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Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate how science fiction can engender critical conversations about post-humanity as otherness by close reading N.K. Jemisin's science fiction series *The Broken Earth Trilogy*. More specifically, it investigates how Jemisin uses science fiction devices to criticise ideological structures, social constructs and the marginalization apparent in the Anthropocene. Her portrayal of capitalistic greed, dehumanization and slavery parallels ideas and events found in the cultural and industrial history of the Western world, and, especially, in the United States. This is emphasized by depictions of marginalization of alternate identities in speculative pasts and futures, which also offer solutions in alternative ways of thinking. The theoretical focus of this thesis, includes discourse on science fiction devices, and how these can be used to evoke processes of otherness. Furthermore, it discusses sites of otherness, in the Anthropocene and Capitalocene, and investigates how these interact with ideas in the trilogy, arriving in solutions in the posthuman. The posthuman, as discussed by Rosi Braidotti, is a theory free from binary exclusionary thought which pushes through anthropocentric ideas of humanity, revealing solutions in embracing otherness. As will be explored in this thesis, these views are paralleled in *The Broken Earth Trilogy*, where the visualisation of otherness plays a crucial part in establishing the identities that hold the potential to save the world. Additionally, this thesis investigates post- or non-anthropocentric views on subjective truths, by means of the narrative devices that belong to the genre of science fiction which enable the writer to engage in radical depictions of identity. This is, for instance, revealed through the category of the *grotesque*, which provides an inward sense of shock when faced with the unrecognizable other, but which also urges the reader to reconsider existing notions of identity and otherness in themselves.

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1. Introduction

Science fiction, and its vast array of speculative landscapes, can provide countless depictions of new and exciting worlds to provide insight into our own. As the genre has approached modernity, so have the speculative aspects authors in the genre delve into. This thesis aims to investigate how science fiction can engender critical conversations about post-humanity as otherness by close reading N.K. Jemisin's *The Broken Earth Trilogy*.

The Broken Earth Trilogy, is written by N.K. Jemisin, a contemporary Brooklyn based author, and recipient of the Hugo Award for Best Novel for three consecutive years, for each book in the trilogy. Jemisin is a Black woman, who is known for her short stories and novels which are often based around themes such as "resistance to oppression, the inseparability of the liminal, and the coolness of Stuff Blowing Up" (Bibliography, *N.K. Jemisin*).

The themes may seem quite ambiguous at first, but as we start looking at Jemisin's work, we can see how she draws inspiration from contemporary America and the modern history of the Anthropocene to portray them. She is also a well-known advocate for seeing sf and fantasy as traditions of political resistance (Bibliography, *N.K. Jemisin*).

Jemisin is known for speculative fiction, of which in the *Broken Earth* trilogy, she uses various science fiction elements to tell stories of adventure, oppression, and ideas which diverge from what has become expected in the Anthropocene. These elements regularly revolve around processes of othering, in which science fiction provides opportunities to depict forms of other which can invoke an imaginative shock in the reader, unthinkable in realist fiction.

The Broken Earth Trilogy consists of *The Fifth Season* (2015), *The Obelisk Gate* (2016) and *The Stone Sky* (2017), which are all set in a post-apocalyptic reality where our planet consists of a single continent and is plagued by constant apocalyptic events. The main story commences some 40,000 years after a "human"-made cataclysmic event sends the moon out of orbit, causing the earth to be afflicted by continuous natural disasters.

Humanity, and humans who dominate the social order in the continent of *the Stillness* are fairly similar to those who dominate the Anthropocene, albeit with one distinct biological difference. They possess a fictional organ of the *sessapinae* at the centre of the brain. This is the case for all human and humanoid beings in the narratives, with the main difference between what someone is designated as, is whether the *sessapinae* is active or not. A person with an active *sessapinae* can *sess* (feel) and manipulate kinetic energy in the earth, and is called an *orogene*. While others, who manage to further their abilities, and learn to manipulate

the threads of silver apparent in all life, perform *magic*. These were known as *tuners* in *Syl Anagist*, a technological empire that dominated the world 40,000 years prior, which exploited life – natural, human and non-human – as resources for its own gain.

Magic is explained as the ability to manipulate energy present in all life, which combined with orogeny, gave tuners the ability to channel into *obelisks*, giant crystal batteries made to hover above the sky, to provide energy for the empire.

In the present setting of the novels, the successors of the tuners; orogenes, are othered, dehumanized and reviled for their differences, despite being able to reduce the constant geological disasters. They are controlled, commodified, and put on a leash by the ruling faction of the world through the use of *guardians*.

Guardians are a different form of other, portrayed as beings with supernatural powers, including prolonged life expectancy, and the will of the world imbued into their sessapinae. This implantation turns the oppressed into vehicles of the oppressors. Overuse of the ability of magic, will slowly turn tuners to stone, and they can eventually transform into *stone eaters* – humanoid beings made up of stone, who are characterized by their eternal life and the ability to transport themselves through solid earth.

Despite each of these starting out as what would be called “human” in the Stillness, ideology strips their rights of being referred to as such. Furthermore, the same ideology others, dehumanizes and commodifies these alternate identities. Guardians are employed to control orogenes, and use their powers for the ruling factions own benefit. However, the guardians are presented as another form of ‘other’ all the same.

The Broken Earth trilogy is split into three separate novels, in which we experience the point of view of characters who possess each of these othered identities; Orogenes, guardians and stone eaters. In order to fully investigate the characters, their narratives, and fully understand these depictions of posthuman otherness, it is important to incorporate the entirety of the trilogy in this thesis.

The first novel, *The Fifth Season*, contains a unique narrative structure where we encounter three female narrators, Damaya, Syenite and Essun, who, towards the end of the book, are revealed to be the same person. Damaya and Syenite’s stories are told in third person, while Essun’s is told in second person. Damaya, the youngest, tells the story of her realization of power and meeting with her guardian Schaffa, leading to a life in servitude of the Fulcrum, one of the leading factions of the Stillness. Syenite, who is chronologically second in order, tells the story of her life in the Fulcrum, under her mentor, powerful orogene, and later father to her first son, Alabaster. They eventually escape after being targeted by a

guardian, to the island utopia of *Meov*, run by orogenes.

Finally at peace, and commencing her new life, the island is attacked by guardians including Schaffa, causing the separation from her new family and refuge, as she murders her own child to avoid him leading the same life she did. Essun, who we follow for the rest of the series, tells the story of the death of yet another son, this time by the hands of her husband, after it is discovered that she and her two children are orogenes.

The society in which Essun attempts to survive and start families as an orogene, never seems to permit for her to be happy, as the contempt for orogenes permeates and overshadows even family bonds. She escapes from her settlement, and we learn of the catastrophe that emerges from a large cataclysmic rift opening along the continent, named *the rifting*, which signals the beginning of the final fifth season – an apocalyptic period where shelter is of utmost importance. Furthermore, Essun meets Hoa along the way, who we later learn is a stone eater. They travel in search of Nassun, and find shelter in a comm called *Castrima*, where orogenes are in charge.

The second novel, *The Obelisk Gate*, introduces Essun's orogene daughter, Nassun, into the narrative, following the murder of Essun's orogene son, Uche, by her husband Jija due to his loathing of orogenes. Jija kidnaps Nassun and brings her to the south of The Stillness, chasing a rumor of a base which can "cure" orogenes of their "illness". Here, they meet Schaffa, who has suffered a memory loss and is at terms with his own identity as a guardian. Schaffa becomes somewhat of a father figure to Nassun, as he teaches her how to control her powers.

Simultaneously, Essun reunites with Alabaster, and it is revealed he is the one who started the rifting. This has caused him to become weak and partly turn to stone, which he eventually succumbs to after teaching magic to Essun, preceding his transformation into a stone eater. Castrima is then attacked, leaving it destroyed and its inhabitants in need of a new place of survival.

The novel further introduces Hoa into the narrative, who is revealed to be a stone eater, and was previously a tuner for Syl Anagist. He recalls his memories from living in Syl Anagist in a first-person perspective, as we learn of the horrors of a capitalist technological empire. The third novel, *The Stone Sky*, reveals that the entire narrative is actually told by Hoa, who follows Essun on her journey to rescue the world, where she confronts Nassun as the moon is rebounding towards the earth. Nassun, who wants to destroy the earth, and Essun who wants to save it, fight for control of the *obelisk gate*, which possesses enough power to put the moon back in to orbit.

Essun eventually succeeds in her goal, only to become a stone eater herself. Hoa retraces her memories for when she wakes, as they prepare for their life as stone eaters: to exist until the world ends, and the reader finally understands why Essun's story is told in second person: It is written for Essun by Hoa. The narrative also continues to tell the story of Hoa's past, as part of the tuners. It delves into their participation in creating the human-made cataclysmic event that sent the moon out of orbit, and resulted in their transformation into stone-eaters, as well as unleashing seasons upon the Stillness.

As will be discussed in this thesis, Jemisin uses a range of science fiction devices to criticise political structures, social constructs and the marginalization apparent in the Anthropocene. She also draws upon a number of contemporary political and social issues, such as those connected to race, ideology and identity.

This thesis will furthermore comprise an investigation of how the posthuman is largely portrayed as a solution to these harmful ideological structures, to the extent that it functions to de-center the human. Most of all the thesis will undertake an investigation into how these critiques can be aided by a post- or non-anthropocentric view on subjective truths, both in narrative devices taken from science fiction, as well as through radical depictions of identity.

The thesis finally seeks to unpack how N.K. Jemisin's trilogy measures up to traditional science fiction narratives, by looking inwards towards the earth, critiquing colonial and capitalistic ravaging of the earth and its resources, both human and non-human.

In order to investigate the aforementioned points, this thesis is divided into a literary review chapter, followed by a close reading of *The Broken Earth Trilogy* which incorporates points from the literary review. The literary review covers science fiction, otherness and sites of otherness, such as the Anthropocene, before gathering the arguments in posthumanity as a form of absolute otherness. Each of these concepts interweave in a manner that functions as a baseline for the close reading of *The Broken Earth Trilogy*.

Following this, the close reading chapter gathers points from the literary review to investigate storylines and parallels in the trilogy, which is further divided into two sections: *Sameness – The Problem* and *Otherness – The Solution*. Sameness discusses the various parallels to the Anthropocene we can find in *Syl Anagist* and *The Stillness*, while Otherness presents posthuman solutions revealed in these sites of otherness, identity and narration.

The thesis is concluded by gathering together points from both the literary review together with the close reading, as well as looking into future work that could be done in this area of study.

2. Literary review

The Anthropocene is known as the current epoch in the history of earth, pertaining to humanity's effect on the planet on a global scale in the sense that human activity in this period has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment. *Anthropo-*, meaning 'human', demonstrates how central humanity is in the Anthropocene and its accompanying anthropocentric views. The Anthropocene as a geological era contains a large history of humanities effect on earth, and its modernity can alternatively be linked to the Capitalocene, which primarily traces the effect of capitalism and human gain to the deterioration and horrors of humanities current predicament.

Furthermore, prominent modern Eurocentric ideologies within the Anthropocene can be argued to provide for an anthropocentric and bleak view of the future, as they often portray individuals as singularities bound by class, gender and race. Discussion regarding the Anthropocene popularly revolves around climate change, but also "ocean acidification, global population growth, resource depletion, massive species extinction, and ecosystem simplification" (Vermeulen 9). Effects which are a detriment to human development through its unsustainability, but also serves as a threat to non-human others in our ecosystem.

The Anthropocene is a relevant topic for literature in general, but also for contemporary science fiction. In *Literature and the Anthropocene*, Peter Vermeulen maps out how literature can engage with the Anthropocene, both to inform readers, through literary studies, in the description and observation of the reality of the world, and to critique aspects of it through literature, in which a plethora of genres can raise questions and critiques (4).

In the case of science fiction, Vermeulen refers to Ursula Heise's note that "science fiction is becoming the default genre for the narrative engagement with climate change" (Vermeulen 112, referencing Heise 2018). One of the reasons for this, Vermeulen argues, is that science fiction can "reimagine the present as the past of a future yet to come", which makes it well-suited to critique the present-day dangers of the Anthropocene (112). In other words, future-oriented genres such as science fiction, can use speculative futures to remind of us of past and current destitution, in order for the reader to develop a suitable awareness of what needs to be addressed in the present (113).

Within the context of this thesis, our focus will be on how science fiction can interact with and critique the Anthropocene's history of oppression towards those who have been designated as 'other'. This is certainly the case with *The Broken Earth Trilogy*.

