dystopia* (2016), concerns such as income inequality, financial issues, power relations, and climate change that have unprecedented consequences, have reflections in dystopian narratives. In other words,

[d]ystopian works reflect society’s worries. What do we have to worry about? Income inequality, the financial crisis, power in the hands of a few—a few anonymous, wealthy and powerful elite—which brings to mind the elite group of the Party insiders in 1984. Science and technology are impacting our lives and changing who we are as people when few of us understand how these things—genetic engineering, software engineering—are done. Climate change—we don’t know what the seasons will be like over time and we don’t know how many cities are going to be under water or, on the other end of the spectrum, completely dried out. We don’t know how our changing environment will impact food production but we know that there are pollinators at risk. (1)

Within this perspective, dystopian narratives may envision scarcity, depletion of food sources, and hunger based on ecological concerns, portraying cannibalism as the ultimate consequence. Cormac McCarthy’s dystopian novel *The Road* (2006), for instance, exemplifies this theme, depicting a post-apocalyptic world in which societal rules, civilisation, along with laws and moral codes collapsed after an unspecified event akin to the species extinction. The story follows a father and his son struggling to survive in a hostile world where people have resorted to cannibalism due to hunger. Similarly, Don LePan’s *Animals* (2009) “explicitly engages with the corporate animal agriculture system” and offers cannibalism as a solution to the anticipated food crises (Castle 42). LePan’s novel depicts a society whose nutrition solely depends on

‘mongrels’ (special children) after the mass extinction of all the species that humans consume as food. David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* (2004) also employs the cannibalism metaphor, narrating the future of consumer capitalism that uses ‘fabricants,’ namely clones, as the food supply because they are the ultimate source of meat in Mitchell’s dystopian society. Examining the twisted depictions of cannibalism, *The Road* and *Animals* reflect concerns about extinction, while *Cloud Atlas* manifests the future of consumer capitalism, showing quasi-humans exploited for the market due to lack of raw material sources. In this regard, dystopian narratives may employ the cannibalism metaphor to represent the extent of ecological degradation, aligning well with contemporary ecological concerns embedded in today’s cultures. Both Burgess’s *The Wanting Seed* and D’Lacey’s *MEAT* are dystopias that reflect societal concerns and ‘collective shadows’ by intertwining cannibalism with environmental degradation.

The novels reflect collective fears over the extinction of natural resources, namely, food sources. Cannibalism is therefore the last resort regarding the mass absence of food and healthy ecologies that the narratives embody. In a sense, the novels serve as mirrors of environmental concerns, as dystopias often “highlight our collective fears and allow us to process them in a nightmarish fantasy” (Barton 5). These collective fears, or shadows, as Barton identifies, are the ramifications of ‘eco-anxieties,’ as both arise from the culmination of negative emotions such as hopelessness, fear, and panic. Eco-anxiety is a psychological response to degrading ecologies, and can be defined as a mental distress, which is characterised by “panic attacks, insomnia, obsessive thinking, and/or appetite changes caused by environmental concerns” (Usher et al. 1233). In other words, it is a ‘psychoterratic’ syndrome that occurs due to the feelings of helplessness, environmental uncertainty, and anxiety “in the face of accumulating evidence of non-sustainable pathways” of both environmental and climatic change (Albrecht, “Chronic Environmental Change: Emerging ‘Psychoterratic’ Syndromes” 49). Culmination of adverse responses to ecological factors, arising from various environmental threats, such as pollution or biodiversity loss, explains the need for coining the term ‘eco-anxiety.’

Glenn Albrecht, a professor of environmental philosophy, notes that chronic stress on ecosystems gives rise to “negative eco-emotional states” within the Anthropocene (*Earth Emotions: New Words for a New World* 73). Eco-anxiety, to Albrecht, is an “eco-emotional state,” which means negative emotional responses that

people feel for their futures (49). Even though the term is first used by the journalist Lisa Leff referring to the concerns about pollution, it is identified as the anxiety that is related to “changing and uncertain environment” by Albrecht (76). It is important to note here that the term ‘eco-anxiety’ refers to one of the ‘negative eco-emotional states.’ In his “Chronic Environmental Change: Emerging Psychoterratic Syndromes,” Albrecht also introduces the terms “ecoparalysis” and “solastalgia” (77). In the broadest sense, ecoparalysis stands for the apathy and disengagement from climatic and ecological challenges, meanwhile solastalgia is “the lived experience of negatively perceived change to a home environment” (50). In 2019, Albrecht writes *Earth Emotions: New Words for a New World* and expands the vocabulary that describes the negative states. Ecocide, biophobia, environmental generational amnesia, global dread, meteoranxiety, and tierracide are the other responses to the ecological pressures in the Anthropocene era (72).

The term ‘eco-anxiety’ is studied within eco-psychological framework, highlighting the relationship between human, mind, and the environment. Andy Fisher, one of the pioneers of ecopsychology, defines the field as an encompassing term for “synthesizing ecology and psychology, placing human psychology in an ecological context, and mending the divisions between mind and nature, humans and earth” (3). Theodore Roszak, another pioneer of the field, writes on the principles² of eco-psychology, asserting that ecopsychology “questions the essential sanity of our gargantuan urban-industrial culture, whether capitalistic or collectivistic in its organization” (321). It implies a concern about the impact of industrialised societies on both the human psyche and the ecological well-being. Roszak also identifies another principle that critiques the unsustainable practices in industrial societies. To Roszak, “[t]he core of the mind is the ecological unconscious ... [and] repression of the ecological unconscious is the deepest root of collusive madness in industrial society” (320). Roszak underscores the connection between the human psyche and the natural world and indicates that individuals have an innate connection to the ecologies. Within this perspective, disruption of the ecologies can lead to eco-psychological impacts on the individuals, causing eco-anxieties to arise from the degraded ecologies, as “there is a direct relationship between the disturbed emotional balance of humans

² In his book *The Voice of The Earth An Exploration of Ecopsychology* (1992) Roszak writes about eight principles of ecopsychology.

and the irreversibly disturbed nature especially when industrialisation, urbanisation, mechanisation, and technology-driven isolated lifestyles became dominant” (Aykanat 38).

Regarding industrialisation, urbanisation, and mechanisation, disruption of ecologies become more tangible. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), for instance, published an all-inclusive research and assessment report about livestock industry and its adverse ecological impact on the environment in 2006. Conducted by the members of the Steering Committee of the Livestock, Environment and Development (LEAD), *Livestock's Long Shadow* examines the geographic transition, livestock's role in climate change, pollution, water depletion, and its impact on biodiversity. Main issues include land degradation and climate hazards, occurring due to industrial livestock as the “production accounts for 70 per cent of all agricultural land” and its expansion “is a key factor in deforestation, especially in Latin America.” Also, industrial livestock is a major contributor to CO₂ emissions, “responsible for 18 percent ... higher share than transport” (xxi). Therefore, this report underscores the role of industrial activities play in exacerbating ecological issues. FAO's report furthermore emphasises water pollution and biodiversity loss. As the report states, “[t]he major sources of [water] pollution [is] from animal wastes, antibiotics and hormones, chemicals from tanneries, fertilizers and pesticides...” and livestock is a factor that threatens world species that are affected by habitat loss (xxii-xxiii). In this regard, the report sheds light on the ecological repercussions of the industrialisation, which is increasingly evident in today's world. Addressing the impact that the environmental degradation has on individuals' mental well-being, eco-anxiety becomes a psychological response to the environmental degradation.

Panu Pihkala, a professor of environmental theology, further explores the psychological dimensions of ecological concerns in his work *Eco-Anxiety and Pandemic Distress: Psychological Perspectives on Resilience and Interconnectedness* (2022). Pihkala identifies eco-anxiety as a manifestation of broader concerns about climate change, categorising both as “macrosocial worries” (1). Both stem from the serious concerns about environmental degradation and the sense of uncertainty about the future of the planet. Climate change and the concerns it entails, therefore, create stress not only on the planetary scale, but also on human mind. This psychological stress therefore called eco-anxiety, and it encompasses a variety of emotions, including

fear, worry, and helplessness. (Pihkala 2). A global survey on young people's responses to climate anxiety, involving ten thousand participants aged between 16-25 in ten countries, found that

all countries were worried about climate change (59% were very or extremely worried and 84% were at least moderately worried). More than 50% reported each of the following emotions: sad, anxious, angry, powerless, helpless, and guilty. More than 45% of respondents said their feelings about climate change negatively affected their daily life and functioning, and many reported a high number of negative thoughts about climate change (e.g., 75% said that they think the future is frightening and 83% said that they think people have failed to take care of the planet). (Hickman et al. 863)

The findings of the survey is pivotal in highlighting the psychological impact of climate-change related concerns on human psyche. By reporting feelings of worry, anger, and a sense of powerlessness across diverse demographics and geographical boundaries, the survey serves as a compelling illustration of the contemporary human experience. In other words, as the data suggests, the prevalence of eco-anxiety is not merely a personal experience but a widespread shared feeling. This underscores the fact that today's ecological concerns are more tangible than ever before, and 'eco-anxiety' describes the shared negative human experience, not only in terms of climate change but also as "the general term for anxiety caused by all kinds of ecological problems" (Pihkala 2). In that sense, eco-anxiety manifests itself in ecological concerns, such as pollution, degradation, forest clearance, or forest fires.

Collective fears and anxieties about ecological devastation, which is embedded within contemporary industrial cultures, elucidate the deep connection between human psyche and the environment, indicating how ecological disruptions to ecosystems lead to psychological distress, therefore, eco-anxieties on a global scale. As the abovementioned research shows, eco-anxiety as a psychological response can be recognised as a shared experience that reflects the sense of fear and worry in the face of environmental crises. The intertwining of cannibalism with environmental degradation in dystopian narratives serves as a powerful metaphor for the ecological fears. Through novels like *The Road*, *Animals*, and *Cloud Atlas*, for instance, authors explore the consequences of ecological collapse, resource scarcity, and societal breakdown, giving cannibalism as a desperate response to the ecological devastation and hunger. Ultimately, dystopian narratives that employ cannibalism become the warning signs or the cautionary narratives that confront the consequences of ecological destruction. Both *The Wanting Seed* and *MEAT* resonate with eco-anxieties with the

use of cannibalism, which is the satirical highlight of the environmental degradation. In both of the novels, the cannibalism metaphor becomes a mirror that reflects eco-anxious manifestations, which means the collective fears and anxieties about ecological concerns embedded within their own eras. Cannibalism therefore plays the role of an evolving literary device between the novels.

The selected novels highlight eco-anxieties of their own eras; therefore, conditions and contexts that affected the novels illustrate an agential shift, aligning well with the heightened sense of eco-anxiety in the twenty-first century. As Ursula K. Heise explains, population growth was a concurrent topic in Western texts between the 1960s and 1990s, and “scientists and demographers were primarily concerned with what persistent population growth implies for humankind’s relationship to its planetary environment...” (75). *The Population Bomb* (1968), as an example, is a historical book written by Paul R. Ehrlich that predicts worldwide food scarcity as a result of overpopulation. In line with this, Burgess’s *The Wanting Seed* employs cannibalism as a satirical response to the eco-anxieties over demographic growth that results in environmental degradation and resource scarcity. It seems that D’Lacey’s *MEAT* solves the population problem by turning people into processed and packaged food supplies. It satirises capitalist factory farming industries and reflects the ecological anxieties that high-volume food production create today. In this manner, *MEAT* reconstructs the cannibalism metaphor in a dystopian future, pointing out to a new way of seeing cannibalism, that is, what I refer to as ‘industrialised cannibalism.’ It is possible to argue that this shift in representing cannibalism occurs as a radical answer, or a critique towards capitalist production mechanisms, which utilise various sources and causes environmental degradation on a large scale.

All in all, food is a critical concern not just for humanity, but also for all living organisms, from non-human animals to even slime moulds, a type of primitive fungus. John Tyler Bonner, a professor of ecology and evolutionary biology, studies slime moulds for a number of years and he identifies that slime moulds become multicellular “with the sudden absence of the food” and they “orient towards the source” (18). In other words, when facing starvation, slime moulds attempt to reach and move towards food source. Parallels can be drawn between the slime moulds and humans in terms of searching for food. Ozan Arslan Aytan compares and contrasts the lifestyles of hunter-gatherer and farmer communities and he emphasises that hunter-gatherers had to take

position, or move according to the mobility of the animals to feed themselves (981). Even though food is readily available for us today, how far humanity will have to reach in the risk of starvation? More importantly, where should humanity move if food sources become extinct, or if there are no crops to be harvested due to ecological degradation?

It is safe to say that the twenty-first-century livestock industry does not promise a sustainable future for nature, humanity, and non-human animals. In nightmarish fantasies of dystopian imagination, human flesh is the food for unsustainable futures. While the cannibalism metaphor is ancient regarding its history in literary works, dystopian literature employs cannibalism as a reflection of ecologically oriented anxieties. As ecological concerns change, or add-up through time as a consequence of human activity, *The Wanting Seed* and *MEAT* employ the trope of cannibalism on the different ends of the spectrum. Tracing the literary representations of cannibalism from an ecocritical lens reveals the underlying reflections of ecological concerns, and subsequently it is possible to follow “connections among environmental conditions, economic modes of production, and cultural ideas through time” (Glotfelty xxi). As Glotfelty emphasises in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, adopting an ecocritical approach is to trace the aforementioned connections while answering the environmental crisis.

Accordingly, the first chapter of this study starts by highlighting the discussion of overpopulation, which is first credited with Thomas Malthus’s ideas in *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798). Even though Malthus was a controversial figure due to his ideas on the family size of the working class, his essay can be seen both as a solution and a warning against the uncontrolled growth of the human population. On the one hand, scholars argued that Malthus’s essay has proto-eugenicist notions. Geoffrey Gilbert, for instance, notes that “[Malthus’s] call for lower rates of reproduction (through ‘moral restraint’) among the lower classes was predicated on a belief that those classes were biologically inferior” (32). In this regard, Malthus’s call for lowering the reproduction rates is viewed with suspicion and dislike. On the other hand, his population principle is rooted in the idea that human reproduction might exceed the capacity to produce food, hence, the human population may eventually surpass the available food sources (Gilbert 12). To put it differently, the uncontrolled population grows at a geometric rate, while food production –specifically agricultural

production— can only be increased arithmetically. Therefore, an exponential increase in human population leads to scarcity in the foreseeable future (11). Malthusian premise thus maintains the notion of two conflicting forces: demographic growth and finite food supply.