Jemisin has noted in an interview with Jessica Hurley that she draws "a lot of material from a number of different experiences of oppression, like being closeted from queerness, or

drawing from the Holocaust [...] when you look at human history, it's full of Fifth Seasons (the series' name for intermittent cosmic disasters), full of apocalypses [...] I wanted to draw a world that felt realistic" (Vermeulen, 113). In this interview, Jemisin shows that despite the *Broken Earth Trilogy* being set in a fictional future world, themes and plot points are drawn from our own. Within the Anthropocene, Jemisin draws from large historical contexts, as well as paralleling contexts from more recent times, with issues stemming from modernity in capitalism, and the othering and dehumanization apparent in genocides such as the Holocaust. *The Stillness* is plagued by its own history of oppression and cataclysmic events, which urges the reader to reflect and change the way in which they think in the Anthropocene, as presented through science fiction.

2.1 Science Fiction

Science fiction is a literary genre that can help us understand, discuss and critique issues revolving around the Anthropocene, while also presenting solutions in posthuman convergences. As Adam Roberts discusses in his study *Science Fiction*, however, science fiction is also challenging to define (2). In order to grasp the genre's totality, we can look back at its origins, before we delve into a broader understanding of it as a concept.

Historically, science fiction is seen to have gothic origins in works such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), and its awe-inspiring use of the imagination and sublime. Others may trace the genre back to 'science fictional' elements in ancient literature, where stories of strange new worlds and civilisations, or journeys to the moon appeared (37).

As science has consistently evolved throughout the existence of science fiction, ancient literature has subsequently missed the mark when referring to the cosmos. Early visions of outer space did not take into account the understanding of a heliocentric solar system, and it was not until the seventeenth century that astronomical instruments, and seventeenth-century science provided for literature to have a proper understanding of the universe (39).

Similarly, developments in both science and literature has caused the genre to constantly evolve as time has passed. The term 'Science-fiction' itself was coined by American magazine editor Hugo Gernsback in 1927, and throughout the development of the genre, there have been many efforts to categorize it, as well as to trace common characteristics in science fiction narratives (38).

More recently, it has been referred to more within the *speculative fiction* umbrella, which is a concept that refers to literature that contains imagined worlds or events where "thought experiments, the 'what if?', is crucial" (Mendlesohn 4). Within the scope of science fiction, this speculation may revolve around speculation of new technological advancements and discoveries in speculated futures, as alternate worlds and histories are created. These futures may be contained within both our own world and other worlds alike (1).

Before delving into narrative characteristics, we will look at a general definition of the genre, and the issues such a basic definition may present. Rather than thinking of science fiction as a genre, one might understand it better as mode of writing, which tends to borrow plot structures from other genres, often combining *sf* narratives with mystery, romance, horror, etc. to discuss and speculate upon any issues or alternative futures the narratives wish to raise (Mendlesohn 2). As we move along, the abbreviation of 'sf' will often appear in place of 'science fiction', for ease of reading.

Formally, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines sf as “imaginative fiction based on postulated scientific discoveries or spectacular environmental changes, frequently set in the future or on other planets and involving space or time travel”, and states that it is a term which came into common usage in the 1920s (OED qtd in Roberts 3-4). Differentiating science fiction from “realist” fiction, this definition provides a basic understanding of sf as a genre which delves into worlds different from our own. However, while pointing towards frequent or popular plot points, the definition does not encapsulate the entirety of what the narratives can be. For instance, narratives concerned with alternative histories, cyborgs or other technological inventions are left out (4). Additionally, the definition does not entirely encapsulate what science fiction can do to critique and discuss social issues and injustices. If we compare the genre to fantasy, science fiction revolves around what is scientifically possible, no matter how unlikely it may be, while fantasy narratives focus on the impossible (James, Mendelsohn (Fantasy) 1). Furthermore, in an academic context, approaches to defining science fiction by critics will often contradict or be modified by others, as the narratives are extensive, multivalent and of ever-evolving complexity (Roberts 1). Therefore, as we start to delve into how *The Broken Earth Trilogy* fits into the genre, we will simultaneously define this thesis’ understanding of the genre, and delineate which narrative structures will be in focus.

2.1.2 Otherness

A prominent idea within science fiction, and a key component in understanding how Jemisin interacts with the world and the individual through text, is othering. In Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, she views sf as a derivative of fantasy (4), and lays out how important the 'other' is in these narratives: "Fantastic literature has always been concerned with revealing and exploring the interrelations of the 'I' and the 'not-I', of self and other" (31). This, I will argue, is also the case for *The Broken Earth Trilogy*.

In this case, Jackson's definition of fantastical literature includes sf. However, it can also be argued that *The Broken Earth Trilogy* possesses some characteristics more typical of fantasy. As imagined literature, the trilogy utilizes some fantastical tropes, such as the stone eaters, the sentient Father Earth, and the supernatural powers of orogenes and guardians. Aside from Father Earth, these powers and alternative identities can be traced back to imagined technology – which keeps with sf traditions. Furthermore, what these elements have in common is how they can be viewed as "other", as they explore the boundaries of what is expected in the Anthropocene with its core focus on the human being and its sense of subjective selfhood.

The interpenetration of self and other, which has been a curious theme throughout the history of fantastical literature, has traditionally been viewed in two different ways. Firstly, otherness may be viewed as uncanny, evil, different; as a threat. On the other hand, it may be viewed as marvellous and wonderful; as a solution.

Presentations of otherness can appear in a multitude of different ways. In fantastical literature, presentations of religious fantasies, alternate species, elves, dwarves and the like, focuses on otherness found outside of oneself, and constitutes what Jackson calls a *supernatural economy*. In the opposing *secular economy*, however, otherness is "read as a projection of merely human fears and desires transforming the world through subjective perception". The 'other' is rather viewed as strange or uncanny (14). In other words, what one sees in an 'other' reflects one's own self, in fears or desires. Therefore, if one dehumanizes and views otherness as pejoration, this is due to an inward sense of fear, where the 'other' produces the uncanny or strange.

Within the origins of science fiction in a gothic context, this can be exemplified in the uncanny otherness of, for instance, Frankenstein's monster. He is assembled from various human body parts and brought to life by a human. Despite the body parts being described as beautiful, the resulting creation becomes an uncanny reflection of human fears, which goes so far that even his creator is disgusted by him.

Furthermore, the depiction of aliens, morphed bodies, and strange, uncanny projections of self, popularly appear throughout science fiction as a genre. Various depictions of otherness are prominent in *The Broken Earth Trilogy*, both secular and supernatural, and they cause multiple interpretations, both for the characters in the trilogy and the reader alike. However, the secular is emphasized, as questions of self, humanity and subjective perception are problematized throughout the trilogy.

It is also presented as a liberating thought, which shows similarities to posthuman convergences. For instance, the portrayal of humanoid creatures who are not quite human, provide a sense of uncanny unfamiliarity, which can be seen in the orogenes - and it is exactly these unfamiliar others who rescue the world.

The reason behind this othering within sf, is because sf narratives tend to want the reader to question the world's dominant ideologies and expectations, by making the familiar unfamiliar. Processes of othering are further prevalent throughout the trilogy, with examples in the setting, characters and even pronouns, through the unconventional use of second person pronouns in Essun's narrative.

2.1.3 Science fiction and Otherness

For this thesis' understanding of science fiction, and of how *Broken Earth Trilogy* fits into the genre, we have already identified how a variety of approaches, characteristics, and the history behind the genre can cause difficulties with identifying a singular linear understanding of what science fiction literature is. Jemisin uses various literary devices, established in the long science fiction canon, as well as presenting both traditional and contemporary sf themes, which serve as a critique to the Anthropocene through othering and posthuman ideals.

It is evident that Jemisin's depiction of the Stillness portrays the strange and the other as familiar, which connects with posthuman ideas of embracing alternative viewpoints and solutions. To further encapsulate how these viewpoints appear in the trilogy through the guise of science fiction, and to clarify some of the concepts and terms that will be used in the analysis chapters of this thesis, we will continue to look at fundamental premises, shared essences, and underlying grammar prevalent in a wide range of science fiction literature, as presented by prominent science fiction critics such as Darko Suvin and Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, as well as more contemporary critics Farah Mendlesohn and Donna Haraway.

As a working understanding of science fiction narratives that underpins this thesis, we can point towards a definition of sf from Donna Haraway in her *Promises of Monsters*, which relates to arguments on the relations between humans and others: "Science fiction is generically concerned with the interpenetration of boundaries between problematic selves and unexpected others and with the exploration of possible worlds in a context structured by transnational technoscience" (Haraway, *Promises of Monsters* 300). This quote describes how science fiction revolves around the relations and difference between people, humans, alternate organisms and machines. Prevalent within sf, these relations can be used to discuss the identity of self, which can be problematized through the unexpected, unfamiliar other, appearing in alternate species and viewpoints from the readers. Combined with technology and science, the exploration of possible worlds where this technology has advanced to unfamiliar places, science fiction reveals itself as a mode which can criticize and discuss endless possibilities. These critiques can, for instance, critique the world as we know it, which can be categorized in a variety of ways, but particularly through the designations of epochs that attempt to describe our current predicament – such as the Anthropocene.

Sf as speculative fiction, relates to what Darko Suvin calls the "novum" (Suvin 63, qtd in Mendlesohn 4), of which he describes the 'idea' which the speculation within sf revolves around. Suvin describes a novum as a "novelty, or innovation, validated by cognitive logic",

which possesses narrative dominance (Suvin 63). In other words, a novum is a phenomenon which can be understood by the reader despite being foreign in terms of it not appearing in our own world.

As will be discussed in the following chapters, Jemisin uses nova to ask critical questions about humanity and the Anthropocene. For instance, the existence of *orogenes*, people with abilities that makes them capable of sensing the earth and manipulating nature, can be described as a novum. Orogenes are characterized by their supernatural abilities, which stem from the fictional organ of the *sessapinae*.

The *sessapinae* is described as an additional part of the brain which appears in all humans in the stillness, but only actively produces supernatural abilities in some. As the logic behind the novelty is cognitively understandable for the reader, and the narrative distinctly revolves around it, the *orogenes* serve as an apt example of a novum.

If sf narratives revolve around speculation and nova, the rest of the plot remains unidentified, where critics often show discontent with generalizing sf narratives into simple plot threads. However, there are certain narrative elements, which have been described by critics to appear in most, if not all sf narratives.

One narrative element, which was prominent throughout the conception of sf as a genre, was coined by David Nye as the ‘sense of wonder’, in his *The American Technological Sublime* (1994), which ended up being quite primitive in comparison to what sf has become. This sense of wonder can be described as an appreciation of both natural and technological sublimities. For instance, the cosmos as a natural sublime, or intergalactic space stations as the technological sublime. However, the sense of wonder is a fragile phenomenon, as it weakens by familiarity (Mendelsohn 1-4, referencing Nye 14-15). In other words, by reading numerous science fiction narrative which over-rely on the literary tool, the genre would end up becoming stale and predictable for the reader.

Ever since the pulp era in the 1920s, this sense of wonder has been regarded as one of the main attributes of sf, with early titles in sf magazines using key words such as “*Astounding, Amazing, Wonder Stories, Thrilling, Startling, etc.*” (Csicsery 71). Although ‘Sense of Wonder SF’ helped establish an early artistic framework in which modern sf has been formed (Roberts 42), early science fiction would often restrict itself to these affective values, rather than the critical commentary and discussion it is known for today.

Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, in his *On the Grotesque in Science Fiction*, argues that restricting sf to a “sense” seems to oppose ideas and intellectual investigation, whereas “wonder” discourages analytical thought (71). Thus, as the sense of wonder poses an

important attribute throughout the development of sf literature, Csicsery argues that relying on the sense alone proves problematic regarding critical thought within sf as an intellectual genre. The sense of wonder is a device used for outward sensations, as a sense of awe when faced with spectacular space, technology, and the supernatural economy of otherness, while other devices shift the focus inwards, and towards the secular economy of otherness.

Since the establishment of the sense of wonder, several other literary devices have developed within the mode which counteract its simplicity. The first, which became popular in sf literature in late 1930s, establishes itself as a response to the sense of wonder with what Csicsery describes as the *grotesque* (Mendelsohn 2, referencing Csicsery 71-99). As a counterpart to the sublime, the two are described as responses to the sense of wonder (Csicsery 71-72). As the sublime is described as “imaginative shock” when trying to understand unimaginable and great objects, the grotesque provides a more visceral reaction, as an imaginative shock of a more inward nature.

In the context of this thesis, I will also use “imaginative shock” as a concept to illuminate various processes of othering. Within the grotesque, it is a reaction either observed through new scientific inventions or synthesized by them, which sf narratives use in order to both create a response within the fictional universe and within the reader of the novel. The grotesque is an example of a literary device in science fiction, that appears to make us think differently. Through unnatural events, the reader can be freed from the anthropocentric constraints of the Anthropocene as we delve into fictional landscapes and thought-provoking themes.

With examples in the aesthetics of the unnatural fusing of objects and bodies, the grotesque opens possibilities of unprecedented synthetizations and combinations. For instance, in the grotesque organicism physical forms are re-imagined, such as in the altered bodily shapes and mutating bodies of aliens, often breaking boundaries between organic life and technology (Csicsery 82, 92).

This is exemplified in *The Broken Earth trilogy* in the portrayal of the transformations of select orogenes into *stone eaters*. After extensive use of their powers to affect the earth, select orogenes would turn into stone, to later be reborn as a new “species”, named stone eaters. Stone eaters appear to be roughly human, albeit made out of stone, which they also eat, while also possessing uncanny characteristics, supernatural strength, and powers to traverse through solid earth.

Freed from the boundaries of gender, race, class and time, the stone eaters are immortal beings of stone. They serve as an example of an inwards imaginative shock, which

causes a response in the characters internal to the fictional universe, who tend to find them disgusting, and in the reader, who, ideally, psychoanalytically deliberates on the boundaries of bodies and what it means to be human.

Another of these characteristics of sf is how sf can use description as a stand-in to characterization by “making cognitive estrangement storyable”, especially in the manner in which it characterises the world (Suvin 15, qtd in Mendlesohn 8). The term “cognitive estrangement” is another term coined by Darko Suvin, which is defined as a literary construction where elements in a fictional world are dissonant with the readers’ world (Mendlesohn 5). For instance, in the way scientific or biologic universal truths may be wildly different from what the reader expects to be true.

Regarding the world in which the plot of a sf novel takes place, it will often see itself become central in the objective of the story, sometimes even to the point of being portrayed as thinking and feeling, that is, as alive. Thus, as fictional worlds become characters in a story, their significance and involvement in the narrative becomes clearer. This is the case in *The Broken Earth Trilogy*, as the earth is a central element in the narrative, and is personified as *Father Earth* by its inhabitants.

It is later discovered that Father Earth, in fact, possesses sentience, and has been waging war against his inhabitants due to humanity’s vast exploitation of his power. As this is ‘other’, and different from expectations of a purely natural earth in the readers’ world, it serves as an example of cognitive estrangement through the grotesque patriarchal personification of Father Earth. He is an existence, who is depicted to despise humanity, for its greed and abuse of life. Presented as a male force, rather than the traditional ‘Mother Earth’, the name itself also causes estrangement, which leads us to our next point on the use of language in sf.

In terms of language, lexical invention has become part of the encoded nature of sf, in the sense that new and foreign terms are used frequently. As language is not trustworthy, “metaphor becomes literal” (Mendlesohn 5). This causes the reading of science fiction to become one of translation, with invented language creating dissonance, and the reader will either understand the meaning or create their own where there is none (6).

In modern science fiction, where characters tend to be familiar with their land, there would be no need to explicitly explain what any unfamiliar terms mean, as the characters already use and understand them in their day-to-day speech (7). This could be the case in, for instance, varying understandings of gender, conception, death and identity, in senses and boundaries of self. *The Broken Earth Trilogy* uses this kind of linguistic cognitive

estrangement, as it is not explicitly explained what most foreign terms are throughout the trilogy. The reader must piece together context clues, by gathering more information as the narrative moves on.

Already in the prologue of the first book, *The Stone Sky*, we are presented with terms such as *Seasons* (cataclysmic environmental events) and *comms* (distinct communities which serve specific purposes), and fictional places such as *The Nomidlats*, *Old Sanze* and *Palela* are spoken of as if they are known. Thus, since such devices make the narrative become unfamiliar to readers, “layering, embedding and shorthand endemic” (8) become essential in order to rescue sf from didacticism. In other words, narrative becomes unfamiliar, by avoiding explicitly stating what certain phrases and words mean through pages of dialogue (which would often be the case in early sf) (8). Therefore, authors will include unfamiliar terms throughout their narratives, causing the reader to be able to deduce their meaning for themselves. This will often be combined with a sense of alienation as a central element of character, where these functions cause sf texts to be open to a variety of interpretations (10).

2.2 Sites of Otherness

As geological epochs have been created to categorize eras and epochs throughout history, -cenes have appeared to categorize the most recent ones within the Cenozoic era. The Holocene is designated as the current geological epoch following the last ice age 11700 years ago (Collins). -Cene is a suffix which originates from the Greek word *kainos*, meaning recent, and is attached to recent epochs in the history of earth. However, not all designations are unanimously agreed upon as correct.

The Anthropocene is just one of many unofficially proposed replacement epochs of the Holocene that describe the current state of the earth. Additionally, it is a contested argument as to when, exactly, the Anthropocene started.

As the general definition states that the epoch is centred around human activity's impact on the planet's climate and ecosystems, this can generally be traced to three different starting points. These options range from either some thousands of years ago, with the early Anthropocene theory, the industrial revolution, and lastly, the great acceleration (Zalasiewicz et al. 1). The latter two are more modern and pronounced in the direct ties between modernity, ideology, and their subsequent effect on the planet.

Literature dealing with ideology, engages with "the governing social, cultural and especially political ideas, images and representations of a society" (Bennett and Royle 370); ideas which are apparent in the modern views of the Anthropocene where ideologies pertaining to human gain and superiority is a main factor in the degradation of the planet, and oppression of minorities.

Furthermore, the Anthropocene can also function to discuss the ideological framework humanity has been in since the industrial revolution. In terms of *The Broken Earth* trilogy, Jemisin's portrayal of ideological frameworks parallels those in the cultural and industrial history of the western world, and often the United States. For instance, in capitalistic greed, slavery and dehumanization as consequences of ideology.

In the case of slavery, *The Broken Earth Trilogy's* depiction of the dehumanization and "ownership" both *of*, and *by* alternate identities, in orogenes and guardians respectively, provides parallels to the dehumanization apparent in slavery.

In English sociologist and scholar, Paul Gilroy's *Small Hands*, he dedicates a chapter to a discussion with American novelist Toni Morrison, which among other issues, discusses slavery, and the dehumanization slaves and slave owners alike were faced with:

"Slavery broke the world in half, it broke it in every way. It broke Europe. It made them into something else, it made them slave masters, it made them crazy. You can't

do that for hundreds of years and it not take a toll. They had to dehumanize, not just the slaves but themselves. They have had to reconstruct everything in order to make that system appear true” – Toni Morrison (Gilroy 178).

Similar to the way in which slavery broke the world in half, the oppression in *The Broken Earth trilogy* literally broke the world. Both in the revolt from tuners and Father earth causing the moon to be launched away, and in the rifting, cutting the continent in half. However, it also figuratively broke the world in half, as humanity is divided into self and other, based on whether or not someone possesses an active sessapinae. The dehumanization of slave masters, is apparent in guardians, who are the “leash” put into place to dehumanize and control orogenes, while they themselves are simultaneously dehumanized and othered, as the ideology which permits these actions is fundamentally broken.

Furthermore, slavery can fit into our understanding of the Anthropocene. This is apparent not just in the atmospheric degradation caused by carbon dioxide emissions from the steam engine used throughout the slave trade, but also in the systematic enslavement of peoples and their subsequent suffering in a perspective connected to otherness and dehumanization (Outka 31).

Paul Outka, in his *Slavery and the Anthropocene*, discusses the inextricable nature of race antagonism and the Anthropocene, particularly in the case of white enslavers in the US: “the very institution of slavery itself, naturalized the absolute dominance of those considered fully human over whatever they considered natural, a hierarchy that has made racial and environmental politics inseparable” (31). Outka places the environmental crisis in relation to the development of slavery and the ideology revolving around it. Slave owners did not view racialized others as fully human, rather naturalizing them as lesser beings in a context of “white supremacy and racial oppression” (31). These constructs of nature, humanity and capital are further discussed in more detail in alternative ways of defining the world we live in.

In addition to the Anthropocene, examples of other attempts at naming our current predicament arise in the Plantatinocene, Capitalocene and Cthulucene (Haraway *Anthropocene*, 159). Just as Jemisin portrays distinctly different future world orders and ways of living in the Stillness, these –cenes show how time and place interact as we move towards the future. Jemisin’s world of the Stillness presents fictional future societies, to warn us of the dangers of the present state of the world, and where they can lead to if not addressed. Similarly, -cenes are often presented to describe the dangers of our current behaviour, and what can happen if nothing changes.

As the Anthropocene appeared as a popular term to refer to humanity's effect on the earth, others have followed suit. New terms appear as limiting ways to argue for humanities effect on the world to the Anthropocene, can cause it to be disproportionately conveyed. This is the case as typically privileged communities and constituencies bear more responsibility compared to marginalized groups that the planetary crisis may affect negatively (Vermeulen 7). A -cene that will be important for this thesis, is the *Capitalocene*, which arose as a counter-point to the Anthropocene misrepresenting the role of capitalism, and will be discussed in the following section.

2.2.1 Capitalocene

Donna Haraway, in her *Staying with the Trouble (Experimental Futures): Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, presents the *Capitalocene*, which focuses more on the ways in which capitalism and capital has influenced the earth and its inhabitants. Together with the Anthropocene, Haraway deems *Anthropos* and *Capital* as exterminating forces, which are important to discuss for this thesis (2). This is because effects of capital, exploitation of human and non-human resources, and its effect in the destruction on the environment is central in *The Broken Earth Trilogy*.

The trilogy delves into the history of the Stillness, the world in which the main narrative takes place, as well as society 40,000 years prior to the main plot of the story. In the latter, we are presented with a futuristic society, in which human development has come so far that they set their sights on the moon for further domination of power sources. The exploitation of orogenes, then *tuners*, causes revolt, as the moon is launched out of orbit, setting the stage for continuous natural disasters plaguing the Stillness for the next forty millennia.

The Capitalocene is also discussed by Marxist sociologist Jason Moore in *The Capitalocene, Part I: on the nature and origins of our ecological crisis*. Here, he argues against the “shallow historicization” of the Anthropocene, by discussing certain scholars’ arguments of that the Anthropocene originates in the Industrial Revolution. Despite the Industrial revolution’s clear impact on the acceleration of environmental change, Moore explains how these changes more aptly fit into “patterns of power, capital and nature established four centuries earlier” (594). Encapsulating this thought, the Capitalocene and its impact can be traced back to the development of capitalism evident four centuries prior to the Industrial revolution, as the precursor to modern capitalism.

Moore periodises capitalism to early-modern origins, with Columbus’ conquest of the Americas, and English and Dutch agricultural revolutions in the 1400s. His arguments revolve around the power capitalism has brought to those participating in it, and how it has contributed to ravage natural resources throughout its existence.

As we compare Moore’s arguments to the world of *The Stillness*, we might compare the power structures dominant in the trilogy, to the power structures Moore argues lead up to human impact on the world. This is important, as the Stillness does not always benefit from the same technological advances in its post-apocalyptic scenarios, with exceptions in the lost

technology from Syl Anagist. Instead, we can look at the ideological detriments capitalism causes for the characters, for instance in the commodification of orogenes.

Furthermore, Moore's arguments stem from a discontentment with the Anthropocene's human/nature binary, as *Humanity* is often differentiated from *Nature* as the driving force behind its impending doom. He argues that the concepts of 'Humanity' and 'Nature' are viewed as abstractions with operative force. They are viewed as ideas which have been given their own distinct meanings and distinctly different roles, in disconnect, when humans and nature are in fact interconnected in the webs of life (Moore 595). In other words, human exceptionalism in the Anthropocene distinctly views human relations as separate from nature in Humanity, or *Anthropos*: a singular homogenous unit, of which the intricacies of humanity's differences, distinctions and involvement with nature become erased. Moore argues that Humanity as a geophysical force can be acknowledged, while still considering humans, humanity, as a species within the web of life, a part of nature.

This viewpoint goes further in its connection to the Capitalocene, as capitalism is viewed as a part of humanity, as well as a part of nature. Thus, as capitalism and the power-structures leading up to it has had detrimental effects on nature since its conception, this effect is just as much directed towards human and extra-human life as it is the ravaging of natural resources, the destruction of ecosystems and ecological horrors (597).