Malthusianism flourished in the twentieth century. William Vogt's *Road to Survival* (1948), for instance, depicts the revival of Malthus's views on population. Similarly, *The Limits to Growth* (1972) written by "The Club of Rome," a neo-Malthusian school of thought, "including economists, social demographers, urban planners ... and natural scientists who claim that in the process of social expansion, ecological imbalances have occurred in the form of ... natural resource exhaustion and pollution of near-irreversible proportions" (Mellos 5). The group adopts an ecological sensibility and proposes a reduction of growth, thus offering ecological restoration. A team of researchers, including Donella and Dennis Meadows, Jorgen Randers, and William Behrens, published a report examining the finite supply in the face of increasing population growth, and investigating the long-term consequences of exponential demographic growth and industrialisation. This report is a pioneering work in the field of environmental sciences, as it identifies the long-term impact of human activities on the planet's ecosystems. Soil degradation is another issue that needs to be addressed, considering the use of DDTs in agriculture until it was banned in 1972 ("Chemical Factsheets"). In this regard, overpopulation and soil degradation may be viewed as the dominant discourse of the twentieth century in terms of environmental concerns. In this regard, the first chapter aims to show the parallels between twentieth-century eco-anxieties and Burgess's *The Wanting Seed* by tracing the cannibalism metaphor and reading the environmental realities of the text, arguing that the narrative reflects the aforementioned anxieties and employs 'cannibalism in extremis' motive as a satire.

The second chapter moves the focus to twenty-first century production mechanisms, namely, factory farming. Ecological concerns are escalating in relation to the extinction, pollution and ecological annihilation caused by capitalist mode of production. Factory farming and the concerns it encompasses—such as food security, extinction, pollution, and more—become the dominant discourse in twenty-first-century ecological concerns. For instance, studies have shown the concerns over meat safety, including challenges in controlling the ever-evolving pathogens and their

antibiotic resistance, posing potential risks of foodborne illnesses.³ In this regard, food security becomes a valid concern in connection with the meat industry in the twenty-first century. D'Lacey's *MEAT* portrays the discourse of eco-anxiety through the aforementioned contemporary ecological concerns. In this regard, revealing environmental realities and human-environment relationships in the narrative will align with contemporary ecological anxieties. Highlighting the environmental realities and policies that influenced both *The Wanting Seed* and *MEAT* will signify an industrial shift, in other words, an agential move towards the concept of industrialised cannibalism.

The study will conclude that the magnitude shift between the selected narratives represent the twenty-first century zeitgeist, indicating the gradual exacerbation of the earth's ecological systems. Also, this shift is an indicator of the twenty-first-century ecological anxieties tied to capitalist factory farming, and the idea of processed human flesh as the sole food source becomes a new cannibalism concept.

³ See Sofos's "Challenges to Meat Safety in the 21st Century" (2008), Mataragas's "Risk Profiles of Pork and Poultry Meat and Risk Ratings of Various Pathogen/Product Combinations" (2008), and Todd's "Epidemiology of Foodborne Diseases: A Worldwide Review" (2010).

CHAPTER ONE

Cannibalism as a Neo-Malthusian End-result and Eco-anxious Manifestations in *The Wanting Seed*

“He didn’t come to school,” he said. “His mother and dad cut him up and ate him.”

—Anthony Burgess, *The Wanting Seed*

British novelist Anthony Burgess is better known for his dystopian and satirical novel *A Clockwork Orange* (1962). The novel is set in future where the government tries to control violent youngsters through a behaviour modification technique. The experiments and supposed ‘cures,’ however, create a paradoxical situation for the protagonist; he transforms from extremely violent to utterly docile and cannot live a normal life. In the broadest sense, the major themes that *A Clockwork Orange* explores are free will and state control. Burgess’s dystopian vision portrays a bleak picture of a world where societal decay and moral degradation have reached alarming levels. It contains satirical elements acts as a social commentary. Another dystopian novel written by Burgess and published in the same year is *The Wanting Seed* and it similarly represents a distasteful vision of a future world ravaged by demographic expansion and environmental decay. The title of the novel implies sense of a lacking: the narrative portrays extreme food scarcity and hunger as well as the absence of individualism under the oppression of a despotic government. *The Wanting Seed* carries projections of the twentieth-century ecological concerns to dystopian imagination and portrays an overpopulated society where hunger eventually leads to cannibalism. In the narrative, anthropophagi highlights dehumanisation, concerns over demographic growth, and resource anxiety. This chapter thus argues that there is a parallelism between the cannibalism metaphor and twentieth-century eco-anxieties in *The Wanting Seed*. The argument is that through the cannibalism metaphor, the novel reflects neo-Malthusian concerns, i.e., exponential demographic growth and environmental degradation. Neo-Malthusianism is a term that aligns with twentieth century environmental discourse, echoing Malthus’s ideas on demographic growth and food scarcity. The neo-Malthusian premise can be seen as a manifestation of twentieth-century eco-anxieties. In that sense, interpreting neo-Malthusian concerns as the twentieth-century eco-

anxieties in *The Wanting Seed* potentially reveals the significance of eco-anxiety as an eco-emotional state.

The Wanting Seed is about an urban society which is struggling to survive in the face of scarcity and extinction. The plot is set in England, though a futuristic version of England where skyscrapers resemble a forest. The narrative depicts a totalitarian regime that enforces strict birth control measures and subverts sexuality to alleviate the population problem. On one hand, homosexuality is encouraged by the state to reduce the birth rates. Mr. homo, for instance, is a myth that is created by the totalitarian system, and the myth is taught at schools as a means of domination and control. Moreover, the state uses The Ministry of Infertility, which conducts research on how to exterminate fertility, and the Population Police as the instruments of control over the individuals. The state also controls food production and distribution, and the food is so scarce that it is rationed weekly. The plot revolves around the two main characters: Tristram Foxe, a history teacher, and his wife Beatrice-Joanna. The story starts with their son, Roger's death. As the state allows having one child only, alive or dead, Beatrice-Joanna escapes from the city in fear of the Population Police during her second pregnancy. Meanwhile, Tristram is falsely imprisoned during a food riot. Considering the societal dehumanisation process caused by extreme hunger, it is possible to say that the narrative first obscures cannibalism: hunger gradually escalates in the society due to ration cuts and the absence of natural food sources. Towards the end of the novel, cuts in rations, crop failures, and resulting hunger eventually make overpopulated society resort to cannibalism. In other words, Burgess depicts a dystopian society that becomes dehumanised due to hunger.

In her dissertation, Çevik similarly observes that Burgess's narrative portrays overpopulation followed by food scarcity and hunger as the central concern (108). While scrutinising the novel through an eco-psychological lens, Çevik highlights the relationship between demographic growth and its profound impact on human psyche. She indicates that overpopulation disturbs the peace of mind because it also means the "[t]he end of privacy, solitude, wilderness [and] permissivity is threatened" (117). Within this perspective, Burgess's narrative weaves together ecological and psychological impacts of overpopulation within the dystopian setting in the novel. According to Çevik, food scarcity that the novel represents is another issue within ecopsychological framework, shedding light on the lack of connection between human

and nature, while demonstrating the scale of environmental degradation (118). In this regard, Çevik's study broadens the perspective on analysing *The Wanting Seed* from an eco-psychological lens, reminding Roszak's principle about the interconnectedness of human mind and nature.

It is also useful to highlight Timothy Clark's exploration of overpopulation and disturbed nature themes in dystopian narratives, as he emphasises that works like Burgess's *The Wanting Seed* "highlight contemporary demographic and other trends" (22). The trends Clark identified can be interpreted as the concerns of the twentieth century, such as demographic growth, scarcity, and environmental degradation. In this vein, it is possible that *The Wanting Seed* emerges as a Malthusian allegory. Malthus's *Essay* focuses on the imbalances between human population and food, yet fails to encompass ecological factors of growth and production. Debates about rising population, along with technological and industrial expansion paved the way for Malthusianism to sprout in the twentieth century, especially after World War II. Neo-Malthusian theory emerged in the second half of the twentieth century considering not only the disequilibrium between demographic growth and food production but also population growth and nature's tolerance (Mellos 15). The neo-Malthusian scope highlights the problematic consumption of natural resources, for instance the industrial consumption of raw materials, and organic tolerance becomes the factor for determining the growth of population, technology, and industry (17). In this regard, neo-Malthusian premise comprises ecological concerns. Burgess's work constantly implies environmental degradation, portraying barren landscapes and widespread crop failures due to soil deterioration. Consequently, *The Wanting Seed* becomes a representation of neo-Malthusian discourse, incorporating anxieties about anthropogenic environmental degradation.

Similar to Clark and Çevik, Hubert Zapf also emphasises the representational value of the thematic underpinnings in *The Wanting Seed*, along with other twentieth-century dystopian narratives. Zapf notes that literary texts are in a complicated relationship with cultural systems, and literature is therefore a sensorium for societal concerns, reflecting the zeitgeist of a particular period of time (138). Western texts, especially from the 1960s and 1990s, represent the extreme limits of demographic growth, so much so that overpopulation "became a major theme in [dystopian] fiction ... inspiring whole series of novels such as Anthony Burgess's *The Wanting Seed*

(1962) ... Harry Harrison's *Make Room! Make Room!* (1962) ... [and] John Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968)" (Heise 74). Although intense population is a literary theme, the aforementioned dystopias do not necessarily address ecological concerns. Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar*, for instance, focuses on advanced technologies as a solution for survival and on the sociocultural concerns. Harrison's *Make Room! Make Room!* similarly represents a sociocultural emphasis, such as the huge gap between haves and have-nots, and the conflict between individuals and the masses. In this regard, the socioeconomic, cultural, and individual concerns can be seen as human-centred and, thus, problematic. As Heise notes, population growth that brings "social fears about the fate of the individual in urban society" concern only humans, but not the stress on the ecosystem and the other species; therefore, it is critiqued as 'anthropocentric' (79). The term anthropocentric refers to human-centred beliefs and interests, which are prioritised over the well-being of the environment. Regarding the escalating human agency over the planetary ecosystems, Eugene Filmore Stoermer and Paul Crutzen first coined the term Anthropocene to define the current geological epoch. In their article, Crutzen and Stoermer highlight the outcomes of the human activities, such as increasing population and exploitation of planetary resources, rapid urbanisation, fossil fuel burning, and resulting greenhouse emissions (17). In this regard, Anthropocene defines the current geological epoch that human activity has become a profound force on the planet (Clark 1). The term Anthropocene is then adopted by the humanities and has become a new description for all

the new contexts and demands – cultural, ethical, aesthetic, philosophical and political – of environmental issues that are truly planetary in scale, notably climate change, ocean acidification, effects of overpopulation, deforestation, soil erosion, overfishing and the general and accelerating degradation of ecosystems. (Clark 2)

Within this perspective, the Anthropocene emerges as a pivotal framework that encapsulates the various dimensions of environmental issues. Regarding Heise's criticism on the aforementioned narratives, i.e., the texts that reflect demographic growth, it is possible that their focus is on human-centred concerns, reflecting the Anthropocene zeitgeist. While these narratives address population growth and societal challenges, they lack a reflection of ecological issues.

On the one end of the spectrum, Burgess's *The Wanting Seed* may be interpreted as an anthropocentric narrative, particularly in its portrayal of political and individual concerns. The fate of the characters and the despotic practices of the

totalitarian regime in response to the overpopulation threat remain at the forefront of the narrative. Tristram's false imprisonment, his involuntary participation in the pseudo-war, and Beatrice-Joanna's escape from the city are the representations of the individual's fate in an overpopulated society. Towards the end of the first chapter, for instance, a food riot erupts, leading to Tristram's false accusation and imprisonment. In the second chapter, Tristram manages to escape but is compelled to participate in the pseudo-war, organised by the government to reduce the population. Meanwhile, Beatrice-Joanna's escape from the city is motivated by her pregnancy, which is frowned upon in Burgess's dystopia. The aforementioned trajectories, therefore, show the difficult consequences faced by the characters in the overpopulated dystopian society. This portrayal further highlights the narrative's anthropocentric focus. Moreover, the fall of the totalitarian system and its subsequent reconstruction based on the 'general politics' of groups and the people may be viewed as the representation of the agency of the regime of truth.⁴ In Foucault's view, truth is a product of social contexts and institutions such as the state, the media, or education systems play roles in establishing and maintaining the regime of truth within a society. In this regard, state control in *The Wanting Seed* establishes accepted norms to seize control over the individuals. Within this context, *The Wanting Seed* foregrounds a totalitarian dystopia that addresses concerns centred around the individuals, potentially interpreted as a depiction of anthropocentric concerns.

On the other end of the spectrum, the employment of cannibalism metaphor in Burgess's novel seems to be offering an alternative reading by which neo-Malthusian notions are visible. Diehl and Donnelly categorise the practice of cannibalism that took place during the times of famines, disasters, and wars as "cannibalism in extremis" which means eating human flesh in acute circumstances "for the purposes of survival, even if the culture of the individuals involved rejects [it]" (53). Burgess's *The Wanting Seed* obviously depicts the 'cannibalism in extremis' case. In the narrative, hunger dramatically escalates due to the absence of natural food sources in connection to soil degradation and exponential population growth that leads the society to resort to cannibalism. When considering the underlying reasons for the 'cannibalism in extremis' situation, neo-Malthusian concerns related to demographic growth and

⁴ See Michel Foucault's *Power* (2002).

environmental degradation become evident in the novel. In other words, the novel depicts an environmental catastrophe in relation to soil deterioration, exponential population growth, and extinction. In this regard, the cannibalism metaphor may be seen as the satirical solution to the anthropogenic environmental degradation that the narrative portrays, reflecting a neo-Malthusian discourse.

Building on the abovementioned perspectives, Burgess's work resonates with the challenges that characterised the twentieth century, reflecting eco-psychological and social elements. Burgess's narrative therefore encapsulates the concern over overpopulation, environmental degradation and societal breakdown. Transitioning from these perspectives, the employment of the cannibalism metaphor becomes a neo-Malthusian end-result in *The Wanting Seed*. The argument is that the neo-Malthusian concerns in the novel highlight eco-anxieties prevalent in the twentieth century. Through this lens, the analysis provides an exploration of the interplay between environmental degradation and eco-psychological perspectives, offering insights into the relevance of eco-anxieties in discussions about humanity's relationship with the environment within the context of the narrative.

It is possible to say that the narrative conceals cannibalism until the third chapter, despite its repeated foreshadowing. As mentioned, the story begins with Roger's death at the Ministry of Agriculture, in other words Phosphorus Reclamation Department. One of the ministry officials sings a song that alludes to anthropophagi: "My adorable Fred:/He's so, so sweet,/From the crown of his head/To the soles of his feet./He's my meat" (Burgess 3). It is stated in the novel that the song has recently become popular among youth. In a sense, the song initiates the idea of eating meat at the beginning of the narrative, yet 'he' stands for eating human flesh. Another instance that foreshadows cannibalism is when Beatrice-Joanna daydreams about the taste of meat: "She wondered vaguely ... what meat had tasted like. Her mouth recollected only the salt of live human skin in a purely amatory context – lobes, fingers, lips" (85). Within this context, the only instance when Beatrice-Joanne is close to 'eating meat' is during intercourse. Human skin, therefore, theoretically replaces the meat, and that can be viewed as the narrative's foreshadowing of cannibalism.

The onset of extreme hunger within the society is first depicted in the second part of the novel. It starts with an immediate reference to insufficient rations and

hunger: “Tristram Foxe sat at midnight breakfast ... [h]e was trying to eat a sort of paper cereal moistened with synthelac, and – though hungry at all hours these days, the rations having been cut considerably – he found it very difficult to spoon down wet fibrous horror” (Burgess 57). It is important to note here that the decline in natural food sources is visible, but societal dehumanisation begins and escalates in the third chapter. It begins with mentioning societal transformation into cannibalism due to extreme scarcity and famine, though indirect to the reader: Llewelyn and Dymphna, Beatrice-Joanna’s nephews, say that one of the schoolboys called Jim Whittle was eaten by their parents:

He didn’t come to school ... His mother and dad cut him up and ate him ... It’s true. A lot of us went by their house coming home from school ... They had a big pan sort of thing on the stove, and it was bubbling away like anything. Some of the other kids went in and they saw. (Burgess 123)

Even though parents’ eating their children evokes enough horror, the major societal transformation is depicted in two ways. First, the news reported an instance of cannibalism when a middle-aged man was publicly killed and eaten: “... Thomas Wharton, going home from work shortly after midnight, was set upon by youth. These knifed him, stripped him, spitted him, basted him, carved him, served him - all openly and without shame...” (Burgess 130). This radio announcement indicates the level of madness that circulates among the society due to excessive hunger. Then, Tristram escapes from the prison and encounters bonfires where people are boiled and cooked. Due to extreme hunger, Tristram joins a group of thirty men and women who round a barbecue and “[h]e sucked in a steaming spoonful. Rich, rich, an oily liquid in which were suspended gobbets of smoking pliant rubbery stuff. Meat. He had read about meat. Ancient literature was full of meat-guzzling - Homer, Dickens, Priestley...” (165). In this manner, the societal dehumanisation is explicitly elucidated to the reader in the third chapter. Cannibalism, however, is twofold in the narrative. Cannibalism in extremis motif is first applied due to the absence of food sources. In the final part, the narrative then offers a dark irony, which is the idea of tinned human flesh. Processed human flesh becomes the norm, so much so that even a name is given: “The bully-tin had a Chinese label ... The Romanized transliteration was clear at the bottom of the label. Ripe, soft, properly cooked man” (Burgess 250). ‘Bully’ therefore becomes the name for the tinned human flesh in the novel.

The cannibalism metaphor can be seen as a representation of the breakdown of social order and the destruction of moral norms in the novel. It also serves as the dire consequence of overpopulation and environmental deterioration. Soil degradation, for instance, can be considered the primary cause of source depletion in *The Wanting Seed*. As mentioned, this study posits that the cannibalism metaphor serves as a reflection of a satirical solution to an outside threat, idea of identity consumption, and ideological assumptions towards class differences, encapsulating different zeitgeists in literary texts. In this regard, it is possible to draw parallels between neo-Malthusian concerns and *The Wanting Seed*, and read the novel as a neo-Malthusian narrative. As articulated, neo-Malthusianism embodies environmental concerns, considering a total decline in natural sources due to various growth trends, such as industrial development and population increase. Even though the narrative does not specifically represent industrial growth, overpopulation is the central issue. Hunger circulates among the society due to insufficient resources to feed the overcrowded society. Within this perspective, the novel centres on overpopulation and environmental degradation, which is made evident by the representation of soil deterioration. Cannibalism, therefore, can be argued as a satirical response to the anthropogenic environmental degradation that the narrative embodies. Human flesh becomes the ultimate food, and that emphasises the catastrophic consequences of exploiting natural sources at an increasing rate. The novel unfolds the ultimate consequences of anthropogenic soil deterioration and unprecedented demographic growth by employing cannibalism. Resurgence of eighteenth-century Malthusian ideas in the twentieth century, which is encapsulated in neo-Malthusianism, embodies an environmental discourse that addresses concerns about environmental degradation stemming from various factors. In other words, it comprises ecological concerns focusing on the collective impacts of population growth and human progress. Paul Ehrlich, Donella Meadows, and William Vogt are some of the scholars whose studies show the neo-Malthusian premise, i.e., ecological concerns.

In explicating the relationship between the demographic growth and environmental degradation, the biologist Paul Ralph Ehrlich highlights “doubling times” that means “the time necessary for the population to double in size” (Ehrlich 4). The agricultural revolution and advances in disease control significantly contributed to the doubling of the human population. As Ehrlich writes, “[in] the

decade 1940-1950 the death rate declined 46% in Puerto Rico, 43% in Formosa, and 23% in Jamaica” (16). Moreover, Ehrlich notes on the ecological consequences of exponential population growth by focusing on agricultural effects of increased food production. First and foremost, he sheds light on the biodiversity loss that leads to soil degradation. Pesticides, for instance, “reduce the diversity of life in the soil ... soil is not just crashed rock and decaying organic matter. It contains myriads of tiny plants, animals, and microbes, which are essential to its fertility” (Ehrlich 31). Biodiversity loss in the soil, therefore, causes the ecosystem to become less stable. Furthermore, producing more food involves clearing forests to gain additional land (Ehrlich 29). Even today, it is known that deforestation due to livestock production is a pivotal concern for sustainable futures. BBC has recently explained that the highest deforestation rates have been recorded in Amazon rainforest in 2022 due to clearing more land for the livestock (Cursino). In alignment with Ehrlich’s ecological considerations, which is the impact of exponential demographic growth on agriculture and the Earth’s ecological systems, encompass broad environmental consequences, and recent observations underline concerns for sustainable futures. Ehrlich’s concept of doubling times and population growth mirrors the societal collapse depicted in the novel, where cannibalism becomes a grotesque solution.

The use of pesticides in agriculture is another factor drawing criticism due to its potential for soil deterioration. In line with this, Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) should also be highlighted here in relation to neo-Malthusianism, as it bears notions that are akin to the theory, namely the environmental harm which is caused by pesticide and fertiliser use. In “The Affective Legacy of *Silent Spring*” Alex Lockwood emphasises that Carson breaks the boundary between the nature writing and scientific data. Furthermore, Carson’s writing alters “‘the barrier of public indifference’ to environmental degradation” (qtd. in Lockwood 124). Indeed, Carson’s work is effective: it attracts worldwide attention in its era and causes a major policy change in terms of the abolition of the use of DDTs in agriculture (Lockwood 129). For Carson, the use of pesticides is humanity’s war against nature. Carson writes that in the twentieth century, especially

[s]ince the mid-1940s over 200 chemicals have been created for use in killing insects, weeds, rodents, and other organisms described in the modern vernacular as ‘pests’; and they are sold under several thousand different brand names. These sprays, dusts, and aerosols are now applied almost universally to farms, gardens, forests, and homes

– nonselective chemicals that have the power to kill every insect, the ‘good’ and the ‘bad.’ (Carson 13)

The use of chemicals in agriculture is vainglorious to Carson because the insect also become immune to the pesticides, “hence a deadlier one has always to be developed – and then a deadlier one than that” (13). *Silent Spring* is thus vehement in explaining ecologically oriented concerns related to soil health in the twentieth century.

In *The Wanting Seed*, the notion of soil deterioration appears frequently. In the first chapter, when Beatrice-Joanna is grieving her son’s death, the narrative begins with an immediate reference to soil degradation: “Another dollop of phosphorus pentoxide for dear old Mother Earth. Rather less than half a kilo, I’d say. Still, every little helps” (4). Phosphorus is a plant nutrient in the soil, and its deficiency causes plants and crops to stunt and die (Chakraborty and Prasad). The need to help soil suggests that its quality has deteriorated. Similarly, the narrative reinforces the concept of helping the soil in the second chapter, where food riots took place. The riots end with the burial of four thousand people in a common grave that supplies “plenty of phosphorus pentoxide” (Burgess 110). While the narrative does not explicitly explain the reasons for ‘helping’ the soil, it can be interpreted that *The Wanting Seed* shows a soil figure whose flora is degraded.

In the novel, one reason for soil degradation is the disruption of the intricate relationship between the Earth’s vegetation and the complex web of life within the soil. This especially clear when the narrative focuses on wide-range crop failures.

... sickness of the world’s grain crops seemed to ride, like an aircraft, above the weather. It was a blight never known before, its configuration under the microscope not cognate with any other pattern of disease, and it proved resistant to all the poisons the Global Agricultural Authority could devise. But it was not only rice, maize, barley, oats and wheat that were affected: fruit fell off the trees and the hedges, stricken with a sort of gangrene; potatoes and other roots became messes of black and blue mud. (109)

Soil deterioration is gradually depicted in the novel, which might create a sense of transition towards environmental decay. First, wheat-blight and failure of rice-crops occur due to an unknown reason (Burgess 66). Then, the narrative depicts an uncontrolled disease, in which many of the scarce sources are affected. On the one hand, Global Agriculture Authority’s failure in devising a solution (a poison) echoes Rachel Carson’s critique of vainglorious efforts in *Silent Spring*. It seems that the system cannot find a solution to soil deterioration, and the super-resistant disease may

be interpreted as the consequence of what Carson notes as “chemical warfare,” that is, synthetic chemicals created in laboratories to eliminate the insect (17). On the other hand, considering Darwin’s theory of survival of the fittest, this ‘chemical warfare’ actually creates more diseases as super immune races of bacteria and insects become more destructive (Carson 13). George Agrios similarly writes on plant diseases covering an extensive historical and biological body of research in *Plant Pathology* (2004). Agrios emphasises that the control over the plant pathology increased with the twentieth-century developments in science and technology, for instance the use of electron microscope and the use of chemical pesticides aimed at controlling plant diseases, such as blight, which is caused by bacteria, fungi, or viruses (45). Even though food productivity was increased, and financial loss prevented, the chemical pesticides, such as DDT, chlorinated hydrocarbons, and especially the ones containing mercury, were banned in the mid-1960s due to their adverse effects on soil, plants, animals, and humans (48). In parallel with the twentieth-century environmental concerns over air pollution and industrial wastes, he also notes that pesticide use becomes another public concern, and it gained voice through Carson’s *Silent Spring* (47). Within this perspective, it is clear that soil deterioration becomes a public matter in the mid twentieth century. As Glotfelty explains, after *Silent Spring* was written, it led to “a wave of anxiety” that spread across America, and then Europe (qtd. in Lockwood 129). It is perhaps this anxiety that arose the public concerns over pesticides. In this regard, it is possible to argue that *The Wanting Seed*’s depiction of soil degradation aligns with the ecological concerns of that era. Within neo-Malthusian context, the novel embodies the twentieth-century concerns on pesticide use and soil deterioration. With reference to Vogt, the elimination of insects potentially maximise food output to meet the needs of an overpopulated society as they are considered the ‘limiting factors’ in food production (21). However, it also means putting pressure on soil’s carrying capacity. Burgess’s dystopia therefore depicts a future where natural sources are exhausted, so much so that the land cannot feed the excessive population, and even the pesticides or fertilisers are no longer effective in agricultural production because of the environmental collapse.

The theme of soil degradation indicates a decline in environmental health, and it parallels neo-Malthusian concerns, reflecting on the consequences of demographic increase and environmental decline. The cannibalism metaphor symbolises the

outcome of environmental degradation, where human flesh becomes the ultimate food source due to scarcity of resources. Cannibalism critiques and mirrors real-world concerns over the current and future state of the environment in the novel. Furthermore, exploration of cannibalism as a satirical solution to hunger underscores the extreme measures people may contemplate in the face of environmental catastrophe, adding to the sense of existential dread that characterise eco-anxiety. While soil deterioration serves as a poignant reflection of neo-Malthusian concerns, thus the eco-anxious tone, novel's depiction of synthetic food production and consumption also becomes a vivid representation of the depletion of natural food sources.