Viewing human organizations as a part of nature can help us understand socio-ecological connections. This distinction is important to keep in mind, as *The Broken Earth Trilogy* presents humans and nature in unison. Orogenes are a part of the nature they control directly through their powers, just as much as nature controls them through various power structures. The Capitalocene can help us understand the current state of the world, but responses to our current predicament vary.

This is apparent as we learn of the technological empire Syl Anagist, which has transcended any expectations of what technology we would expect to see in our own world, yet the empire is still faced with the horrors of capitalism. The consequences of these horrors, are evident when their endless hunger for more, and expectations that technology will solve their need for more energy backfires, causing the Stillness to be faced with continuous natural disasters.

This can be linked to Haraway's dismissal of two popular responses to the "horrors of the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene", which she deems impatient. The first, being a "comic faith in technofixes, whether secular or religious". The idea that technology, or even God will somehow save humanity, and thus all one needs to do is wait. (Haraway, *Staying*

With The Trouble 3) It is, however, important to embrace technological advancement and ideas, which can have many benefits. Second, is the idea that it is too late to make a difference, as the world has become too far gone in its everlasting hunger for more within the bounds of Anthropos and Capital. She argues that if nobody thought what they did mattered, no progress will be made, as such cynicism hinders growth, and discourages others (4).

2.3 Posthumanity as absolute Otherness

As we have discussed the Anthropocene, Capitalocene and the many horrors which plague the earth, and are critiqued through sf, we arrive at one solution in the absolute otherness of the *posthuman*. *Posthumanity* questions human supremacy, and “confronts established categories of ontology, identity and agency” (Hellstrand 68). It is defined by Ian Buchanan, in the *Oxford Dictionary of Critical Theory*, as an eco-conscious discourse that finds difficulty in the delineation of differences between human, non-human and animal entities (358-359).

Beyond this, the posthuman as a concept is further defined and reflected upon in Rosi Braidotti’s study *The Posthuman*, as one which goes beyond anthropocentric ideas within Humanism (15). The concept is apparent in debates on issues of identity, in discourse about the way technological advancements impact the way humans both interact and can transcend bodily limits through the non-human, with, for instance, visions of trans-humanism, technologically enhanced bodies through prosthetics, and visions of extraordinary bio-engineering (2). Furthermore, within posthumanism, the category of ‘human’, becomes a “changeable identity” (Hellstrand 68), as the nature of what it means to be human is questioned, and viewed as a performative action.

As Braidotti argues against a Eurocentric paradigm within Humanism, she instead raises the posthuman as a continuation of anti-humanist inclusive theories. She argues that Humanism, which imposes “binary logic of identity and otherness as respectively the motor for and the cultural logic of universal Humanism”, negatively views “difference” as pejoration.

Within “universal” (Eurocentric) humanism, Otherness is viewed as the negative counterpart to the rational and ethical Subjectivity (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 15). In other words, with a binary viewpoint and logic of identity and otherness, universal Humanism disposes of those who are viewed as “others”, instead focusing on the subjectivity which is important within a Eurocentric view of humanity. Thus, the “sexualized, racialized and naturalized” (15) others, are reduced to secondary status and viewed as disposable bodies, less than human.

If humanism is imperial and Eurocentric, speaking in favour of the binaries of race, class and sex of European bodies and viewpoints; the posthuman views difference and “otherness” as central to its arguments. This is evidently a main concern for Jemisin, as we are presented with the disposable others in alternative beings, who embrace their otherness, as they become central to the narrative of saving the world.

Furthermore, the issue of posthuman subjectivity appears free from binary thought, in contrast to prior ideas of human subjectivity apparent in humanism developed since the Enlightenment. As noted by Braidotti; “The production of the figure of ‘the human’ is located within the violent colonial history of racialization” (*Posthuman Feminism* 37). ‘The human’ has historically been viewed in a racially divided binary, where those who do not possess the characteristics of Western ideals are thus less than human.

Furthermore, the posthuman convergence furthers the Capitalocene’s rejection of a human-nature divide, as binary systems and distinctions reduce the complexity in important matters, and should instead be approached from a more diverse approach (101). Although posthumanism’s ideas contrast Humanism, it is less anti-humanist than a search for alternatives in a different discursive framework (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 37).

Examples of alternatives within posthuman subjectivity will be discovered as we begin to discuss *The Broken Earth Trilogy*, where characters who go beyond what is traditionally viewed as human appear, which deconstructs anthropocentric expectations that dominate Eurocentric humanism.

2.4 The Broken Earth trilogy

The Broken Earth Trilogy is a series filled with speculation, which the following part of this thesis will argue revolves around the literary devices, genre characteristics and themes of science fiction that function collectively to critique the Anthropocene and establish posthuman ideals. This is done through various notions of otherness and subjectivity, apparent in the creation of alternative human and non-human identities.

Jemisin presents ideas which function to de-centre the human, and establishes narratives of radical struggles for equality. As speculative fiction, it interacts with a speculative past and future, which both draw parallels to the readers' world. It will investigate how this can be aided by a post- or non-anthropocentric view on subjective truths; both by using narrative devices as well as experimentation with depictions of identity. The chapter also seeks to unpack how N.K. Jemisin's trilogy measures up to traditional science fiction narratives, by looking inwards towards the earth and critiquing colonial and capitalistic ravaging of the earth and its resources, both human and non-human.

3. A close reading of The Broken Earth Trilogy

This chapter investigates how *The Broken Earth Trilogy* interacts with the ideas and issues which have been discussed in the literary review. Each of the novels in the trilogy has important aspects which will be discussed, and in order to present a fulfilling investigation on certain posthuman aspects, such as the origin of stone eaters, the revelation of Hoa as the narrator, and the Syl Anagist narratives, it is imperative to incorporate the entire trilogy into this analysis. This analysis chapter is divided into two parts:

The first, entitled *Sameness*, investigates how the trilogy draws parallels to anthropocentric ideals in the Anthropocene and Capitalocene, and how Jemisin presents these in order to critique the horrors of history.

The second, entitled *Otherness*, investigates how Jemisin presents posthuman ideals as solutions, or alternative ways of thinking, that go beyond what is expected or tolerated in an anthropocentric society.

We will begin the analysis of sameness, by investigating the two different places in time Jemisin brings us to in her narratives, and how these fictional structures parallel ideological values that lead to injustices, marginalization, discrimination and racism, apparent in the Anthropocene and Capitalocene.

3.1 Sameness – the problem

The Broken Earth trilogy presents us with two different social orders that exist at two different times in the history of their planet. Yet the two social orders possess similarities in the way they oppress and enslave those who are presented as other. In the past narrative, we learn about an empire known as *Syl Anagist*, a futuristic society who attempts to harness the power of the earth in order to push their technological evolution. This is made possible through the combined power of *tuners* and *obelisks*. In the present narrative, we learn about structures of oppression that undermines any semblance of societal life for orogenes. The world's history of oppression is presented in a cyclical manner, as we learn of events and circumstances that parallel the Anthropocene and Capitalocene.

3.1.1 Syl Anagist

Tuners are the predecessors of orogenes, turned stone eaters, who were created by Slynagistines (natives of Syl Anagist) to provide energy for the empire. Obelisks, at first described as “massive crystalline shards that hover amid the clouds” (*TFS* 8), are later revealed to be powerful “engines” (*TSS* 196), used by tuners in Syl Anagist to power the empire. Like orogenes, tuners were also held captive, living for purposes not decided by themselves. Of course, this is until they are sent on a mission to the moon, in order to achieve *Geoarcany* - a “comic faith in technofixes” (Haraway, *Staying With The Trouble* 3), that “seeks to establish an energetic cycle of infinite efficiency” (*TSS* 97).

Syl Anagist attempts to create a device of infinite energy by awakening the *Plutonic engine*, an assemblage of all obelisks, creating a “self-perpetuating” energy source which feeds on the life of the planet (*TSS* 322). Their “noble” goal of abolishing the world of problems is dependent on tuners, but it will also rid the world of the need them: “If successful, the world will never know want or strife again...or so we are told” (*TSS* 97). Syl Anagist’s crucial mistake could be described as ignorance, but even “ignorance is an inaccurate term for what this was” (322). They had failed to account for those who would resist.

Firstly, the tuners, who’s future in a world where the tool loses its usefulness was unknown, and as they had experienced Syl Anagist’s “hunger for magic, which “grows with very drop it devours”, they feared that *Geoarcany* would not be the end of it (334). They stage a revolt during the process of *Geoarcany*, with the goal of blasting the energy from the plutonic engine through Syl Anagist, in order to end their greed once and for all.

Secondly, the existence of Father Earth as a sentient being, who fought back against the attempt at indefinitely stealing his energy. Thus, as the project commenced, and the tuners had planned to destroy Syl Anagist with the power of the Plutonic engine, suddenly Father Earth seized control of about half of the obelisks, and a tug-of-war battle between him and the tuners commenced. The tuners were forced to distribute the overflowing kinetic force somewhere, and with the only option being the moon where they were situated, the extreme force caused it to be sent out of orbit, commencing the devastating seasons which persisted for 40,000 years. Simultaneously, it caused the destruction of Syl Anagist, and the solidification of tuners into stone, as consequence of being exposed to the backfiring raw energy, becoming stone eaters: “It chose for us a punishment leavened with meaning: It made us part of it” (*TSS* 341).

The worst punishment was saved for those who “had offended the Earth the most”. However, this action was intended to kill the first guardians, as Hoa notes: “Human will is harder to anticipate than human flesh. They were never meant to continue” (341). Hoa describes the transformation into stone eaters as a punishment dished out upon the tuners by Father Earth. While others on the moon, who played a more structural part in Geocarcany, suffered a perceived much crueller fate, as they are taken control of by corestone fragments, alluding to the creation of the first guardians.

This depiction of the futuristic Syl Anagist’s hunt for more, provides a picture on the dangers of capitalistic ideologies, the exploitative treatment of others, and ignorance apparent in the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene. It is clear that these events provide commentary on capitalism’s detrimental effects on nature, as the effects are directed towards human and extra-human life, through the ravaging of natural resources (Moore 597). Aided by the othering of the tuners, it also demonstrates how dehumanizing others, by utilizing them as tools, is detrimental to society as a whole. It urges for the consideration of the intricacies of life, both the planet and all its various forms of other.

Furthermore, the personification of Father Earth deciding the fate of those who have offended it, places human relations to the planet in an eco-conscious and post-anthropocentric perspective. Humanity is but a small force when compared to the grand scale of the earth, yet it plays a crucial part in the degradation of nature. Altogether, it demonstrates the sameness apparent in *The Broken Earth Trilogy*, in relation to horrors of the Anthropocene and Capitalocene. The dangers of this sameness are also apparent in the “present” narratives of the Stillness, which show how history repeats itself despite the devastating effects that have resulted from it.

3.1.2 The Stillness

This brings us to the narratives 40,000 years into the future, where the dominant governing organs of the Stillness are known as *The Fulcrum*, *Sanzed ruling class*, and the *Guardian Order*, who possess a monopoly on the treatment and “ownership” of orogenes. In the present time of the novels, the Stillness is the only remaining continent, and it is largely divided into a multiplicity of self-governing communities. Especially in the case of the recurring seasons, (cataclysmic events of natural destruction), each community is on its own in its goal of survival.

The world in which we encounter these systems of governance is the same as Syl Anagist, and is portrayed as an alternate future of earth as we know it in the Anthropocene. In both the past and the present narratives, we are presented with depictions of the devastation caused by capitalism which parallels the Capitalocene, and views on identity which can parallel views dominant in the Anthropocene. These views are combined with sf devices, as ideological structures interweave with depictions of alternate othered identities.

Science fiction goes beyond the limitations of regular fiction, as processes of othering are expanded into an unknown territory. Questions of the “‘I’ and the ‘not-I’, of self and other” (Jackson 31) are a central focus in *The Broken Earth Trilogy*, as the majority of characters we meet are systematically othered throughout their lives. This is made possible through the mode of sf, which allows for the depictions of alternative identities. The trilogy focuses on depictions of select orogenes, guardians and stone-eaters, but the Stillness’ variety of peoples and identities provides a diverse landscape of characters to work with, which is made possible through depictions of otherness through the use of sf features.