The research conducted by Jonathan Foley and others shows that even though modern agricultural practices are successful in terms of increasing food production, they also cause wide-range soil deterioration, for instance, "increasing fertilizer use has led to the degradation of water quality in many regions" and irrigated soil become salinized, causing a worldwide 1.5 million hectares of soil loss (570). Modern agricultural production provides short-term increase in food production, yet causes long-term anthropogenic ecosystem degradation (571). In line with this, *The Wanting Seed* portrays the long-term anthropogenic ecosystem degradation through the portrayal of soil deterioration, intermingled with dystopian imagination. While the novel shows degraded ecosystem through soil deterioration, absence of natural resources and failure of food production are depicted by the synthetically produced food. In the first part of the novel, The Ministry of Synthetic Food, which is an instrument of the totalitarian system, is represented as the unit that produces and supplies the society. The representation of food, however, may create a sense of alienation in the reader, regarding the synthetic replacement of almost all the food that the society consumes. In other words, all the food that Burgess's dystopian society consumes is artificially produced:

Beatrice-Joanna served him with a cutlet of reconstituted vegetable dehydrate, cold... Then she gave him a slice of synthelac pudding. 'Have a nut?' she offered when he'd finished. A nut was a nutrition unit, creation of the Ministry of Synthetic Food. (Burgess 51)

This quote illustrates a typical dinner that Beatrice-Joanna and Tristram have with synthelacs. The dramatic alteration in food representation, therefore, has the potential to evoke a sense of uncanniness. The narrative also creates the same alteration in the

part where Beatrice-Joanna goes shopping for synthelacs. It is obvious that shopping is quite different in Burgess's dystopia: "Beatrice-Joanna received and paid for two blocks of brown vegetable dehydrate (legumin), a large white tin of synthelac, compressed sheets of cereal, a blue bottle of 'nuts' or nutrition units" (85). Moreover, the narrative portrays a near-vegetarian world where people do not even need their teeth, instead, they use plastic teeth because there is no available food to cut and chew via teeth (Burgess 71). The novel's alteration of everyday activities like having dinner, shopping, and eating, can evoke uncanny feelings, leading to alienation in the audience. This sense of alienation may be explained by the absence of natural food sources. The reliance on synthetic substitutes like nutrition units, blocks, reconstituted vegetables, and synthelacs symbolises the depletion of natural sources. Within neo-Malthusian context, the twentieth century witnessed growing public and scientific concerns over environmental degradation (Agrios 48). Burgess's dystopia therefore reflects environmental degradation through depicting an infertile soil that results in total absence of natural sources. Furthermore, the representation of synthetic food underscores the sense of environmental deterioration in the narrative, mirroring ecological anxieties of the era.

The ecologist William Vogt focuses on the factors contributing to soil degradation as well. He introduces the term "the biotic potential" to address the productive capacity of soil (21). The biotic potential here stands for the 'carrying capacity' of soil. The carrying capacity, within this context, refers to the soil's productive capacity, and its tolerance in the face of human activities. In *Road to Survival*, Vogt critiques the destructive and exploitative methods used in food production "where human populations are so large that available land cannot decently feed ... them" (31). In this regard, if food demand exceeds the soil's carrying capacity, it strains land ecology. Vogt places particular emphasis on the role of pesticides and overgrazing as key contributors to land degradation. The use of DDTs and other pesticides in agriculture is to eliminate one of the limiting factors, which is the insect. The procedure, however, destroys the soil's dynamo, namely its flora. Likewise, overgrazing devastates the soil flora, diminishing its capacity for self-renewal, e.g., affecting water tables and decreasing flood control (Vogt 28-30). Vogt's emphasis on the abovementioned factors highlight the interconnectedness of agricultural practices and the ecological wellbeing of the planet. Building on this concept, *The Wanting Seed*

mirrors the results of exceeding soil's carrying capacity. As the narrative portrays, the disequilibrium between 'human carrying capacity' and soil's productive capacity, as well as the attempt to increase the productivity with chemical pesticides and fertilisers, eventually lead to soil degradation, and hunger. Excessive demographic growth is the central concern in novel, as the "...planetary survival dependent on the balance of population and a scientifically calculated minimal food supply..." (Burgess 53). Andreu Domingo categorises the dystopian texts that portray concerns over demographic growth as "demodystopias" (725). Domingo relates the birth of demodystopias with the population explosion after World War II, specifically between 1950 and 1975 with "[b]oth developed countries experiencing a baby boom and developing countries that were rapidly reducing their mortality..." (728). The birth of demodystopias may be in parallel with what Ehrlich means by the victory over diseases and the agricultural revolution. One notable instance in the novel that emphasises the overpopulation issue is the occurrence of 'extermination sessions,' which is the name of pseudo-wars (Burgess 276). As Clark emphasises, issue of demographic growth may produce extremist scenarios in dystopian works (22). In the case of *The Wanting Seed*, the novel establishes a governmental agency called The Global Population Limitation Authority. This agency and the War Department orchestrate wars to decrease the population and "[t]hey don't, of course, actually give orders in the military sense. They merely report on population in relation to food supply ... You see, what other way is there of keeping the population down?" (Burgess 278). *The Wanting Seed* becomes the prospect of a demographic dystopia that human carrying capacity exceeds the available food sources, that requires extreme solutions such as extermination sessions and cannibalism.

In this vein, the novel's use of cannibalism can be seen as the end-result of the neo-Malthusian premise, depicting that 'human carrying capacity' exceeds the 'biotic potential,' and that results in ecological deterioration. Human carrying capacity broadly means the maximum number of individuals that the planetary natural resources, i.e., soil's carrying capacity, can provide. In *How Many People Can the Earth Support?* (1995), Joel Ephraim Cohen writes on some case studies in the twentieth century, focusing on the human carrying capacity regarding the potential food sources. In 1924, for instance, Albrecht Penck made an equation "that relate[s] food production and population density" (165). This equation originates from the idea

that natural resources, specifically food are finite; hence, the Earth's carrying capacity, or the number of people it can sustain, is limited (166). With calculations he found that almost sixteen billion people can inhabit the Earth by the most extreme limits. However, his equation failed to measure "nutritional requirements, maximal possible productivity of food per unit of area or intensity of cultivation" (170). In 1967, another calculation was made considering the net carbohydrate need of an individual, and the available amount of carbohydrate for consumption. This calculation only showed how many people "could live *from* the earth; not *on* the earth" (emphasis in the original), thus, the result was far-fetched, that is, a hundred and forty-six billion people could inhabit the planet (qtd. in Cohen 175). It is important to note that this study does not consider problems of providing infrastructure, soil's maximum productivity, and preventing ecological damage (177). In 1970, another case study that worked on the optimal human population stated that the ideal world population is less than one billion. It considered the food production rates and variety of raw materials to feed the population (179). Cohen suggests that the research did not take technology and agricultural industry into account. He concludes that with the present agricultural and industrial capacity (of the twentieth century), the supportable population is between two and four billion maximum (183). Lastly, FAO explored the potential carrying capacities in 1983. FAO calculations considered demographic structure by age, sex, and nutritional needs (Cohen 206). The essential point highlighted in the FAO report is that the soil's carrying capacity is anticipated to diminish in the 2000s due to factors such as salinisation, pollution, and nutrient depletion (204). In this way, the study points out different projections for each region of the world, changing from 4.4 billion to 13.7 billion people (207-208).

It is clear that when demographic growth, i.e., human carrying capacity exceeds nature's tolerance, or soil's carrying capacity, it creates ecological stress, resulting in ecological degradation. As in the case of the novel, soil degradation can be seen as the result of exceeding and stretching the limits of soil's productive capacity, which results in hunger and subsequently, cannibalism. Interpreting the cannibalism metaphor in *The Wanting Seed* as the embodiment of a neo-Malthusian nightmare paves the way for understanding it as a response to twentieth-century ecological anxieties. Both neo-Malthusianism and eco-anxiety share a common premise, that is, they arise from the deep-seated concerns about the environmental deterioration, highlighting the potential

and real threats to sustainable futures and the planet's ecosystem. The term eco-anxiety is used to define an eco-psychological emotional response to environmental degradation. Cannibalism as a neo-Malthusian end-result similarly becomes a stark response to the twentieth-century ecological concerns, or anxieties, which can find resonance in the narrative. It is because the term eco-anxiety can be associated with both the apparent irreversible impacts of environmental deterioration, akin to neo-Malthusian emphasis on degradation of the natural environment. Referring to Pihkala, eco-anxiety stands for explaining a wide-range spectrum of ecological challenges ("Anxiety and the Ecological Crisis" 8). Therefore, the neo-Malthusian concerns and their profound implications on ecosystems may evoke eco-anxieties in the present day.

Albrecht notes that the necessary vocabulary to describe the new set of emotions on psychoterratic states arise during the Industrial Revolution, and these "emotions become focused on notions of growth and progress that privilege human life at the expense of all other life." Privileging human life creates a separation process, that is, humanity becomes the "Earth destroyers, or terraphthorans" in the Anthropocene (69). The separation progress Albrecht writes about can be exemplified within eco-psychological lens. As Fisher emphasises, "[e]copsychology ... essentially says "we too are nature." It is a way of describing the interconnectedness between human psyche and the natural world (7). Fisher's perspective, in a sense, recognises humanity as an integral part of a larger ecological system. Humanity's mental separation, or recognising the natural world as a merely a resource to be utilised, creates a widening gap between humanity's industrial progress and environmental deterioration. Similarly, neo-Malthusian theorists foreground the capital expansion and utilisation of raw materials, as well as fossil fuels and mineral reserves, all of which are the factors that create various ecological distresses (Mellos 20). *The Limits to Growth* by The Club of Rome matches perfectly with this argument. As mentioned, the report evaluates growth processes from various perspectives and concludes a pessimistic outcome, that is, future sustainability is at risk considering the parallel progress of environmental degradation and capital accumulation (48). As the report stresses, the prevailing growth trends will inevitably cause a sudden collapse. The report concludes that

[i]f the present growth trends in world population, industrialisation, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years. The most probable

result will be a rather sudden and controllable decline in both population and industrial capacity. (Meadows et al. 23)

Referring to Fisher's perspective, neo-Malthusian thought, aligning with the scientific calculations of The Club of Rome, may highlight the separation of human psyche and the degraded environment. The report suggests a human tendency to view nature solely as a resource for exploitation, and thus it contributes to the widening gap between economic growth and environmental degradation. Stemming from this perspective, *The Wanting Seed* shows eco-anxieties symptomised by the narrative elements such as vast soil degradation, disruption of the biotic potential, and extreme hunger. These narrative elements may illustrate the repercussions of such trends, shedding light on what can be called as the manifestation of the twentieth-century eco-anxieties in the novel.

Beyond these narrative elements, neo-Malthusian thought and eco-anxiety share another significant common ground, that is, the notion of 'ontological insecurity' that they bear. The American Psychological Association (APA) published a report that reviews the effects of climate change on mental health, and the report defines eco-anxiety as the "chronic fear of environmental doom" (Clayton 68). Feeling of helplessness, fear, and despair exemplify the source of anxiety when confronting with the ecological realities (27). Burgess's work not only resonates with ecological anxieties in relation to soil deterioration and exceeding the carrying capacities but also through the notion of ontological insecurity and the sense of panic in the face of the environmental deterioration.

On the one hand, as Pihkala emphasises, eco-anxiety can be signalled by various forms, such as pathological and non-pathological, social, and existential (Pihkala, "Anxiety and the Ecological Crisis" 2). In this regard, 'eco-anxiety' can refer to the non-pathological emotional state of an individual. However, it may have an impact on mental health, thus causing pathological forms of anxiety to originate. Depression, for instance, is closely related to anxiety, and the impact of ecological crisis is prevalent among the observations (Pihkala, "Anxiety and the Ecological Crisis" 8). Another manifestation of eco-anxiety is on the social level, related to the fears of an individual. With reference to Pierre Bourdieu, Pihkala emphasises the changes in the social order, that is, "disruption of the ecological habitus" eventually leads to social anxiety (qtd. in Pihkala, "Anxiety and the Ecological Crisis" 5). The

idea of disruption of social order is in parallel with disruption of ecological habitat, which can be relevant considering the displacement due to anthropogenic climate change and environmental disasters (UNHCR). Pihkala also links eco-anxiety with existential anxiety, considering the ‘ontological insecurity’ that ecological crises create in individuals (6). Ontological security can be seen as the “basic trust in the continuity of everyday life, and in the sense of self and other that maintains that continuity” (Adams 110). In *Ecological Crisis, Sustainability and the Psychosocial Subject* (2016), Matthew Adams notes that the need for ontological security is universal, and intrinsic for humans; therefore, anthropogenic ecological crisis encompasses a threat to the taken-for-granted everyday realities. In other words, the ecological crises break down the “... implicit trust in some of the foundations of late modern society, including consumerism, individual freedom, capitalism, [and] liberal democracy,” thus creating many uncertainties and establishing a base for ontological insecurity (112). These foundations provide ‘security’ and ‘certainty’ in daily life. However, environmental crisis undermines the aforementioned foundations of ‘modern’ life and creates ontological anxieties that Pihkala links with eco-anxiety.

On the other hand, neo-Malthusian thought similarly reflects the notion of ‘ontological insecurity’ through its focus on environmental degradation. The theory posits that rising consumption of natural resources amid population growth eventually leads to scarcity and potentially extinction, thus threatening the foundations of modern society. Neo-Malthusianism therefore underscores the fundamental instability of the physical environment, exacerbating ontological insecurity by threatening the continuity of life through ecological crises. As a neo-Malthusian narrative, *The Wanting Seed* embodies the notion of ontological insecurity. Beatrice-Joanna talks to the sea in the depths of despair, which illustrates the ecological degradation.

She had a mad intuitive notion that the earth was dying, that the sea would soon be the final repository of life ... ‘Sea’, she said quietly, for this promenade was as crowded as the street she had just left, ‘sea, help us. We’re sick, O sea. Restore us to health, restore us to life. (15)

The sense of despair is noticeable through her asking for help from a non-human entity, though in vain because the ecological systems are at the edge of collapse in the narrative. The ontological insecurity felt by the character may be regarded as her eco-anxious state. It is therefore possible to say that the narrative’s depiction of ontological insecurity is a manifestation of eco-anxiety. Moreover, both Tristram and Beatrice-

Joanna feel a constant sense of unease and panic, emotions that stem from ontological insecurity. Tristram, for instance, experiences a mood swing during his lecture, he starts shouting, “[t]here is irrationality, there is panic. When the reason goes, the brute steps in. Brutality!” (Burgess 19). In a sense, the novel foreshadows the chaos that unfolds towards the end. Tristram also experiences an inescapable dread when he forcefully joins the ‘extermination session.’ As The Global Population Limitation Authority mischievously arranges pseudo-wars to reduce the human population, Tristram feels that “it’s all sheer bloody madness” (277). Beatrice-Joanna, on the other hand, feels an existential confusion throughout the storyline. Her watching, thinking and listening to the sea is a concurrent scene in the novel: In part two, before Beatrice-Joanna goes to the store to receive the weekly rations, she thinks about “sand-hoppers, mermaids’ purses, sea gooseberries, cuttlebones, wrasse, blenny and bullhead, tern, gannet and herring gull” (85). The repetition of such scenes throughout the narrative highlights Beatrice-Joanna’s deep engagement with nature, yet her existential confusion is visible as she searches for a form of escapism from the dire ecological circumstances portrayed in the novel. In this regard, the emotional states of the main characters are the outcome of the sense of ontological insecurity, and that represents the eco-anxious tone in the novel.

The shared ground between neo-Malthusian thought and eco-anxiety is evident in the sense of ontological insecurity, recognising the disruption caused by environmental crises to the foundations of modern-day life. *The Wanting Seed* reflects the shared concern, contributing to an understanding of the relationship between humanity and the psychological toll of the environmental degradation. As there were no terms to describe the emotional states that arise from environmental degradation in the mid-twentieth century, it is possible to interpret neo-Malthusian concerns as the twentieth-century eco-anxieties from today’s perspective. Narrative elements in Burgess’s dystopia are therefore the manifestations of the accumulation of negative emotional states amid environmental deterioration.

Even though the term eco-anxiety is used decades after neo-Malthusianism, *The Wanting Seed* depicts the eco-anxious state of the era by employing cannibalism as a satirical response to anthropogenic ecological degradation. In other words, cannibalism can be interpreted as a satirical response to the twentieth-century eco-anxieties based on neo-Malthusian concerns. For this reason, the novel differs from

the totalitarian dystopias written before it, such as Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). *The Wanting Seed* foregrounds a totalitarian dystopia that represents individual and political concerns, yet the use of cannibalism is a provocative metaphor that undermines the sanctity of human flesh, thus transforming human bodies into the ultimate food source. In this regard, the narrative links cannibalism with environmental degradation and overpopulation, namely eco-anxieties of the era. The cannibalism metaphor and the notion of eco-anxiety are actually at the end of the same spectrum, which can be seen through the idea that both are responses to environmental crises. On one hand, eco-anxiety is a response that highlights the profound psychological impacts of ecological degradation on individuals. On the other hand, cannibalism is a response to the twentieth-century ecological concerns that the narrative portrays. Therefore, cannibalism and eco-anxiety are both responses, and the former symbolising the latter in Burgess's dystopian narrative, considering the twentieth-century neo-Malthusian concerns. Ultimately, cannibalism becomes the literary prospect of eco-anxiety that responds to the twentieth-century environmental anxieties.

Interpreting cannibalism in *The Wanting Seed* as the portrayal of twentieth-century eco-anxieties leads to rethinking eco-anxiety as a pro-active response rather than a reactive response. Pihkala notes on anxiety theories and writes that the key point is the aspect of uncertainty. It means that the feeling of threat creates uncertainty "about its exact nature or time" ("Eco-Anxiety, Climate Change, and the Coronavirus" 11). It is important here to emphasise that this kind of anxiety can manifest itself in relation to ecological crises, which create eco-anxieties. Charlie Kurth, an anxiety theorist, notes on the notion of 'practical anxiety' in relation to eco-anxieties. Practical anxiety, to Kurth, is the "unease that we experience in the face of a novel or difficult choice ... [and] it operates as an alarm that helps attune us to the challenges and uncertainty of our situation" (Kurth and Pihkala 5). Drawing from this perspective, Kurth and Pihkala show the positive correlation between eco-anxiety and practical anxiety in connection to ecologically oriented risk evaluation (6). The sense of attunement and ecological risk evaluation, then, generate cognitive engagement for the anthropogenic environmental challenges and uncertainties. In this regard, 'practical eco-anxiety,' as Kurth writes, becomes a valuable eco-emotional state and "it tends to be concerned with decisions or issues that one currently faces or that are on the

horizon” (7). Eco-anxieties, therefore, act as warning signs that direct one’s attention to ecology, creating a forward-looking sense, thus creating pro-active responses and building heightened awareness and engagement with anthropogenic ecological degradation (Kurth and Pihkala 7). In line with this, understanding the twentieth-century eco-anxieties that *The Wanting Seed* represents may initiate a valuable proactive response through rethinking and evaluating the environmental realities of the twentieth century.

With reference to the discussion in this chapter, it may be concluded that the cannibalism metaphor in Burgess’s dystopian fiction highlights the Zeitgeist, that is, the twentieth-century eco-anxieties. As the term eco-anxiety is not a direct reference to encompass environmental problems, rather it is a term that describes the effects of ecological crises on individuals’ psyche, it should be interpreted cautiously and should not be confused with similar emotional states of the Anthropocene. The essence of eco-anxieties, however, coincides with neo-Malthusian concerns of the twentieth century. Therefore, understanding environmental concerns of an era equipped with the lens of eco-emotional states of the Anthropocene paves the way for reading the cannibalism metaphor in *The Wanting Seed* as the manifestation of eco-anxieties. Supported by scientific calculations, the data of neo-Malthusian theory, and the studies of scholars like Paul Ehrlich and Rachel Carson, this manifestation highlights the sense of engagement and awareness towards ecological realities. That is to say, accelerating anthropogenic ecological degradation may lead to the collapse of ecological systems in a not-too-distant and scientifically calculable future and cause people to eat themselves like piranhas in a fishbowl, as criticised in *The Wanting Seed*.

CHAPTER TWO

The Interplay Between Cannibalism and Capitalism in D'Lacey's *MEAT* and Ecological Annihilation

I am meat.

—Joseph D'Lacey, *MEAT*

Joseph D'Lacey is a British author whose works often explore dark themes, such as eco-horror, environmental destruction, and humanity's condition at the edge of extinction. *Garbage Man* (2009), for instance, represents a post-apocalyptic world that is stricken by plagues and ecological degradation. Humanity's exploitative force over the environment plays a significant role in the novel's background. *Black Feathers* (2013) is another work of fiction by D'Lacey that explores environmental decay and its consequences for humanity. D'Lacey's other notable novel, *MEAT* (2008), resonates with vast-scale ecological catastrophes. The novel portrays a massive land degradation and extinction event that all the Earth's food resources become extinct. As a way of survival, *MEAT* offers a dark satire, that is, cultivating 'human cattle' instead of livestock. The novel portrays a factory farming industry that first produces human cattle and then utilises their flesh, not only for meat but also milk, desserts, cosmetics, and electricity. This process involves processing human flesh, blood, intestines, and faeces. In a sense, the novel shows the idea of 'cannibalism in extremis' considering the representation of the environmental decay. *MEAT*, however, employs a novel form of cannibalism in which human bodies are not only an instrument of survival, but also utilised and sold. From this perspective, the notion of cannibalism is rather capitalised. The 'industrialised' form of cannibalism is the end-product of ecological annihilation, which mirrors twenty-first century ecological anxieties tied to factory farming. There is a mutual influence between environmental decay and factory farming's environmental impact. Forest clearance to develop livestock feed area, biodiversity loss and resulting mass extinction, and the dietary preferences favouring animal product consumption, for instance, are some of the ecological stressors linked to factory farming. In this regard, D'Lacey's *MEAT* projects eco-anxieties related to the above-mentioned environmental stressors and offers a

radical satire, that is, the quasi-sustainable way of living while capitalising on human flesh.

MEAT is a dark dystopian satire set in Abyrne, a post-apocalyptic town surrounded by an immense wasteland. The town is in a state of decay, that is, the soil is dead, and almost all the biodiversity becomes extinct. The townsfolk depend on human flesh and products to survive and with all the die out of animals and vegetation, humanity is also on the brink of extinction. Theocratic and corpocratic constitutions are ruling the town and they propagandise consuming processed human products in various forms, such as steak, skin care creams, and perfumes. Welfare, for instance, is the devout organisation that strictly imposes the idea of eating the divine flesh. This religious organisation consolidates its power in the doctrines of the Book of Giving, which promotes eating the flesh of the Chosen, i.e., the ‘human cattle.’ By being exposed to various industrial processes and body modifications, a herd of people is produced by the sole industry of the town to become the cattle and to feed and provide the Abyrne’s needs. The ‘Chosen’ are first dipped into chemicals, their teeth are then pulled, and two digits of their fingers are clipped at the knuckles and cauterised. Religious propaganda justifies and normalises the process: “God is supreme. Flesh is sacred” (D’Lacey 4). Welfare propaganda is also utilised as a religious guideline by the workers of the sole industry of the town, Magnus Meat Processing (MMP). Stunners, whose job is to stun the human cattle prior to slaughter, use the propaganda as a ‘catchphrase’ on the chain. Richard Shanti, the protagonist, works at the MMP as a stunner, and he is the most efficient MMP asset. He is called “Ice Pick or Ice Pick Rick because of the total cool with which he manned the stun gun” (3). The Ice Pick is able to maintain high productivity, in other words, the highest chain speed, thus doubling the company’s profit. “Efficiency and productivity” of the Chosen are highly valued by the MMP as the ultimate survival of Abyrne depends on the industry and the Chosen (15). The industry therefore produces the generations of the Chosen to supply almost all the demands of the people of Abyrne.

The dystopian society depicted in the novel describes the exploitation and consumption of human beings as a means of survival. It reflects the extreme consequences of capitalism unchecked, where cannibalism is normalised in the pursuit of profit and survival. This aligns with Jason Moore’s critique of capitalism’s role in driving ecological degradation in the Capitalocene era. Moore explains that the

Anthropocene concept is inadequate in terms of providing a clear and significant answer to environmental degradation. The Anthropocene concept emphasises that humanity has become a geological force on the planet; however, the questions of why and how remain unclear (Moore 83). “The Anthropocene sounds the alarm ... [b]ut it cannot explain how these alarming changes come about,” and therefore, the question should move beyond “the degradation of nature thesis: How does modernity put nature to work?” (Moore 4). Moore therefore coins the term “Capitalocene” which means the “Age of Capital.” Capitalocene, as Moore notes, stands for the era that humanity currently undergoes (6). In other words, he argues that today’s modern societies are living in the age of capital, which is a term that “signifies capitalism as a way of organising nature – as a multispecies, situated, capitalist world-ecology” (7). Moore develops the ‘capitalist world-ecology’ concept that offers a framework for understanding the intersections of capitalism, environment, and society. This concept provides crucial insights and paves the way for analysing the ongoing ecological crisis linked with factory farming. The capitalist-world ecology utilise natural resources as cheap capital. Cheap food, for instance, refers to producing food at low prices through intensive industrial practices that cause environmental destruction on various levels, such as land transformation and wide-scale deforestation (Moore 98). Regarding the factory farming industries, Tesco’s founder Jack Cohen’s business slogan exemplifies Moore’s contention: “Pile it high and sell it cheap” (O’Grady). His business model might emphasise the importance of profitability while undermining the environmental consequences. Capitalism, Moore notes, operates not only through cheap food but also through accumulating cheap raw materials, cheap labour, and cheap energy (11). On one hand, cheap energy means utilising inexpensive energy sources, e.g., fossil fuels. On the other hand, human labour-power encompasses the idea of cheap labour, as human labour is meaningful only with its profitability (86). The continuity of the capitalist systems and the accumulation therefore rests upon the aforementioned capitalist policies, that is, the four cheaps.

For Moore, industrial/capitalist processes pose such questions in the Anthropocene: “How do humans fit within the web of life? How have various human organizations and processes – states and empires, world markets, urbanization, and much beyond – reshaped planetary life?” (2). Factory farming, for instance, reshapes planetary life by altering biodiversity, forest flora, and the soil. Moore’s questions

touch upon the relationship between industrial societies and nature, that is, seeing nature as a material that should be accumulated and turned into profit. *MEAT* answers Moore's questions by depicting a dystopian world where planetary life is vastly degraded, presumably due to human organisations. Satirically, the novel places humans into 'the web of life' only by cannibalism. However, the industrial process of producing meat obfuscates the idea of crude cannibalism. Nora Castle scrutinises the novel and elaborates on the relationship between the Capitalocene and *MEAT*. As she notes, "[t]he nature of the Capitalocene is one of uncertainty; no one is sure how to predict and manage potential future risks" and "[the novel is] increasingly compelling for working through the issues of ... present" (45). Within this perspective, *MEAT* grapple and navigate the present-day challenges. It mirrors the uncertainties of the Capitalocene era, therefore exemplifies the ways in which cannibalism operates as a response to the environmental issues posed by the age of capital. As a contemporary dystopian fiction, D'Lacey's *MEAT* is not widely studied by scholars. In this regard, this chapter offers a new study drawing upon capitalocentric value set, and its crosscutting with eco-anxieties and the cannibalism metaphor.

The novel engages with Moore's concept of Capitalocene and capitalist world-ecology in depicting a cheap labour, commodification of nature, and resource exploitation. On one end of the spectrum, the novel reflects the notion of cheap labour through Richard Shanti. The stun chain is psychologically "the toughest job on the chain; the most damaging to the mind." For the sake of mass production and high profit, which symbolises capitalism's drive for efficiency and productivity at the expense of human and environmental well-being, the MMP management replaces stunners because "[n]o one could kill hour after hour, day after day, month after month without something coming permanently adrift in their head" (D'Lacey 3). Even though replacing stunners is seen as a solution, the narrative clarifies that working on the stun chain is not possible without any damage to the psyche: "We're all mad here" says Bob Torrance, the slaughterhouse manager, and he tells the story of "one stunner opening the access panel, locking eyes with the cow in the restraining box and then shooting himself in the head with the bolt gun ... plenty of the men in Magnus's employ were a rib shy of a rack" (6). The MMP legend Richard Shanti, however, is not replaced because he has the highest chain speed. The more chain speed means more human cattle are slaughtered swiftly, eventually bringing more profit. The

narrative begins with Richard Shanti running home after working for hours on the chain. Shanti is depicted as thin and weak because he runs every day,

[s]tep after crushing step, his breath falling in and out of strange rhythms with the pounding of his feet. Mucus building at the back of his throat – the only moisture left in his body. His legs alternately telling him that they’re burning beyond endurance, that they’re too weak to go on ... He smiles. His thighs and calves are blowtorched. Blazing, blazing, blazing with every step. His muscles are lava and jelly. There’s no strength left in them; not an ounce of goodness or grace. (1)

Shanti is emotionally traumatised, just like the other MMP employees, and feels that “[h]is existence is whiteness of suffering.” He conceptualises running as a way of self-punishment because he hopes that he might be “getting clear” of his deeds by doing so (2). As a result, Shanti is replaced when he cannot sustain the high chain speed after his mental health is deteriorated. Shanti embodies Jason Moore’s concept of cheap labour. His value lies solely in the profitability of his productive labour, making him easily replaceable when economic circumstances shift. *MEAT* thus portrays Shanti’s labour power as expendable and cheap within the capitalist value system.