Jemisin expertly makes use of these sf features to interweave futuristic, posthuman aspects with contemporary issues that dominate the Anthropocene. She shows us how the Anthropocene is a problem through the way we think of ourselves as individuals that are locked in terms of singularities, in gender, race and class. We are beings that are locked into patterns of racial, gendered and class-bound individuals. It is seemingly the only genre or mode which allows for the reader to imagine such issues on the scale it is presented to us.

The familiar is made unfamiliar as we learn of a speculative future, which uncannily faces similar problems of otherness to the Anthropocene. Sf narratives tend to want the reader to question the world’s dominant ideologies and expectations, and this can be seen in the portrayal of sameness in the ideology of The Stillness.

This analysis will further investigate how these structures affect the main characters of the trilogy, specifically in terms of processes of marginalization, ideology and identity that are tied to otherness. In particular, it will investigate how the trilogy portrays “humanity” in comparison to the Anthropocene, and how the ideology of capitalism both affects the characters and drives the narrative. Each character is a product of the environment created through this long history of othering, which ties into the Stillness’ anthropocentric definition of humanity.

Humanity, and humans who dominate the social order in the Stillness are fairly similar to those who dominate the Anthropocene, albeit with one distinct biological difference, which is the sessapinae at the centre of the brain. This is similarly the case for all human and humanoid beings in the narratives, with the main difference between what someone is designated as, is whether the sessapinae is active or not.

As will be shown, according to the dominant ideology, if you possess an active sessapinae, you are no longer human; and are stripped of all rights of humanity. Furthermore, the same ideology others, dehumanizes and commodifies these alternate identities. Orogenes and guardians exist within this scope of systematic oppression, each on their own side of the coin. On the other hand, stone eaters are powerful and autonomous, existing outside of humanity’s societal ideology. The various literary tools and devices Jemisin uses to make us aware of horrors of the Anthropocene will be investigated further in the following sections.

3.1.3 Otherness faced with the horrors of the Anthropocene

Jemisin presents us with various dystopian structures, which are largely due to the ideologies of the ruling classes. Simultaneously, a sense of patriarchy is apparent in the depiction of ‘Father Earth’. More specifically, indoctrination based on ideology can lead to dehumanization, marginalization, racism and othering. These horrors which take place in an alternate world, can be argued to be deliberately linked to the horrors of the Anthropocene.

This section will delve further into plot points which put these horrors into perspective, to make the reader think about the urgency in which these structures should be addressed and dismantled. This includes the relationships between Essun and her family, as well as Schaffa’s relationship with Essun and Nassun respectively. Furthermore, understanding views on orogenes, guardians, and the origin of orogenes in the Niespeople is important to fully understand Jemisin’s dystopian structures and portrayals of otherness.

Jemisin presents a rich variety of racial groups in the Stillness, through a diverse world-building, where each region possesses distinct characteristics. Examples range from coastal people with ebony skin, to mixes of brown hued skin in the Somidlats, and those with white skin in the Antarctic and Arctic regions. Furthermore, the Sanzed empire consists of “ideally” bronze-skinned, six feet tall people (*TFS*, Appendix 2).

Beyond racial diversity, the inhabitants of the Stillness are furthermore divided into various groups, through a caste system which divides and designates households and communities to their livelihood based on their background. These groups are designated by caste-names as their second names. A third name is again based on which community a person belongs to.

Finally, Jemisin presents us with a minority distinguished by supernatural characteristics possessed by some of the inhabitants, who exist within a system of oppression. Orogenes, who can be argued to be the main nova of the story, are continuously abused throughout the narratives. It is notable that orogenes can descend from any racial group, which makes their designation as a “race” illogical at face value. Visually they do not differ from other humans in the Stillness, and they appear sporadically in each race. However, ideology recognizes them as a separated from “humanity”, as they are faced with discrimination, dehumanization and a plethora of injustices throughout their lives.

This majorly stems from a fear of the unexplainable and powerful other, as Schaffa describes it:

“‘The Leadership families of Yumenes believed that orogenes once ruled the world,’ he says. ‘That their duty was to keep your kind from ever regaining that much power. ‘That you would be monstrous rulers of the world, doing back to ordinary folk what had been done to you, if you ever got the chance.’” (TSS 240)

Yumenes is a city and headquarters of the Fulcrum, in which the belief of the leadership families previously perpetuated a myth about orogenes as monstrous beings. This thought survived throughout time, and has led to the current disdain and persecution of orogenes. The ruling factions fear of their own methods being used against them, shows how that they created the issue in the first place. Their fear of the other manifests from a fear of their problematic selves, as it alludes to for instance antisemitism and the Holocaust. Stereotypes and fear branded Jews as a dangerous other, and their subsequent persecution is reminiscent of injustices orogenes historically have been faced with within Jemisin’s speculative world of otherness.

A prominent example of injustices towards orogenes, is presented through the main characters Essun and her daughter Nassun. Already in the first chapter of *The Fifth Season*, the narrative shows how much contempt the inhabitants of the Stillness have towards orogenes. Initially, Essun is presented as “the woman whose son is dead” (TFS 15), and as the narrative continues, we learn why and how her son Uche was killed. It was in fact done by the hands of her husband, Jija, because “Jija realized – ‘That your children are like you’” (22). As Essun’s part of the narrative is written in second person, “you” refers to Essun, and, more specifically, it refers to her identity as an orogene, which Uche shared. But, as the narrator remarks: “That should never have been enough to provoke a father to murder his own child” (23). The murder of Uche by his father shows how deeply the contempt and hatred towards orogenes permeates society.

Within the Anthropocene this can show parallels to the treatment of alternate identities or ideologies through the forms of dehumanization inflicted towards orogenes. It is evidently the “morally right” thing to do, to murder an orogene child when it is discovered they are an orogene. In this sense, the Anthropocene only heeds human life by operating with a limited understanding of what humanity is as its anthropocentric thought is largely motivated by capitalist concerns.

Jemisin’s portrayal of a father irrationally murdering his child due to these fundamental processes of othering created by the system, triggers an imaginative shock of a

visceral level in the reader, which makes us aware of how such ideologies can affect someone. These structures function to shape public discourse on orogenes: “They are orogenes – born cursed and terrible” (193). Even when speaking of themselves, the ideology persists: “Nobody gives a damn whether a couple of orogenes get hurt” (311). The simple existence of an orogene causes Jija to view his wife and children as “other”. His closest family, which is a large part of what could be called his “self”, is affected by these deep processes of othering as these interpenetrate and his first reaction is to murder his own child.

It is not just the common perception of people towards orogenes which evokes such responses, but also the systematic oppression by the governing organ of *the Fulcrum*. The Fulcrum is described as a “self-managed and self-sufficient paramilitary order”, which has the authority to train and use Fulcrum-trained orogenes for purposes which they deem fit (*TFS*, Appx. 2).

The systematic oppression that runs rampant in *The Stillness* is done in collaboration with the Guardian order, which consists of guardians, whose role is to “track, protect, protect against, and guide orogenes in the Stillness” (Appx. 2). As another form of other, it is curious that they are the natural “enemy” of orogenes. When needed, even simple skin-contact with orogenes “turns your orogeny inward” (290). Evidently, there is no alliance between these othered groups. They are at odds with each other despite their identities of otherness.

The independence of orogenes is almost non-existent as everything they do must be in accordance to the guidelines of the Fulcrum and the guardians. As Schaffa explains to Nassun concerning the roles of orogenes and guardians:

Orogenes are essential. And yet because you are essential, you cannot be permitted to have a *choice* in the matter. You must be tools – and tools cannot be people.

Guardians keep the tool... and to the degree possible, while still retaining the tool’s usefulness, kill the person (Jemisin, *The Stone Sky* 178).

Here, Schaffa’s perception of the two is clear. Orogenes are simply tools to be used for their abilities by guardians. If orogenes are unable to be handled, or kept under reign, they are disposed of. As the orogenes are dehumanized, othered, and viewed as tools, the guardians are the ones in charge of keeping the tools. In other words, Schaffa justifies any inhuman actions which may be inflicted upon orogenes by viewing them as less than human.

Historically the dehumanization of groups of people draws parallels to the vast history of racial discrimination, for instance in the treatment of Native Americans, slavery, and the Holocaust. The dehumanization and othering of groups of people has caused boundless suffering and trauma throughout history.

Particularly, in the history of the United States, the relation to slavery and its aftermath as a result of ideology is evident. The United States, which was founded by immigrants, permitted slave owners to flourish by primarily enslaving those of African descent, forcibly taking them from their homes and stripped of their rights to become forced labourers. Those who became slaves did not have a choice in the matter, and were similarly stripped of their humanity to operate as tools. Those in charge of this process were the slave owners, who are comparable to guardians.

Even though guardians are the ones in charge of “keeping” orogenes, they are also presented as other, which can parallel the dehumanization of self, apparent in slave owners, in which this was necessary to reconstruct everything to make their ideology seem true (Gilroy 178). Schaffa had to dehumanize himself in order to act along the lines of Father Earth’s wishes. When he loses his memories, Schaffa’s “blank slate” shows a radical struggle between his new-found interests and what the corestone tells him to do. Before the onset of amnesia, however, Schaffa was desensitized to the horrors he was inflicting on others. Unfortunately, it is not revealed exactly how old Schaffa is, and much of the guardians’ past is left to the imagination. What we do know of Schaffa, is mostly from his interactions with Essun and Nassun.

This brings us to a point where we can examine the two types of relationships Schaffa has with Essun and Nassun respectively, in order to show the detrimental effects of human involvement on the Stillness, which parallels the Anthropocene. Humanity in the Stillness have made their marks to such a great degree on the planet, that only part of humanity is considered to be human. The problem is thus two-fold. Humans seek to govern (and destroy) the planet, but they also seek to govern (and destroy) each other. The destruction of each other is evident in the treatment of orogenes, which is particularly apparent in Schaffa’s relationship with Essun. We can begin by examining Schaffa’s mindset in the beginning of the story after centuries of involvement in the Guardian order.

Schaffa forcibly retrieves Essun from her biological parents’ home in Palela in the start of her narrative as Damaya in *The Fifth Season*. As a newly discovered orogene, she is unaware of what the Stillness has deemed her role in society to be. As Schaffa begins to indoctrinate her throughout their journey to the Fulcrum, Damaya is forced to accept her role as a tool in order to survive. This is proved to be necessary when Schaffa to establish his control breaks her hand with the reasoning: “I will break every bone in your hand, every bone in your *body*, if I deem it necessary to make the world safe from you” (99).

The early depiction of Schaffa's role shows that he will not stop at violence in order to keep the perceived threat of orogenes at bay. The act of forcibly removing someone from their home to serve the ruling factions purposes again mirrors issues of slavery in which the slave trade forcibly removed the othered and dehumanized from their countries to serve as slaves.

On the other hand, Schaffa's relationship with Nassun starts a decade after the raid of Meov, where Nassun's rage causes the death of her child Corundum, and damages Schaffa to the point where he is affected by memory loss, washes up on shore, and forgets much of how his original treatment of orogenes used to be.

When Nassun arrives at *Found Moon* with her father Jija, Schaffa has also settled down here, providing shelter and guidance to a handful of orogene children, together with two other guardians. Their first meeting causes Nassun to instantly feel "defensive" when he suddenly "presses two fingers to the back of her neck" (*TOG* 123), a coercive action in which Schaffa steals the silver, which is apparent in all life, from Nassun, appeasing the part of Father Earth running rampant in his sessapinae. Nassun notices this, but does not understand what it entails. However, she later remembers thinking "He's not alone in there" (124). This refers to the corestone implanted into Schaffa's Sessipinae causing the will of the world to subconsciously affect his actions.

The action of stealing a filament of her silver, her fabric of life, without her consent reads as abusive. Nassun later gives her silver to Schaffa freely as their bond grows stronger. However, their bond is complicated and full of manipulation. Nassun, whose father murdered her brother and despises her identity as an orogene, and whose mother "trained" her in a perceived abuse manner, lacks a parental figure that she so dearly wishes for. Throughout their journey to Found Moon, Nassun is required to continuously manipulate Jija to avoid him killing her, which is not the case with Schaffa. Schaffa appears as a loving parental figure, who embraces her identity as an orogene and commends her for her abilities, despite it going against the beliefs of the world.

As their relationship develops further, Schaffa grows fond of Nassun to the point where his protection and accompaniment of her grows at odds with the piece of Father Earth which has been implanted into his sessapinae. He states:

"'You're my redemption, Nassun. You are all the children I should have loved and protected, even from myself. And if it will bring you peace' He kisses her forehead.

'Then I shall be your Guardian till the world burns, my little one'" (*TSS* 92).

This shows how the guardians' prejudice and what they are told to do, is not due to their own will, but an effect of the patriarchal Father Earth, which forces them to think the way they do.

The voice in Schaffa's head tells him to "use her" and "break her" (180), and when he refuses, he is punished through pain. While this is an element of *novum*, it is also a symbol for how we come to naturalize ideology in our own minds. Father Earth naturalizes his beliefs onto the guardians on a subconscious level through the corestone, while ideology naturalizes its values upon its subjects through the various backgrounds one is faced with. In other words, Father Earth can symbolize the patriarchal, anthropocentric ideology prominent in the Anthropocene, which subconsciously forces its subjects into patterns of submission.

In the case of Schaffa, the corestone functions to force him to do Father Earth's bidding, but following the onset of his amnesia, Schaffa resists. The subconscious battle between self and other in Schaffa's mind persists throughout his journey with Nassun. It finally comes to a breaking point when he travels with Nassun in a pre-civ vehicle to get to *Corepoint* – a remnant of Syl Anagist, where the final act of the story takes place.

During their journey, the vehicle brings them through a long underground path, until they pass by the molten core of the earth: "Slowly, with Schaffa writhing in silent agony in her lap, Nassun turns to face the core of the Earth. And here, within the sanctum of his heart, the Evil Earth notices her back" (*TSS* 245). The following scene shows Schaffa fully lose control of his own mind, to be replaced by a husk carrying the will of the world. Despite the earth's harmful actions appearing as grotesque and terrible, Nassun somewhat emphasizes with him:

"The Earth did not start this cycle of hostilities, it did not steal the Moon, it did not burrow into anyone else's skin and snatch bits of its still-living flesh to keep as trophies and tools, it did not plot to enslave humans in an unending nightmare. [...] Does Nassun not understand this? [...] Can she not empathize? For the world has taken so much from her" (*TSS* 248).

The cycle of hostilities that affect the earth, were not started by Father Earth himself, but rather the long history of those seeking to ravage and abuse his resources, both human and non-human. The world that has taken so much from Nassun is the same ideology that has taken away from Father Earth.

Similar to the Capitalocene that traces its impact back to the development of capitalism, this impact can be traced back to Syl Anagist, with the cyclical capitalistic nature which has persisted into the present day of *The Stillness*. However, the power structures of the present are connected to guardians imbued with the will of the world. Humanity and Nature interlink, and "the world" becomes a multifaceted way of referring to a long history of injustices.

Furthermore, this thought encapsulates the backdrop for the final act, and subsequent

disagreement between Nassun and Essun. Nassun has no-one besides Schaffa. Not even her own family. Thus, she will do anything for this new bond she has found. Even if it goes at odds with the survival of the entire world. Nassun aims to gather the obelisk network to fire it towards downwards, towards the world, for the energy to transform everyone into stone eaters. An action with the objective of saving Schaffa's life, as he has become the most important person in her life: "Humanity, she decides, is a small price to pay for Schaffa's future" (*TSS* 369). Essun, on the other hand, wishes to use the obelisk network to restabilize the oncoming moon, in order to save the very humanity Nassun has forsaken.

Towards the end of the *The Stone Sky*, Essun and Nassun are finally able to meet. However, the circumstances of their reunion are fraught with danger, and with conflicting opinions on what to do with the rapidly approaching moon, understanding seems impossible. The reason behind this, is due to the influence of the world:

She intuits the thing that you have, until now, denied: That it is hopeless. That there can be no relationship between you and her, because the two of you are what the Stillness and the Season have made you. (Jemisin, *The Stone Sky* 373)

Had it not been for the Stillness' view of orogenes or the Season's destruction sending them on separate journeys, their mother-daughter relationship could have been different. At the same time, it is exactly this relationship that will decide the state of the world.

Simultaneously, it is the ideology of the previous empire which leads to them being in this predicament, as their greed caused the moon to be sent out of orbit in the first place. Had they been born to exist in a natural relationship, their bond could have been able to flourish, but they were separated due to ideological structures, as Jemisin shows us how these make us into beings that are harmful to each other, while also providing a narrow definition on what it means to be human.

These presentations of various interconnected dystopian structures, have resulted in the situation at hand. As a mother, Essun wished to harden Nassun as an act of love, because she wanted to help her survive. For Nassun, it was perceived as a signal that her mother did not love her. As Essun grew up in the Fulcrum, with the closest thing to a parental figure being her guardian Schaffa, she did not have any fundamentals of motherhood.

The cyclical nature of abuse is apparent when she recalls how Essun trained her: "I hated it. I yelled at her once. Told her she was mean. I told her I hated her and she couldn't make me do it" (*TOG* 153). Essun's method of raising Nassun to control her orogeny was discouraging for their relationship. This is emphasized when Essun replicates what had been done to her by Schaffa: "She got really quiet. Then she said, 'Are you sure you can control

yourself?’ And then she took my hand [...] She broke it” (153). The very action which started the processes of dehumanization and othering in Essun, was redirected to Nassun.

A terrible society creates terrible people, as the structures evident in the Stillness have laid the ground work for this abuse, and all these have their basis in the Anthropocene. Schaffa’s reaction to this cements these thoughts: “‘That was wrong,’ Schaffa says. [...] ‘It’s wrong to hurt someone you love, Nassun’” (154). Schaffa unknowingly criticises the same action he himself has carried out. His amnesia has placed him outside of the patterns of oppression and abuse he was used to while part of the system of the world.

The trilogy further presents “internal monologues” throughout the story which cement that the world continuously undermines any hope Essun has of a family:

“You’ve always known better. How dare you expect anything else? You’re just another filthy, rusty-souled roggia, just another agent of the Evil Earth, just another mistake of sensible breeding practices, just another mislaid tool. You should never have had children in the first place, and you shouldn’t have expected to keep them once you did” (*TFS* 272).

It is an internal monologue, insofar as this is what Hoa tells us she is thinking. Essun herself has internalized the ideology which dehumanizes and others her. *Roggia* is a derogatory slur towards orogenes that perpetuates this thought. This shows the dangers of dehumanization and othering as pejoration, which can function for the other to think of their treatment as what is to be expected, rather than aspects of complete inhumanity. She views herself as a tool who was mistaken to wish for a family or any semblance of a regular life.

In fact, each of Essun’s relationships with her children have ended in death and devastation. Her first, Corundrum, who she birthed on the island of Meov, together with her mentor, Alabaster, even ended up dying at her own hands, as she would rather kill him than risk his life being spent at the fulcrum: “Better that a child never have lived at all than live as a slave” (*TFS* 441).

Alabaster wishes to change the unfortunate fate of orogenes, which is shown in a note left for Essun where he reveals that the rifting was intentionally caused by him, in order to provide enough energy in the atmosphere for them to manipulate the moon into staying in orbit as it passes by.

“Make it better. I know I told you it wasn’t possible, that there was no way to make the world better, but I was wrong. I’m breaking it because I was wrong. Start it over, you were right, change it. Make it better for the children you have left. Make a world Corundum could have been happy in. Make a world where people like us, you and me

have Innon and our sweet boy, our beautiful boy, could have stayed whole” (*TSS* 300). Alabaster urges Essun to rescue the world and make it a place where orogenes can live without oppression, where the multitudes of beings in the Stillness can live without fear. This can simultaneously be read as Jemisin’s wishes for the world to be changed. However, this is a daunting price for a single, albeit powerful, individual to bear. The world is not easy to change, and the oppression of others have been prevalent for over 40,000 years.

3.1.4 The original other

When discussing the origin of orogeny and magic, we are presented with the *Thniess*, also known as the *Niess* by Sylagistines, who claimed that Niespeople had a perceived sensitivity to magic. As ironic as it is to use the oppressors' language when speaking of the oppressed, the trilogy continuously refers to them as Niess and Niespeople, which for ease of understanding will also be the case for this thesis. In the time of Syl Anagist, the continent was split into three lands, which eventually all became Syl Anagist. A small part of the land they conquered, was inhabited by the Niess, who subsequently scattered across the continents, holding on to their culture however they could. At first, Niespeople were simply viewed as different. They distinctively “split their tongues with salt acid” (*TSS*, 209), and retained a distinct look of ice-white eyes, and acid-proof *ashblow* hair over generations. However, the main reason they were viewed as different was their magic, which Sylagistines desired for themselves. Niess magic was more powerful than Sylanagistine magic, with a major difference being that Niespeople did not use magic for war. It is inferred that this was the reason behind their later oppression:

“How did it begin? You must understand that fear is at the root of such things.

Niespeople looked different, behaved differently, *were* different – but every group is different from others. Differences alone are never enough to cause problems”

(*TSS* 210).

This quote is also a prime example of Jemisin's view of the Anthropocene and their treatment of others. Niespeople were first viewed as different, then othered, and finally dehumanized and feared.

When we compare this fear and othering Niespeople are faced with to traditional science fiction narratives which might present fear through grotesque depictions of aliens or monsters, Jemisin is able to deeply critique concepts of marginalization apparent in the Anthropocene. Jemisin presents the latter, in instances such as the first appearance of a *kirkhusa*. They are described as a “good hundred pounds of healthy-sleek-furred flesh” (*TFS* 185), who usually act as domesticated pets, but change during a season, and attack Hoa and Essun during the start of their journey. Their grotesque depiction and vicious nature provides a sense of fear. And the language Jemisin uses creates cognitive estrangement of beings that do not belong in our own world, in creating beings that feel alien to the reader.

This fear is fundamentally different from the fear Niespeople are faced with. As a phenomenon which functioned to dehumanize and remove the Niess from society completely, any method was used.

However, as the laws of Syl Anagist stated: “It is illegal to kill in Syl Anagist because life is a valuable resource” (Jemisin, *The Stone Sky* 209). Therefore, the Niespeople were not simply murdered or despised for their differences, but they were taken advantage of in a much more horrific way. Instead of death, the Niess were used like starters to an engine in order to help power Syl Anagist. They were strung up amongst sinklines which connected to the obelisks in order to produce power through contact with the silver in their bodies:

“Their hair and nails have not grown, and their bodies have not produced waste that we can see. Nor can they feel pain, I sense instinctively; this, at least, is a kindness. That is because the sinklines take all the magic of life from them save the bare trickle needed to keep them alive. Keeping them alive keeps them generating more”
(*TSS* 262)

Life is indeed valuable for Syl Anagist. Not in a morally righteous way, but in the manner that life can be used as a resource to benefit them in their greed for more, which again parallels capitalistic greed which throughout history has been a key factor in slavery, concentration camps, and any instances where people are kept alive for their value in producing capital. Those who are viewed as other become disposable bodies, and are commodified to serve the purpose of the ruling order.

Jemisin presents us with a similar case in the *node maintainers*, who are completely stripped of any sense of humanity, as they are unconsciously kept alive to subconsciously quell disasters in the surrounding areas. When Syenite is tasked to check on a faulty node maintainer, it is described as such:

“The body in the node maintainer’s chair is small, and naked. Thin, its limbs atrophied. Hairless. There are things-tubes and pipes and *things*, she has no words for them - going into the stick-arms, down the goggle-throat, across the narrow crotch. There’s a flexible bag on the corpse’s belly, attached to its belly somehow, and it’s full of - ugh. The bag needs to be changed.” (*TFS* 139)

Orogenes are valuable for the Fulcrum. So valuable, in fact, that when unwilling or rebelling orogenes appear, they are used in any way possible. The node maintainer was even a child, in which Alabaster remarks “Sometimes a rogga can’t learn control” (140). The grotesque nature of both the Niess and the node maintainers cause an inwards shock in those faced with them, as well as in the reader. The inhumanity in the treatment of the others causes the reader to

psychoanalytically deliberate on what it means to be human. In relation to humanism which reduces the “sexualized, racialized and naturalized” (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 15) others to secondary status, they are similarly viewed as disposable bodies, and less than human, or not human at all. Both *Syl Anagist* and *The Fulcrum*’s use of human lives as an unconscious power-source reveals the cyclical nature of abuse and dehumanization in history. Their ideals of capital gain result in the exploitation of both human and non-human life. If the brutal inhuman treatment of others is relied upon to maintain the world, it would evidently be for the better to search for alternative solutions, which can be found by embracing the other, rather than the grotesque commodification of them.