On the other end of the spectrum, Moore’s concept of cheap nature refers to capitalism’s tendency to undervalue and commodify natural resources, leading to their overexploitation and degradation. In *Abyrne*, human bodies are treated as commodities, processed and consumed in various forms. The town’s economy that revolves around the industrial cannibalism highlights the extreme commodification of life in a capitalist society. Consuming processed human flesh becomes a societal norm due to severe eco-catastrophes and consequential food crisis. This norm reflects a dichotomy between the townsfolk and the Chosen. The townsfolk, especially the MMP employees and their families, are privileged and have status over the Chosen because they are the eaters. Revoking status in the *Abyrne* means becoming the Chosen, or the meat. In other words, “[i]f you’re not townsfolk, you’re meat ... It’s as simple as that” (D’Lacey 146). A group of people therefore become the eaten in order to feed the other half. In this regard, the Chosen and the townsfolk represent two interdependent aspects. In the novel, cannibalism and capitalism are intertwined as survival methods. The rationalisation of cannibalism and capitalist accumulation of human bodies devalue the lives of the Chosen. In other words, the MMP industry only values the Chosen as a cheap raw material that can be processed and turned into food, thus bringing profit. The novel represents this idea through the meat baron, Magnus. He believes that the Chosen “are just animals ... [t]hey exist purely for [their] benefit”

(188). The vast numbers of the Chosen grant the cash nexus, thus providing the continuity of the capitalist economy in the town. The Chosen, therefore, represents the cheap accumulation of resources. All in all, the novel frames cannibalism and capitalism in such a way that the townsfolk become the product. This framing assigns value to capitalocentric practices while undermining all other life forms in the novel, therefore reminding Moore's concepts of cheap raw material and cheap food (Castle 47). Within this perspective, *MEAT* represents the capitalocentric value systems, as well as the Capitalocene as an era.

As seen in the dystopian scenario of D'Lacey's *MEAT*, capitalist value systems become a stark representation, as well as its drive of ecological degradation through resource exploitation. In the novel, ecological devastation is depicted through vast ecological annihilation, mirroring contemporary environmental discourses about land use, forest clearance, and inclined tendency towards meat consumption. In the Capitalocene framework, these underscore present-day eco-anxieties. First of all, ecological annihilation and resource exploitation are closely interconnected. The relentless consumption of resources for profit lead to their depletion. In the dystopian setting of Abyrne, the environment has been ravaged to the point where soil is dead, and biodiversity has almost completely disappeared. The extinction of animals and vegetation is a profound disruption of the ecosystems. The town's dependence on human flesh as a primary food source also exacerbates this ecological collapse, as the fabric of the ecosystem is torn apart. Elmar Altvater, a German scholar and political scientist, agrees with Moore's concept of capitalist world-ecology and emphasises that today's questions about planetary nature are about how capitalism works through and actively transforms the environment, thus trespassing planetary boundaries and leading to a possible collapse of ecosystems (138). In other words, earth systems have been exhausted and altered by the capitalist world-ecology, and the "driver of these changes [is] not humanity in the abstract; it [is] the people living and working and above all owning the capitalist mode of production who have caused the thoroughgoing changes to all earth systems" (Altvater 144). Within this perspective, both Moore and Altvater emphasise that capitalist industries and their mode of production, e.g., utilisation and accumulation of resources, cause environmental stress, moreover, degradation. Justin McBrien, a scholar in the field of environmental history, similarly points out that the mode of capitalist production, i.e., accumulation of cheap

raw materials, leads to extinction: “The more capitalism exerts its planetary power through the ... extraction of Cheap Natures, the more it necrotises the world-ecology it has created” (117). In that sense, nature becomes an asset for the capitalist industries in the age of Capitalocene, and the attenuated value system of the capitalist world-ecology devalues the environment, thus leading towards eco-catastrophes. *MEAT* engages with vast ecological devastation, reflecting a necrotised dystopian future.

The Earth’s future in the age of capital and the possible collapse of the ecosystems may exacerbate the sense of annihilation, which aligns well with eco-anxieties, and it is mirrored by the novel. Stephen J. Foster focuses on eco-anxiety from a psychoanalytic perspective in *The Journal of Analytical Psychology* (2022). By drawing upon literature reviews on both Jungian psychoanalytical perspective and eco-anxiety, he writes that environmental crises cause increased anxiety, depression, and sometimes suicidal behaviour (1363). Foster also emphasises that “traumatic experiences with nature often enter into the field as both real experiences and as symbolic representations of internal emotions” (1365). These internal emotions, such as the feeling of despair, rejection, fear, and annihilation, can be projected as eco-anxieties. Foster indicates that as environmental catastrophes gradually increase, people’s anxiety, especially for who feels a stronger connection to nature, increases in both directly and indirectly. Even the “overwhelming scenes on the television and memories of the local wildfires” cause mild eco-anxieties (1363). Foster argues that the ‘nature archetypes’ theory shows one of the reasons behind eco-anxiety. The nature archetypes refer to “the qualities in nature areas which stand out to be most-health promoting [that] humans through evolution are prepared to perceive in a positive way” (1364). Nature archetypes, therefore, evoke calmness and connection in the human psyche (Ottosson and Grahn 2). In this regard, environmental destruction alters the positive perspective by evoking various negative emotions, such as fear and sense of annihilation (Foster 1365). Within this context, the sense of ecological annihilation is a response to environmental degradation; therefore, it may be projected as eco-anxieties. In the Capitalocene, increased stress on the ecology, i.e., the environmental degradation that the capitalist world-ecology creates, evokes the sense of fear and annihilation. In other words, both real and anticipated ecological catastrophes related to capitalist accumulation disrupt the health-promoting perspective by creating the sense of ecological annihilation, which is intertwined with eco-anxieties.

In D'Lacey's *MEAT*, a pervasive sense of eco-annihilation and raw fear permeate the narrative. The town, which is known as the ultimate arable land, is surrounded by an immense wasteland where no vegetation thrives, and it is depicted as such:

The wasteland formed a natural, roughly circular border that no one crossed into ... [Shanti] could see out into the barren, eroded landscape ... There was no soil with an ounce of nourishment in it ... It was like looking at a black sea of sculpted waves that never moved, or a black desert of tiny dunes ... There was nothing in the wasteland. Nothing but thirst, hunger and solitude until death. (D'Lacey 10)

The wasteland surrounding Abyrne creates a relentlessly gloomy atmosphere. Here, the Earth's land appears consumed and resembles the barren surface of Mars. This unsettling scene serves as a reminder of annihilation and the potential consequences of ecological collapse. The sense of fear and annihilation is also visible in the depiction of the Derelict Quarter, which was once a part of the town but then swallowed by the wasteland: "... no environment could be worse than the Derelict Quarter ... [Shanti] tried not to think about it ... The area covered by the tumbledown buildings and tracts of formless demolition was vast" (D'Lacey 216). The Derelict Quarter and the wasteland are recurrently mentioned in the narrative to amplify the horror and obliteration in a dystopian world ravaged by ecological catastrophes. The ultimate productive land that sustains the cannibalistic practices of Abyrne, in other words humanity's last settlement, is also in a state of decay. It implies the idea that the utter environmental collapse is irreversible. The dystopian setting underscores the pervasive sense of impending doom and environmental decay, as depicted by the expansion of the wasteland and the gradual decline of the town's resources:

Slowly the town was dying but no one realized it. Even the Welfare, even Magnus and the grain bosses that supplied him believed Abyrne would continue forever and that there would always be enough for everyone to eat. But the wasteland was growing, or to put it more realistically, the town was shrinking. (D'Lacey 158)

The 'shrinking' town represents possibly the last human settlement in D'Lacey's dystopian world, and its destruction signifies humanity's extinction. By depicting the wasteland, derelict quarter, and the idea of the 'shrinking town,' the novel evokes a sense of ecological obliteration and fear, suggesting that humanity is also on the brink of extinction alongside other life forms. Through the portrayal of the abovementioned ecological devastation, the novel not only serves as a chilling backdrop to the narrative but also highlights the real-world anxieties about environmental collapse, corresponding to the repercussions of capitalist world-ecology concept. Just as

Foster's analysis that underscores the feelings of despair and existential dread amid eco-catastrophes, *MEAT* indicates the toll of ecological collapse through industrialised cannibalism, ultimately resonating with contemporary eco-anxieties. Cannibalism contributes to the overall tone of the narrative, emphasising the severity of the ecological crises.

The depiction of a ravaged landscape and the town's dependence on cannibalism as a means of survival serves as a reminder of the consequences of unchecked capitalism. The novel furthermore expands this narrative's lens upon exemplifying real-world examples, such as deforestation and increased meat consumption, driven by capitalist production. This highlights the interconnectedness between *MEAT* and the tangible environmental issues, showing that the cannibalism metaphor can function as a reflection of ecological implications. Moreover, biodiversity loss parallels to the themes present in the novel, showcasing how factory farming perpetuates ecological degradation on a global scale. In this regard, the narrative elements elucidate the underlying dynamics driving environmental collapse in both dystopian and real-world contexts. A research article published in the *Guardian* explicates real-world implications of the factory farming. Using satellite imagery to follow livestock activity in Brazil, researchers found that almost eight hundred million Amazon trees were cleared to meet the red meat demand in the last six years, between 2017 and 2022: "More than 800m trees have been cut down in the Amazon rainforest in just six years to feed the world's appetite for Brazilian beef, according to a new investigation, despite dire warnings about the forest's importance in fighting the climate crisis" (Wasley). To Altvater, humanity paradoxically "destroys the conditions for human-friendly life in pursuit of economic growth" and that creates "a twenty-first-century offence" (140). Deforestation is a twenty-first-century offence that leads to massive extinction and environmental degradation. Similarly, a Greenpeace report published in 2019 shows that "livestock production already uses 77% of agricultural land worldwide ... [y]et the industry's demand for land appears to be insatiable" ("How JBS is still Slaughtering the Amazon" 58). Factory farming's land use appears to be one of the major issues that cause ecological stress, as it is not only the primary driver of deforestation but also soil erosion and extinction. Clearing the land for livestock feed and grazing are the key factors of deforestation, especially in the Amazon forests. Soya production for livestock feed, for instance, has quadrupled over

the past decades “and is projected to increase by another third over the next 10 years” (59). The projections suggest that land use and forest clearance might reach its zenith due to the rising demands of livestock in the age of the Capitalocene. As the ecosystems are intertwined, land use and deforestation create a vicious circle: destruction of the forests due to intensive industrial practices results in less rainfall, ultimately causing a massive die-out of the forests and the wildlife (62). In this regard, land use and related forest habitat destruction is a factor causing extinction. Another factor associated with the massive extinction event is Fipronil, an herbicide used for genetically modified livestock feed. The use of pesticides and synthetic fertilisers were the main reason for ecological degradation in the twentieth century. Starting from the early twenty-first century, however, genetically modified livestock feed is introduced to the cleared area with the more intensive use of herbicides (61). The use of chemicals not only poisons the soil but also causes biodiversity to diminish. It becomes evident that the intensive use of herbicides, especially fipronil, contribute to biodiversity destruction, as exemplified by the devastating impact on honeybee populations:

In 2019, over the course of just three months, 500 million honey bees died ... with the evidence pointing towards the cause being a huge increase in approvals of new pesticides containing known bee-killing chemicals such as Fipronil. [It is] linked to soya production, primarily for animal feed. (62)

The evidence might draw attention to the factory farming industries, their exploitative nature, and the ecological consequences. As Ashley Dawson introduces, industrial production mechanisms, such as factory farming, act on a global extent and have “planet-consuming destructiveness.” She also emphasises that the capitalist system needs to expand endlessly to continue its existence, thus generating a chaotic world system that intensifies extinction (Dawson 42). Deforestation, for instance, demonstrates the chaotic system that capitalist production mechanisms forge. This chaotic world system aligns with Moore’s concept of ‘capitalist world-ecology’ that forms the new pattern of environment-making for the worse. Fulfilling the demand of the ever-expanding factory farming creates intentional deforestation, increasing land use, vast soil degradation, and extinction. In this respect, the capitalist factory farming industry’s mode of production and its environmental destructiveness may threaten ecosystems. D’Lacey’s *MEAT* delves into the dystopian depiction of environmental decay, mirroring abovementioned contemporary concerns about deforestation and

habitat loss. Capitalist-driven practices are critiqued by the representation of trees and instrumentalist demeanour towards the remaining vegetation for personal pleasure.

The novel depicts the land as completely eroded, with trees being highly rare and well protected by the Welfare from the townsfolk. The novel portrays trees in a state where they cannot blossom and provide any fruit, thus emphasising the decaying vegetation along with dire ecological conditions:

There wasn't much land left where trees grew and where they did, they didn't flourish. Only the Welfare could decree when a tree was to be felled and townsfolk caught damaging trees or stealing branches - windfall or otherwise - faced heavy fines or forced labour. (D'Lacey 202)

Highlighting the authoritarian control over the remaining trees, the quotation underscores the grim landscape. *MEAT* therefore envisions a dystopian future where the Earth's life-supporting systems are nearly destroyed. The demise of plant life, for instance, further explicates the ecological conditions: "Sick looking weeds grew occasionally from cracks and rents in the grim landscape. The earth below held little or no nourishment and the weeds appeared to survive on light, air and tenacity" (D'Lacey 214). This imagery highlights the severity of ecological degradation. Namely, the land is inhospitable even for the hardiest vegetation. Even though trees are protected by the Welfare, *MEAT* encapsulates a dark irony, that is, a schizophrenic approach to the last surviving pieces of nature. The Welfare fines people who damage the trees, yet the Welfare boss, the head of the parsons, adopts an exploitative attitude towards the remaining trees for personal pleasure: "The puny fire crackled in the grate but it was a luxury only a few in the town could afford" (D'Lacey 202). His 'elitism' grants him control over the town and the decaying environment. The dark irony lies in the notion that even as life-sustaining systems degrade significantly, pushing humanity to the brink of extinction, the instrumentalist perspective persists. This focus on exploitation is a parallel depiction of the lack of environmental awareness in the twenty-first century. Timothy Clark states that humanity's instrumentalist perspective is associated with "lack of earth-sense," signifying a deficiency in "the sense of the earth as a finite planet" (62). Within this context, D'Lacey's *MEAT* highlights the 'lack of earth-sense' through this dark irony. What Clark terms the 'lack of earth sense' may be linked with the capitalocentric value formation, considering the idea that both are stemmed from the deficient understanding of the finite nature of the Earth's resources. For instance, factory farming industries can prioritise short-term economic gains over

long-term environmental sustainability. This alignment between the capitalocentric perspective and the lack of earth sense contributes to our comprehension of the Capitalocene era, finds unsettling resonance in *MEAT*. The dying vegetation, the vast wasteland, and the desolation of the derelict quarter all serve as stark reminders of dwindling resources. The shrinking town also serves as a powerful warning of the consequences of unchecked environmental exploitation in the age of capital. These narrative elements represent a sense of ecological annihilation and fear, paralleling contemporary concerns such as extinction, unsustainable land practices, and forest clearance. In this regard, the novel addresses contemporary ecological concerns, and the use of industrial cannibalism becomes a response to the twenty-first century eco-anxieties.