3.2 Otherness – The Solution

The Broken Earth Trilogy's sf narratives present an abundance of critiques towards the Anthropocene and its capitalistic effects, but they also present alternative solutions through posthuman ideals and otherness. This part of the thesis will investigate how Jemisin uses sf tools to present these solutions and extend our ideas of self. In particular, it is interesting to assess how the trilogy portrays otherness and the posthuman as the solution, by seeking outside of the box for alternative ideas and going beyond anthropocentric views of the world. Despite the trilogy depicting horrific exploitation and dehumanization of marginalized groups, it is the same groups that end up rescuing the world from its impending devastation.

The othering that Jemisin creates with the orogenes is an othering that questions what it means to be human. Orogenes, who possess the power to control the earth, and stone eaters who can traverse through it, are clearly not human. At the same time, that is exactly what they are. As mentioned, posthumanism confronts humanism, with a view of the category of 'human' as a "changeable identity or ontology" (Hellstrand 68). Therefore, when presented with an othered being, who presents as a human and identifies as a human, then that is exactly what they are. This point is exemplified in a conversation between Essun and Hoa in *The Obelisk Gate*:

“Are you human?” At this, you cannot help but laugh once. ‘Officially? No.’ ‘Never mind what others think. What do you feel yourself to be?’ ‘Human.’ ‘Then so am I’”
(TOG 281)

Officially, the ideology of the Stillness designates them as non-human and strips them of any rights humans may possess. However, they cannot be stripped of their own feelings as they go beyond the ideological structures which force them to be non-human. Therefore, they can embrace their own version of humanity. The world views them as non-human, uncanny, dangerous: a threat. But they themselves look past this, embracing their own thoughts on what it means to be human.

3.2.1 Utopias of Otherness

We have previously discussed the dystopian future landscapes presented in the trilogy, and the horrors presented in *Syl Anagist* and *the Stillness*, but the trilogy also offers places of refuge and hope, in *Meov* and *Castrima*. Both of these communities, can be viewed as *utopias of otherness*, as they embrace orogenes, and their otherness as a benefit, rather than the dehumanization they are used to. However, even perceived utopias have their limit, and both communities eventually perish as they are attacked by outside threats. However, their safety and refuge from the ruling factions ideology provides insight into alternative ways the inhabitants of *The Stillness* are able to function when provided a space to do so.

3.2.1.1 Meov

Meov is an island comm, which embraces alternative viewpoints and solutions in their way of life. As an island which is beyond the reach of the *Fulcrum*, *Sanzed* ruling classes and the guardians, their way of life embraces orogenes as beneficial to their community. The orogenes participate in the small society by quelling dangers in tsunamis and natural disasters which would be prevalent on the island if they did not exist. At first, *Essun* feels “out of place”, largely because she does not speak the dominant language of the island. She is perceived as an unfamiliar other by the inhabitants, and with “nowhere to go” (*TFS* 344). However, she soon finds her place as she learns of a different way of life.

Meov is the only option of safety from the guardians, and their imposing ideology which forces them into subservience. It is here that *Essun*, then *Syenite*, forms her first semblance of family in her connection with *Innon* and *Alabaster*. *Innon* is a feral orogene, meaning he has no formal training in the art of orogeny, who serves as the second-in-command for the island comm. *Alabaster* and *Syenite* end up in a polyamorous relationship with *Innon* as *Syenite* mothers her first son, *Corundum*. Their relationship is a portrayal of otherness outside of the boundaries of *The Stillness*. Despite *Syenite* frequently feeling “bored” (363), the comm provides safety for her family. That is, until the guardians find them to once again impose their superfluous values upon them.

As a utopia of otherness, *Meov* provides the first semblance of freedom *Syenite* has had since her upbringing as *Damaya*. She has escaped the constrains of servitude forced upon her by the ruling ideologies of *The Stillness*. Despite *Meov*'s unfortunate demise, it shows how embracing alternate ideas and manners of living provides comfort for those who have been systematically othered throughout their lives.

3.2.1.2 Castrima

Castrima is a comm and a refuge that Essun comes to in search of her daughter, which has a large population of orogenes. Protected by a façade of a rugged abandoned town on the surface, the main complex of Castrima is located underground.

Upon approaching Castrima, she meets Ykka Rogga Castrima, who uses the derogatory ‘rogga’ as her use name, perhaps as an attempt to reclaim the slur used against orogenes. However, Essun remarks: “Naming yourself *rogga* is like naming yourself *pile of shit*” (TFS 268). These thoughts substantiate the Stillness’ thoughts on orogenes, which seem to have inwardly affected Essun to think the same way. However, it also demonstrates Ykka’s philosophy, and what she is trying to achieve in her newly established comm. This is particularly relevant as commentary on contemporary American issues, as for instance, Black Americans who reclaim the “N-word”, which has historically been used to reinforce racial hierarchies by dehumanizing those of African descent. On the other hand Alabaster previously uses the term deliberately when referring to the node maintainers, and the term is described as “a dehumanizing word for someone who is made into a thing” (140). He uses it to portray the horrible way that the term has been used, and continues to be used, as the orogenes live in a continuous state of oppression, which has gone so far as to literally commodify those with orogene identities.

The horrors of dehumanization orogenes are faced with provide an even stronger sense of relief when Essun, who is travelling with Tonkee and Hoa, is presented with the underground marvel which is Castrima. Beyond a facade of a rugged town, and granite tunnels formed by orogenes of a different civilization, an underground city created within a geode is revealed. Essun’s first encounter with the city leaves her in “openmouthed, abject wonder” (TFS 338).

The comm can be described as a sublime; a technological wonder from a lost civilisation. It is simultaneously futuristic and pre-historic. In terms of science fiction, Essun’s wonder also provides an imaginative shock in the reader of the sublime underground city. The wonder is an underground utopia, of which its inhabitants, both orogenes and stills, participate in various functions needed for the community to survive the season. Compared to the outside world, wrought with disaster and effects of the ruling class’ ideologies, Castrima can be viewed as a utopia, as it is a functioning community which disposes of the oppression apparent elsewhere.

It is notable how the sublime is an underground safe-haven, which focuses our sights towards the earth. This helps establish how Jemisin portrays her sf settings in ways where the reader considers what already exists on the planet, and how it can be taken care of. As Jemisin provokes the reader to re-examine the way we think about the planet, the same can be said about how we think about ourselves. This is exemplified in the depiction of stone eaters, who transcend any known boundaries of the 'human'.

3.2.2 Transcending the human – becoming a stone eater.

Stone eaters, are beings who fill everyone with disgust, and it is difficult for the reader to understand exactly how they look. They are depicted as beings of stone, who appear as humanoid statues. Furthermore, they possess the ability to “move through rock like it’s air” (*TFS* 284). As stone eaters are immortal insofar as the earth survives, their perspective on everything is different. Even if they are killed, or shattered, they will survive:

“We cannot die. In ten thousand years or ten million, they will reconstitute themselves from component atoms into which I’ve scattered them A long time in which to contemplate their folly, and do better next time” (*TOG* 233).

This quote describes an account of Hoa murdering fellow stone eaters. The perspective of ten thousand years or ten million, shows the vast length of time stone eaters are capable of living, and his nonchalance on the subject provides insight into stone-eaters disregard for time.

Alabaster furthers this point when he sums up the main difference between stone eaters and humans: “I don’t think it’s what they’re made of that makes stone eaters so different. I think it’s that no one can live that long and not become something entirely alien” (*TOG* 168). The perspective in which stone eaters live, provides a completely different view on time, and the lifespan of humans. Hoa, who has lived 40,000 years already, has lost much of his original personality, yet he retains aspects of humanity in his connection with Essun.

The sheer length of their lives can be read as a wish for humans in the Anthropocene to think in a longer timespan than just their own life. Especially in the destruction of ecosystems which runs rampant in the Anthropocene, Jemisin urges the reader to reconsider the treatment of others, in societies where personal gain is of utmost importance. Furthermore, the stone eater’s slow movement “emphasizes their uncanny nature - so like humanity and yet so wildly different. It would be easier if they were more alien. When they move like this, you can see what they once were, and the knowledge is a threat and warning to all that is human within you” (*TSS* 27). What they once were, refers to that they once were human, or more specifically tuners/orogenes, which technically are not classified as humans in the Stillness. If they were more alien, it would be easier to distinguish their inhumanity and viewing them as non-human altogether.

Stone eaters are particular beings, and when they appear to have liking for someone, they are referred to as the possession of select orogenes. Essun is paired with Hoa, Alabaster with Antimony, Nassun with Steel, and Ykka with Ruby hair. Each relationship is seemingly different from one another, with stone eaters having their own individual reasons for sticking

with an orogene, a similar aspect that appears in Alabaster and Essun's relationships with Antimony and Hoa respectively, is that they eat

The process of turning into a stone eater happens when an exert themselves too much. This is typically depicted when they tap into the power of the obelisks and perform magic and gradually to stone. Essun focuses where the crystallization process affects, by first throwing away "unnecessary" parts of her body. However, when there are no more limbs to dispose of, and necessary parts are turned to stone, the process will turn an orogene fully to stone. This does not mean that they will completely perish, as their stone eaters may eat them to later transform them into a fully-fledged stone eaters. This can be read as a physical manifestation of the trauma from what orogenes are faced with since birth. It further cements the suffering the marginalized are faced with, both from outside sources and within themselves. Furthermore, the first body-parts that are crystalized for both Essun and Alabaster are their arms. Similarly, the first injustice Essun was faced with when it was discovered she was an orogene, was having her arm broken by Schaffa.

Jemisin fundamentally interrogates what it means to be 'human' through these depictions of alternative human and non-human identities. This is particularly apparent in the finale of the trilogy, when Essun transforms into a stone-eater following her confrontation with Nassun, who fights her for control over the obelisk gate. Eventually relinquishing control to Nassun, Essun undergoes the final stages of her transformation to stone, to later be eaten by Hoa, resulting in the creation of her new identity as a stone eater. Nassun, who was intent on destroying the world, ends up changing her mind, as Essun sacrifices herself in tears. Finally, in the epilogue, entitled "*coda me, and you*" (TSS 398), Essun, who has newly transformed into a stone eater, meets with Hoa for the "first" time:

"'What is it that you want?' 'Only to be with you,' I say. 'Why?' - 'Because that is how one survives eternity,' I say, 'or even a few years. Friends. Family. Moving with them. Moving forward.' - 'Friends, family,' you say. 'Which am I to you?' 'Both and more. We are beyond such things' - 'What do you want?' - 'I want the world to be better'" (TSS 397-398)

Essun and Hoa, who have become the ultimate form of other, have moved beyond human relationships which designate people into categories of human relations. They have transcended the human, by becoming stone eaters. Instead, their focus is on making the world a better place. In order to survive eternity, one must move forward. Progress is of utmost importance to make a difference. The structures which can be embraced to fulfil this progress, are evident in posthuman thought, by dismissing the ideological expectations of an

anthropocentric society. The “established categories of ontology, identity and agency” (Hellstrand 68) in *The Stillness* are confronted, as ideas of what make up a “human” is questioned. Essun’s narrative has finally come to a beginning (rather than an end), as the perspective shifts to the absolute present in first person, which revolves around Essun and Hoa finally together as beings of absolute otherness.

3.2.3 Otherness in narration

As we read through the trilogy, Jemisin presents us with a variety of narratives, perspectives and point of views which demonstrates the need for varying perspectives to grasp the totality of a story, especially in terms of how it affects the world. The first novel, *The Fifth Season*, follows Damaya and Syenite in third person, while Essun's story is told in second person, and small parts of Hoa's story is told in first person. It is here it is revealed that Essun, Syenite and Damaya are the same person at different points of time in their life, following the guardians attack on Meov:

“Here is the Stillness. Here is a place off its eastern coast, a bit south of the equator. There's an island here [...] This is the moment when that island dies, but at least a few of those inhabitants should survive to go elsewhere. [...] One of them, a woman, floats unconscious amid the debris of her shattered ship. Her fellow survivors will find her and take her to the mainland. There she will wander, lost and losing herself, for two long years. But not alone – for that is when I found her, you see. [...] I was glad when she found the little town called Tirimo. [...] I introduced myself to her eventually, finally, ten years later, as she left Tirimo. It's not the way we usually do these things, of course; it is not the relationship with her kind that we normally seek. But she is – was – special. *You* were, are, special. I told her that I was called Hoa. It is as good as name as any. This is how it began. Listen. Learn. This is how the world changed” (*TFS* 442-443).