MEAT not only shows contemporary eco-anxieties over extinction, land use, and deforestation but also highlights dietary concerns of the Capitalocene. The narrative intertwines meat consumption and its adverse environmental effects, representing the interplay between human agency and ecological consequences. This connection shows that D’Lacey’s novel responds to a spectrum of twenty-first-century environmental distress. The age of capital highlights the increased demand for meat, especially beef and pork, which escalates by almost three per cent each year (Blake and Nicholson 133). It becomes evident that the novel’s exploration of contemporary eco-anxieties extends to dietary concerns of the Capitalocene, particularly reading meat consumption and its environmental ramifications. This connection may be further underscored by a research article in *Nature Communications*, which highlights the escalating pressure on fertile soils due to increasing demand for livestock products:

[f]eeding Earth’s growing population with increasing dietary preferences towards livestock products is undoubtedly enhancing the pressure on fertile soils thus exacerbating the erosion problem ... The FAO led Global Soil Partnership reports that 75 billion tonnes (Pg) of soil are eroded every year from arable lands worldwide. (Borelli 2)

As indicated by Borelli, dietary preferences, especially in the industrialised countries, shift towards a greater consumption of animal products. This acceleration undoubtedly causes ecological stress, and environmental consequences become inevitable. Tony Weis, the author of *The Ecological Hoofprint* (2013), critiques the increasing industrial livestock production and points out its environmental consequences. On the one hand, he defines the growing trend of meat consumption in contemporary Western society

with a terminology, that is, the “‘*meatification*’ of diets” which “[marks] the increasing and highly uneven global consumption of meat” (4). Industrialisation of livestock, Weis writes, caused a dietary transformation in industrialised societies in the twenty-first century: production and consumption rates quadrupled “from 71 to 297 million tonnes” of meat alone (1). Furthermore, he refers to the projection made by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) that “global meat production will rise to 52kg per person in a world with 9.3 billion people, which amounts to 484 million tonnes” (2). On the other hand, industrialised livestock uses non-renewable energy sources and “generate[s] tremendous emissions and wastes” (9). It means that factory farming underscores the ecological issues posed by large-scale livestock operations. In this regard, Weis emphasises the growing problems identified with the livestock industry, such as water use, pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change (5). These calculations indicate that industrialised livestock poses threats to the Earth’s ecosystems today.

D’Lacey’s dystopia resonates with what Weis terms as ‘meatification,’ portraying eco-anxieties linked to dietary preferences and biases, particularly favouring the consumption of livestock products, especially meat. The novel shows that the townsfolk must consume the flesh of the Chosen in all their meals to be strong and to survive; therefore, there are recurring patterns of consuming meat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner in the narrative. While the novel offers processed human flesh as the primary food source amid large-scale land degradation and extinction, it also introduces grain bosses, who are responsible for growing vegetables in Abyrne. Vegetables, however, are extremely scarce due to soil erosion, mainly fed to the Chosen and serving as ‘livestock’ feed in town. Richard Shanti, for instance, grows green beans, broccoli, and spinach as pastime activity, albeit of severely poor quality (D’Lacey 7). Although the flesh of the Chosen may not be the sole nourishment available, biased townsfolk crave meat, asserting it as the only sustenance for survival: “What they really craved was meat. Meat would keep them strong for work. Meat would help their children survive to adulthood” (D’Lacey 110). Examining the novel’s portrayal of meals, recurring patterns of meat consumption are evident as the depiction of Greville Snipe’s, an MMP employee, breakfast routine exemplifies the concept of meatification: “He was washed and dressed within five minutes and tucking into a breakfast of steak and black pudding” (35). Furthermore, Maya – Richard Shanti’s

wife – cooks steak for almost every meal: “Maya rose and woke the girls, made their breakfast of grilled steak” (218). When a Parson of Welfare visits the Shanti family, Maya cooks the best steak in the town for dinner, as Richard Shanti has access to the rarest and the most valuable livestock products (54). Shanti and Snipe are privileged as they are MMP employees, so that they can afford meat in most of the meals. In this context, D’Lacey’s novel represents dietary preferences and related biases of the Capitalocene, marked by an escalating demand for meat consumption. Joseph D’Lacey’s extensive research on factory farming before writing *MEAT* also sheds light on both the ecological implications and growing trend of meat consumption. He underscores the environmental impact of grain-fed diets for livestock, revealing the significant use of nitrogenous fertilisers. This insight aligns with the novel’s portrayal of dietary preferences and biases, therefore illustrating the interplay between eating habits and ecological repercussions.

I also read about the impact of large-scale animal farming on the ecology and the planet as a whole ... I discovered that many animals destined for our tables eat a grain diet – something they’d be unlikely to eat in their natural state. To grow this grain, farmers use nitrogenous fertilisers – a byproduct of the petroleum industry, and therefore more and more expensive as the days go by – and use vast tracts of land to do so, often exhausting the land in the process. This grain then feeds their animals. If you think about it, that same land could be used to grow crops for humans instead, possibly making starvation a thing of the past. (Free From Harm)

Envisioning a dark future, D’Lacey weaves today’s eco-anxieties with his dystopian narrative. Moreover, the exploration in eco-anxieties in *MEAT* is not only confined to the fiction, but also mirrors today’s ecological concerns. He further contextualises the theme of meatification in modern diets by highlighting the business interests, and criticises the unnecessary and costly nature of this dietary shift. This perspective resonates with *MEAT*’s exploration of environmental anxieties, particularly regarding the prevalence of meat consumption amid ecological distress in the Capitalocene.

I learned that those of us who eat meat now eat it in far greater quantities and far more frequently than at any other time in human history. This demand for meat is business-led and it’s a disgrace. Many people in the west now eat meat every day or even several times a day – bacon at breakfast, chicken or ham sandwich at lunch perhaps, maybe fish, steak or lamb for their evening meal. Not only is this unnecessary, it’s costly in more ways than most people want to imagine. (Free From Harm)

Within this perspective, it is possible to argue that *MEAT* serves as a manifestation of D’Lacey’s ecological concerns. His eco-emotional state is therefore shown not only within the confines of fiction but mirror contemporary eco-anxieties surrounding the factory farming industry and escalating meat consumption in industrial nations.

Meatification of diets, as Weis points out, may elicit eco-anxieties in relation to production mechanisms and the resulting ecological degradation. While the novel illustrates the interplay between meat consumption and environmental anxieties, recent research highlights the psychological and societal ramifications of dietary choices. Urska Dobersek, a scholar in the field of psychology, for instance, conducted a meta-analysis about the relationship between meat consumption and mental health in 2021. The study highlights that dietary preference, whether to consume meat or not, is the crucial contributor to mental health problems worldwide: Drawing from a large body of research, Dobersek says that “scholars found that ... meat abstainers (vegetarians and vegans) had substantially higher rates or risk of depression, [and] anxiety” (1). It means that omnivores, people who consume both meat and vegetables, tend to suffer from anxiety and depression less than vegans or vegetarians. Regarding the analysis, it is essential to note that individuals might experience anxiety or depression based on some factors, such as personal beliefs and awareness of environmental consequences. Some individuals can adopt more sustainable dietary preferences, like veganism, to align with ecological concerns. However, a lack of awareness towards ecological issues and cultural biases may trigger the increase in meat intake, thus decreasing the anxiety the meat eaters feel, and creating a false sense of security. Another research that investigates the consumption of meat and its impacts on planetary health, for instance, highlights that more than seventy per cent of the participants “lack of general awareness about the negative implications to human wellbeing and the health of the natural environment of high meat consumption” (Marinova and Bogueva 2). The same study also indicates that twenty per cent of the participants see eating meat as a symbol of strength (9). In this regard, whether to consume meat or not is associated with ecological awareness and personal beliefs, and meat abstainers might suffer from anxiety as factory farming industry poses existential threats related to environmental destruction, such as climate change, land degradation, pollution, and water shortages (1). It is therefore possible to interpret that meat consumption in the age of capital may cause eco-anxieties related to ontological insecurity, especially for people with more ecological awareness of industrialised livestock’s environmental consequences and less cultural biases. Within the context of D’Lacey’s *MEAT*, exploration of meatification resonate with psychological and societal ramifications, mirroring present-day concerns. The story vividly depicts a

dystopian world where excessive meat consumption is not just a dietary choice but a necessity for survival, reflecting the societal norms and pressures of the Capitalocene. The pervasive theme of the consumption amid ecological distress in the novel parallels the findings of the contemporary research, underscoring the interconnectedness between dietary preferences, mental and environmental well-being. Examining the socio-psychological dimensions of meat consumption in both the fictional narrative and real-world studies provide insights into the complex dynamics that shape individual behaviour and societal attitudes towards food consumption.

As the story progresses, there is a visible shift towards the tangible effects of this dietary trends. Explored through the lens of D'Lacey's dystopian world, the novel delves into the concrete dangers posed by the escalating demand for meat by food security. It serves as an echo of the real-world repercussions of meat safety and public health. The novel's depiction of meat consumption intertwines with issues of contamination, emphasising the potential health risks and environmental hazards associated with high levels of meat intake. Contamination and food security issues reinforce eco-anxiety, related to the direct impact on human health and ecological devastation. Food security, in its broadest sense, means the assurance of access to safe and nutritious food that fulfils the dietary requirements for a healthy life. In contrast, food insecurity means the opposite: the term encompasses threats such as environmental contamination and adverse health factors (FAO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*). The escalating meat consumption trend bears potential health risks, such as coronary heart diseases, stroke or cancer (Wolk 106). As highlighted by González et al, anthropogenic pollution emerges as a significant contributor to these adverse health risks, and most of the "environmental contaminants that are frequently found in meats are highly soluble in fats." (1). Correspondingly, the rise in meat consumption may correlate with an increase in cardiovascular diseases and cancer types. Additionally, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) report, for instance, states that red meat is highly carcinogen to humans, especially the consumption of processed meat (González et al. 16). By referring to epidemiological evidence that validates the IARC findings, González et al highlights the relevance of the "chemical contaminants, which are often found in meat and meat products" (2). Within this perspective, it is possible to infer that meat consumption is not secure. In this regard, meat consumption in twenty-first century indicates health

concerns, and underscores the broader implications of environmental contamination. Conversely, meat consumption is an issue of food insecurity. The novel seamlessly transitions from a broad discussion of meatification and its psychological impacts to a focused portrayal of its immediate consequences on health. This serves as a stark reminder of the hazards of excessive meat consumption and its role in perpetuating food insecurity, intertwined with eco-anxiety. In this regard, *MEAT* reflects our current global predicaments, making the fictional account increasingly resonant.

The novel introduces the ‘shakes,’ which is a mysterious ailment pervasive across Abyrne, attributed potentially to the consumption of MMP products. This illness is relentless and incurable, worsening over time. *MEAT* describes the illness as

a common illness in every district of Abyrne. There were many remedies, the majority of them based on by-products from [MMP] plant ... Veal was particularly sought after for the Shakes. No one ever seemed to recover, though. The illness progressed gradually over years of swiftly within months. (D’Lacey 168)

This portrays a community grappling with a health crisis directly linked to their dietary habits. Further emphasising the health risks associated with the town’s food sources, the character of Bruno, an MMP employee, embodies the widespread fear and denial prevalent in Abyrne. His internal conflict, as he hesitates to acknowledge the possible link between the meat and the ‘shakes,’ highlights the broader societal reluctance to confront uncomfortable truths about food safety and health: “So many townsfolk had the Shakes these days. If it wasn’t his imagination, then it was... better not to think about it” (D’Lacey 237). As his employer is the MMP, he fears even thinking about whether the meat causes the Shakes or not. Another poignant example is Parson Mary Simonson, whose worsening condition is directly tied to her religious and cultural obligations to consume MMP products. Her experience illustrates how cultural practices and health risks can intersect, complicating the struggle against foodborne illnesses:

Each morning she awoke to the nibbling in her stomach... Each new day was accompanied by nausea and dizziness at the moment she swung her feet from the low, slim cot she slept in... Breakfast was getting harder and harder to eat, but as a Parson, she was required to eat three meals a day and each of them had to contain the flesh of the Chosen. For Parsons the eating of the flesh of the Chosen was a sacrament. (D’Lacey 85)

This narrative thread not only heightens the sense of danger associated with the town’s primary food source but also showcases the personal toll of harmful traditions. Ironically, she believes that the remedy is to eat tripe for breakfast, however, “she

found it too much of a struggle to chew and swallow” (86). Towards the ending of the novel, it is visible that meat consumption makes her gravely ill. She feels an excruciating pain in her “stomach swelled like a sphere of teeth” (D’Lacey 211). These narrative elements align with the real-world concerns about meat consumption’s role in promoting diseases due to environmental contaminants often found in animal products. These examples therefore underscore the insecurities surrounding food safety in world dominated by meat consumption. They reflect a fictional yet frighteningly realistic portrayal of the potential futures. *MEAT*, thus, becomes a reflection of eco-anxiety, where the fear of environmental degradation and its impact on human health is palpable, influencing every aspect of life in D’Lacey’s dystopian society. In his interview, D’Lacey touches upon the food insecurity related to the food. Due to contaminants and illnesses among livestock, D’Lacey emphasises that “[k]eeping farmed animals ‘healthy’ is a big business for drug manufacturers. Antibiotics and anti-worming gels which contain organophosphates are among the routine treatments given to animals destined for the dinner plate. I don’t want to put that in my body” (Free From Harm). In the broader perspective, D’Lacey’s insight into his perspective on factory farming and its impact on human health may contribute to the exploration of the relationship between food insecurity and eco-anxiety in *MEAT*. In other words, D’Lacey’s vision of meat consumption is reflected in the novel by the portrayal of potential meat-borne illnesses, and this perspective may manifest his eco-anxieties.

In light of the aforementioned, the novel shows the dystopian horrors of a society built on the brink of ecological collapse, mirroring contemporary environmental challenges driven by capitalist exploitation. Through its depiction of a world ravaged by ecological destruction, the novel warns of the grim future awaiting humanity if current trends persist. The narrative encapsulates the existential dread and ecological collapse of the Capitalocene, showing environmental concerns such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, and the unsustainable demand for meat. By intertwining these themes with a narrative of societal decay and desperation through the use of cannibalism, *MEAT* critiques the current trajectory of human consumption and production, highlighting psychological impact of such ecological degradation on individuals and communities. The narrative therefore shows the devastating outcomes of unchecked industrial growth, where nature becomes merely an asset to be exploited

until exhaustion. The exploration into the industrialised cannibalism in the novel reflects and satirises the twenty-first century eco-anxieties in a way that resonates with real-world ecological issues. The concept of industrialised cannibalism in the novel accentuates a critical commentary on our current ecological and ethical crises. This portrayal of cannibalism serves as a satirical mirror reflecting and underscoring modern anxieties about sustainability, extinction, and ethical compass concerning meat consumption.

In one aspect, industrialised cannibalism serves as a critique of capitalocentric factory farming, where resources are consumed on a large scale without consideration for long-term ecological consequences. This thematic exploration aligns closely with contemporary environmental discourse, which suggests that humanity's exploitation of natural resources may soon outpace the Earth's capacity to regenerate itself. As indicated by Blake and Nicholson, "human demands on nature already may have exceeded regenerative capacity of the biosphere, which may bring an end to rapid agricultural expansion within 50 years" (138). This statement indicates the precarious balance between current consumption rates and the long-term viability of global ecosystems. Furthermore, habitat fragmentation also exemplifies present-day discourses. As the habitats become increasingly degraded, it "make[s] it more difficult for plants and animals to meet needs and survive" (139). This fragmentation threatens biodiversity and disrupts ecological balance, illustrating the far-reaching impacts of human agency. The role of the industrialised cannibalism in *MEAT* therefore extends beyond a mere survival way. It becomes a metaphorical depiction for how capitalist systems cannibalise their own foundations—natural resources and habitats—thereby nurturing conditions that lead to ecological downfall. Within D'Lacey's dystopian imagination, the industrialised cannibalism is a stark representation of capitalocentric attitudes, indicating that the "capitalist practices act as a form of planetary cannibalism" in the twenty-first century (Castle 44). The 'planetary cannibalism' may highlight factory farming industries' consumption of the finite natural resources. The novel's depiction of the environment, degraded land, extinct animal and plant species, along with the depletion of food sources, illustrate the concept of 'planetary cannibalism.' In this regard, the novel mirrors real-world transformation of over the Earth's land, primarily due to the expansion of industrial livestock operations. Hertel, for instance, notes the significant alteration of landscapes, emphasising that more than

one-third of the Earth's terrain is already transformed due to the intensification of industrial livestock (213). This massive transformation of land is further analysed by Moore, who argues that "[t]he Capitalocene accelerated environmental transformation beyond anything known before" and the capitalist world-ecology creates a novel model of environment-making while posing a threat to the Earth's future (Moore 97). The factory farming industry therefore forges a new pattern of environment-making in the twenty-first century, with the ecological outcomes leading towards eco-catastrophes. In this context, the portrayal of a society reliant on industrial cannibalism is a metaphorical extension of the destructive tendencies inherent in capitalocentric factory farming. Cannibalism consequently presents a dreadful prophecy of what might become of our world if current trends continue unchecked, making a compelling case for eco-anxieties.

In concluding this chapter, it is essential to articulate that Joseph D'Lacey's *MEAT*, as an eco-horror dystopian fiction, leverages the concept of industrialised human flesh consumption—termed 'industrialised cannibalism' within this thesis. The metaphor of cannibalism in the novel poignantly highlights the theme of ecological annihilation, particularly emphasising the extensive land and soil degradation, alongside the extinction of animal and plant species. The portrayal of a planet where all animals are extinct, and the soil's productivity is severely compromised—essentially dead land—reflects the severe eco-anxieties prompted by capitalocentric factory farming industries that dominate the twenty-first century.

The depiction of ecological catastrophes within *MEAT* aligns closely with current eco-anxieties concerning degrading ecosystems during the Capitalocene. The novel's narrative elements—such as the lack of arable land—mirror concerns regarding land-use changes, soil degradation, biodiversity loss, and extinction. The novel thus engages with contemporary ecological issues including extinction, land use, and deforestation, interpreting these issues through a satirical lens. In the story, the MMP industry symbolises the capitalist world-ecology of the twenty-first century, perpetuating its existence by exploiting cheap resources, depicted here as the human body. Additionally, the novel addresses twenty-first-century dietary concerns stemming from eco-anxiety related to meat consumption. It illustrates D'Lacey's critique of cultural biases and the general lack of awareness about the ecological impacts of meat consumption, portraying the increase in global meat consumption and

associated food insecurity through the carnivorous diets of the townsfolk and subsequent epidemic-like illnesses.

From this analysis, I argue that the metaphor of industrialised cannibalism in this novel provides a deep insight into the eco-anxieties of the twenty-first century. The portrayal of annihilation and fear within the novel serves as a direct response to these anxieties, linked to the destructive capitalist world ecology described by Jason Moore. Furthermore, the novel's focus on meat consumption and its environmental repercussions adds another layer to the narrative, addressing another critical ecological concern of our time. Through these thematic explorations, D'Lacey's novel encapsulates the zeitgeist of the twenty-first century, offering a grim reflection of our potential future.

CONCLUSION

Cannibalism as a literary metaphor has the capacity to project power dynamics, ethical dilemmas, and societal concerns. The interpretation of the cannibalism in literary works depends on the context and the era. For instance, the cannibalism metaphor represents a group's or individual's dominance over the other. This highlights the subjugation and the power dynamics specific to that era. As cannibalism is also a taboo subject, it challenges comfort zones, thus creating ethical reflections. The idea of eating human flesh shakes the boundaries of human identity, behaviour, and societal norms. Cannibalism also acts as a social commentary of the era as can be seen in the exploitation of the lower-class by the wealthy. Additionally, cannibalism indicates survival in acute circumstances, such as extreme hunger, scarcity, and extinction. When encountered with extreme conditions, in both literary and real accounts, humans resort to cannibalism as the ultimate way of survival, highlighting the limits of moral and ethical dilemmas. Within an ecological context, environmental concerns, such as deforestation, pollution, overconsumption of the natural resources, and the gradual and vast ecological degradation, explicate the acute conditions that the cannibalism emerges. In dystopian literature, ecological concerns have achieved visibility and consumption of human flesh has become a stark metaphor.

Dystopian narratives that employ the cannibalism metaphor as a representation of ecological concerns are based on futuristic speculations, yet inspired by scientific facts. Some of the key facts about ecological degradation are loss of biodiversity, forest clearance, vast-scale land degradation, and pollution. For instance, the World Wildlife Fund declares that almost sixty per cent of wildlife population is lost due to deforestation and climate change over the last decades (WWF International 14). The cannibalism metaphor therefore frames ecological concerns in relation to the destructiveness of human agency on ecosystems; therefore, it can be seen through an ecocritical lens. In the selected novels, it becomes an allegory for the destruction of natural resources, emphasising that the ecological degradation is fundamentally the extinction of humanity.

In dystopian narratives, the role of cannibalism becomes a speculative element that explores and critiques humanity's impact on the Earth's ecologies. In other words,

the cannibalism metaphor sheds light on the ecological implications embedded in dystopian narratives; therefore, it is possible to discern different perspectives on ecological crises and their possible consequences. Understanding the role of cannibalism as an instrument for communicating ecological concerns provides critical insights into the pressing issues of an era. This thesis, therefore, has explored how dystopian novels *The Wanting Seed* and *MEAT* can be analysed through interpreting the cannibalism metaphor by an ecocritical perspective. By employing cannibalism, the selected works convey eco-anxious tone. In other words, pressing environmental concerns occurred due to humanity's relationship with the ecologies are visible in the narratives. Burgess's *The Wanting Seed*, for instance, voices the twentieth-century eco-anxieties in relation to the neo-Malthusian concerns, and D'Lacey's *MEAT* critiques the Capitalocene era and the intricacies of ecological anxieties are conveyed by the industrialised cannibalism notion.

In *The Wanting Seed*, Burgess presents a neo-Malthusian allegory that portrays food scarcity and extreme hunger as the consequences of overpopulation and soil deterioration. The novel highlights the limits of demographic growth and soil reproductive capacity, where the population surpasses the soil's biotic potential, and chemical pesticides lead to widespread soil degradation. As a response, the narrative first introduces the synthetic food, e.g., synthelacs made of constituted vegetables. When the rations cut, however, societal dehumanisation takes place and people resort to cannibalism as the ultimate solution. The narrative thus shows the notion of cannibalism in extremis, which means the consumption of human flesh in the extreme circumstances. The notion of 'cannibalism in extremis' represents the neo-Malthusian end result and it serves as a metaphorical response to the eco-anxieties of the twentieth-century. In terms of eco-anxieties, it is clear that neo-Malthusianism addresses the twentieth-century ecological concerns, hence both are intertwined. In this regard, Burgess's *The Wanting Seed* shows the notions of soil degradation, ontological insecurity and growth, portraying them as neo-Malthusian eco-anxieties of the twentieth century through the use of the cannibalism metaphor.

D'Lacey's *MEAT*, on the other hand, is a dark satire that allegorically reflects the Capitalocene era. The novel intertwines cannibalism and capitalism within a post-apocalyptic setting marked by eco-catastrophes. In the narrative, the last remaining factory farming industry embodies the capitalocentric value system, relying on the

labour and profitability axis. However, profitability is contingent on processing enough human flesh for sale. The novel explores various eco-anxieties associated with twenty-first-century factory farming, including the sense of ecological annihilation, heightened meat consumption and its environmental consequences, and concerns about food insecurity. The depiction of the eroded landscape and vast wasteland where no plants or trees thrive evokes the profound sense of environmental annihilation. It reflects the contemporary issues of forest clearance and land use. Also, in its representation of food, *MEAT* satirises what Weis emphasises—the ‘meatification’ of contemporary diets. Moreover, the narrative draws attention to meat-borne illnesses, intersecting with contemporary issues related to meat consumption. D’Lacey presents the notion of industrialised cannibalism as a radical satire of the age of capital, a period marked by heightened ecological degradation and an increased in eco-anxieties.

Both *The Wanting Seed* and *MEAT* employ the cannibalism metaphor as a response to the eco-anxieties of their era. The idea of consuming human flesh becomes a stark metaphor for the environmental concerns. Burgess’s novel explores the consequences of overpopulation and resulting environmental degradation, using anthropophagi as an extreme solution, and D’Lacey’s narrative indicates the ecological consequences of a profit-driven society in the Capitalocene era. In this regard, both novels share a common thread in the use of the cannibalism metaphor to explore the eco-anxieties. The cannibalism metaphor, in both instances, acts as a significant literary device that captures the zeitgeist of the novels’ respective eras. However, it is evident that the employment of cannibalism metaphor shifts between the two narratives. While Burgess’s novel shows the crude act of cannibalism as an extreme solution to scarcity and environmental degradation, D’Lacey’s narrative introduces a novel form of anthropophagi, that is, the industrialised cannibalism. In this magnitude shift, human bodies are commodified for the capitalistic factory farming industry. In this regard, *MEAT* extends the cannibalism metaphor beyond a mere way of survival to a reflection of drastic ecological costs associated with a profit-driven capitalistic society. Within this perspective, neo-Malthusian eco-anxieties, rooted in demographic growth, resource depletion, and soil degradation, shifts into the ecological toll of uncontrolled capitalistic factory farming growth, as well as dietary concerns and food insecurity it brings.

In this perspective, this thesis may serve as a resource for examining the use of cannibalism metaphor in contemporary dystopian fiction. The industrial cannibalism metaphor is not only visible in D'Lacey's *MEAT*, but also in Don LePan's *Animals* (2010), David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004). Moreover, the industrial cannibalism metaphor finds voice in diverse literatures: Agustina Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh* (2017), for instance, employs the same notion. This cross-cultural manifestation of the industrial cannibalism indicates a global perspective on the shared eco-anxieties that resonate in different cultures. The industrial cannibalism metaphor, therefore, can become a compelling subject for ongoing scholarly inquiry and discussion. This thesis then offers open endings for further research about categorising twenty-first-century dystopian narratives in terms of their employment of cannibalism.

This study concludes with the notion that the magnitude shift in eco-anxieties, namely the gradual increase in ecological degradation and apprehension in the twenty-first century concerning the profit-driven excesses of the Capitalocene, compels the cannibalism metaphor to emerge as the evolving literary device. The shifting context of eco-anxieties and contemporary ecological issues in our industrialised societies today, is mirrored by the industrialised cannibalism metaphor. Furthermore, the industrialised cannibalism metaphor not only reflects the escalating ecological concerns but also offers a deeper understanding of the consequences of prioritising profit and cheap accumulation of resources over ecological sustainability. The expansion of factory farming industries, vast forest clearance, and biodiversity extinction, which are explicated by *MEAT*, for instance, illustrates the dire outcomes of the relentless consumption of natural sources. In addition, the industrialised cannibalism metaphor indicates a deeper and radical reflection of industrial consumption patterns and resource utilisation, which are explicated by Moore's notion of capitalist world-ecology. The alteration in the literary cannibalism, in this regard, becomes a cautionary tale, urging industrial societies to reconsider their priorities and adopt sustainable practices while highlighting the twenty-first century environmental realities.

All in all, the magnitude shift in representing the literary cannibalism signifies a radical response to the eco-anxieties posed by the Capitalocene. It challenges readers to confront both the environmental and industrial realities, encouraging a critical evaluation of the human agency in the pursuit of progress and prosperity, and

advocating for a sustainable and ecologically conscious approach to environmental stewardship.

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