The depiction of Syenite becoming Essun, is thoughtfully laid out, as the two narratives intertwine just in time for Essun to reunite with Alabaster. As Syenite becomes Essun, “she” becomes “you”. Additionally, this quote reveals Hoa as the first-person narrator in this particular instance, which foreshadows his involvement as the narrator of the entire story. Hoa has evidently followed Essun since the events of the guardians' attack on Meov took place. He breaks the boundaries of what is to be expended in relationships between two different forms of other, setting the stage for the world to change. Despite the death of the island, and the end of Syenite, this quote signals the beginning of Essun, and the beginning of her journey to rescue the world from its impending doom. Had it not been for Hoa, Essun would not have made it to Castrima or Corepoint, and she would not have been able to transform into a stone eater. Hoa appears as a narrative force of otherness and change, in which the reader is able to learn of the truth behind the world.

The second novel, *The Obelisk Gate*, introduces Essun's daughter Nassun into the narrative, focusing on the mother and daughter's parallel journeys in the post-apocalyptic landscape formed after the rifting. It also continues to depict "interludes", which appeared in the first novel, but now it depicts more about Hoa, and his actions, which were previously unbeknownst to Essun and the reader. In one of these interludes, Hoa tells a story of his vicious battles he has gone through in order to protect Essun: "I destroy three of them the first day after I leave you. [...] Then I take the two who have been stalking Alabaster" (*TOG* 233). The stone eaters appear to have different goals and alliances, in which Hoa's actions are crucial in order to protect Essun.

The third novel, *The Stone Sky*, continues to tell Essun and Nassun's stories as their journeys intertwine. It also shifts back 40,000 years to tell Hoa's narrative of Syl Anagist, his fellow tuners turned stone eaters, and the events that caused the moon to be sent out of orbit.

Throughout the trilogy, Jemisin also lays out exposition at the end of most chapters through various forms of research notes, *stonelore* (ancient law), pre-civ scientific letters, historical notes, etc. These in-universe notes function to immerse the reader into the history of the story, which strengthens the things Jemisin says through her literature, as the world feels alive and full of depth. Additionally, they function to shed a different light upon certain events, as we gain insight into the history of the world, as they are laid out as in-universe primary sources.

Furthermore, the first and third novels contain prologues which "start with the end of the world" (*TFS*, 1), and "end with the beginning of the world" (*TSS*, 1), as the trilogy comes together as a whole. The end of the world, in *The Fifth Season*, refers to the final season, the rifting, which was launched across the continent by Alabaster, as well as the beginning of Essun's final journey across a post-apocalyptic landscape. The beginning of the world, in *The Stone Sky*, refers to Hoa's narrative as a tuner, working for and revolting against Syl Anagist, setting the stage for the seasons.

Both the end and the beginning are important in order to understand the entirety of the trilogy, and the existence that ties them both together is the narrator; Hoa. This depiction of the end and the beginning, wrests the world from the hands of humanity. For stone eaters, the words "end" and "beginning" do not possess the same meaning as humanity, with their differing perspective of time, whereas for the human time is linear. For the other, and for nature, time is cyclical, and life is cyclical.

The cycle of life can be depicted by the Ouraboros, the ancient symbol of a snake eating its own tail, which provides a picture of the cycle of life for the stone eaters as well. As

beings created based on the Niespeople, who possessed features similar to snakes, they have become eternal watchers of the world, following along as the world goes through cycles of both natural disasters and the oppression caused by humanity.

This is cemented in the epilogue following Essun's transformation into a stone eater. Essun and Hoa reunite after Essun sacrifices herself to save the world, and Hoa remarks: "This is the way a new world beings". The entirety of the trilogy ends, yet the lingering message is that they have just begun.

3.2.4 Narration Techniques

The narration techniques used throughout the trilogy are different, even ‘other’, when compared to traditional sf narratives, but this is not without reason. Especially when reading the chapters pertaining to Essun, the second-person perspective feels personal, as if you are living through the story yourself. You learn about and experience Essun’s life as if it is your own. The prologue of *The Fifth Season* introduces Essun in the third person, as the horrifying action of Jija murdering her son Uche is revealed. When the first chapter begins, however, the perspective shifts, and the reader becomes Essun, who the story is written for: “You are she. She is you. You are Essun. Remember?” (*TFS* 1).

In traditions of storytelling, one could use various pronouns to tell different stories. Autobiographies use first person “I” pronouns, and stories of adventure may use third person “he” or “she” pronouns through the eyes of an omniscient narrator. However, Jemisin uses each of these pronouns to portray narratives of otherness. The power of “‘I’ and the ‘not-I’, of self and other” (Jackson 31), evidently intermingles in the blurred distinctions of human and non-human identities. Jemisin lessens the power of the “I”, in the creation of a more democratic environment of storytelling. Finally, the power of “I” is given to the other, to the stone eater Hoa, as it is revealed the entirety of the trilogy is depicted through the eyes of the posthuman.

Hoa’s narration of the story, portrays it in light of a post-anthropocentric view on subjective truths, as the details of each narrative are told for Essun to recall her memories following her transformation into a stone eater and subsequent memory loss. She was previously viewed as less than human due to her orogeny, but now she has become a different species entirely. Despite this distinction, as the reader has grown accustomed to Essun’s story throughout the trilogy, she might as well be more human than others who traverse *The Stillness*.

The category of “human” is evidently viewed as a “changeable identity” (Hellstrand 68), which dismisses “binary logic of identity and otherness” within universal Humanism (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 15). Additionally, Hoa’s narration allows Essun to reclaim her own narrative following her release from the confinement of humanity.

The stone eaters, who were at first depicted as grotesque incomprehensible beings, are now the focus of the story. Furthermore, the second person pronouns that have produced connection and familiarity with Essun in the reader, will ideally have the reader psychoanalytically deliberate on the boundaries of bodies and what it means to be human, as

she transforms into a stone eater. The character who has suffered trauma from a young age due to her powers, lost a child – twice, and survived through a natural disaster of astonishing scale; The character who the reader has followed through three novels, in a dystopian landscape of brutal hardships, and peaceful interludes fated to take a turn for the worse, has sacrificed herself to save the world – and her daughter, but has given up her final piece of humanity in the process.

The transformation into a stone eater signals an interpenetration of otherness, as the other and grotesque intertwine and become self. “You” become a stone eater, and “you” give up your humanity. The stone eaters, who were inconceivable and grotesque at first, have now become understandable and relatable. This depiction of posthuman narration through otherness, provides solutions in how we can look beyond the Anthropocene: By embracing the ‘other’, and discarding narrow views on human supremacy that disregard the search for alternative viewpoints.

4. Conclusion (Coda – The End?)

“The beginning” and “the end”, appear frequently in the cyclical nature of life as we also encounter it in *The Broken Earth trilogy*, a science fiction trilogy concerned with the treatment of human and non-human others portrayed in narratives that intertwine with speculative futures in an alternate world. This thesis identifies ways in which the trilogy depicts ways in which humanity has been affected by patterns of oppression and capitalistic greed throughout the history of the Anthropocene, by paralleling them with depictions of posthumanity as otherness that appear in the trilogy through the mode of science fiction. This has been done with a hope that at the end, we can begin by thinking alternatively about the importance of otherness, which historically has been oppressed and diminished by power structures that value capitalistic gain and human superiority over progress and otherness.

In the first chapter – the literary review of this thesis, I identified the connection between science fiction, otherness, sites of otherness (such as the Anthropocene) and the posthuman, in order to understand the way in which Jemisin’s portrayals of otherness can help us learn from the past. As the Anthropocene has evolved, we have been faced with awareness concerning the treatment of others, alternate identities, and the role of capitalist ideologies in the detrimental effects this treatment has had, and continues to have.

With this thesis, I show how science fiction can be used to critique the Anthropocene, but also why the Anthropocene should be critiqued in the first place. An ever-evolving complexity of human and non-human identities and perspectives may find the Anthropocene constraining in the manner it restricts the affective values of human intimacy to anthropocentric ideals of human gain.

By looking beyond such values we can go much further in our understanding of otherness as a part of nature, and the grand scale of the world as we are faced with it. But in order to do so, it is imperative to understand the world and its inhabitants as situated within a post-colonial, capitalistic structure, plagued with the horrors of its past. Similarly, *Syl Anagist* and *The Stillness* are plagued with structures that parallel the Anthropocene. By looking at these comparatively, with a posthuman perspective, it can help us understand ways in which we can break binary limitations placed upon humanity by Eurocentric ideologies.

The Anthropocene is an unofficial geological epoch, which pertains to humanity’s effect on the planet. However, the time in which the Anthropocene starts is contested. Options, which range from several thousand years ago, to the industrial revolution or the great acceleration (Zalasiewicz et al. 1). Similarly, the Capitalocene is another term describing our predicament, which places an emphasis on the role of capitalism in the way humanity has

affected the planet. It traces the origin of our predicament to patterns of capitalism in the 1400s, in English and Dutch agricultural revolutions, and Columbus' conquest of the Americas (Moore 594).

If we take the modernity of the two –cenes into account, we can delve into aspects of the modern age which Jemisin critiques with science fiction. These aspects include capitalistic greed, slavery, othering and dehumanization as consequence of anthropocentric ideologies. Literature can engage with ideology, by focusing on “the governing social, cultural and especially political ideas, images and representations of a society” (Bennett and Royle 370).

This is exactly what Jemisin does in *The Broken Earth Trilogy*, for instance through the depiction of the futuristic and technological empire of Syl Anagist, and its capitalistic greed for more, which goes so far as to view human life as a resource to be ravaged. Furthermore, history repeats itself in the present plot of the novel situated in The Stillness. These points become even more poignant when considering the science fiction devices Jemisin uses to portray various forms of oppression apparent in the fictional societies and ideologies in the trilogy.

Science fiction can be understood as a mode of writing, which often borrows plot points and narratives from a variety of genres to tell its narratives, but there are various common narratives which are often used. This is also the case for *The Broken Earth* trilogy, as Jemisin uses these devices to present narratives of processes of otherness, evident in depictions of oppression, alternate identities and capitalistic, anthropocentric ideologies. She presents the strange and other as familiar, which connects with posthuman ideas of embracing alternative viewpoints and solutions, particularly in the other.

Posthumanity is an eco-conscious discourse, which finds difficulty in the delineation of differences between human, non-human and animal entities (Buchanan 358-359). It views the category of ‘human’ as a constructed and “changeable identity” (Hellstrand 38). It also discusses the way technological advancements impact the way humans interact, and can transcend bodily limits through the non-human, providing visions of transhumanism, in ideas such as bio-engineering.

Furthermore, it argues against a Eurocentric paradigm within Humanism, which imposes “binary logic of identity and otherness as respectively the motor for and cultural logic of universal Humanism” (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 15). As a contrast to Humanist ideas that view the “sexualized , racialized and naturalized” others as disposable bodies, posthumanism embraces otherness in its search for alternative ways of thinking. This is

important to keep in mind as we unfold how Jemisin reveals instances of posthuman thought in her trilogy.

Keeping with this thought, science fiction narratives can more easily be understood as speculative fiction, which revolves around the relations and differences between people, humans, alternate organisms and machines. These relations can be used to discuss the identity of self, which can be problematized through the unexpected, unfamiliar other, appearing in alternate species and viewpoints from the readers. The ways in which sf narratives interacts with these ideas, are through various attributes within the genre.

We can begin, by looking at an early attribute of science fiction narratives, which has been a constant since the term was coined in the 1920s. Early sf literature would appear in magazines, with titles consisting in key words such as “*Astounding, Amazing, Wonder Stories, Thrilling, Startling, etc.*” (Csicsery 71). These works would consistently use what was coined by David Nye as the ‘sense of wonder’, in his *The American Technological Sublime* (1994), which although fantastical, did not envelop the critical commentary science fiction is known for today. The sense of wonder, would be directed towards to spectacular technology or wonders in space, such as the obelisks or the futuristic technology depicted in Syl Anagist.

Istvan Csicsery-Ronay has further divided this sense into the *sublime* and the *grotesque* (Csicsery 71-72), in which the sublime refers to the “imaginative shock” one is faced with when trying to understand unimaginable objects, while the grotesque provides a more visceral reaction as an imaginative shock of a more inward nature. The imaginative shock one is faced with in the grotesque, illuminates how depictions of otherness can provide responses in which the reader is inclined to deliberate and think differently.

The grotesque is particularly apparent in the depictions of stone eaters. Stone eaters may fill you with disgust, as it is difficult for the reader to understand exactly how they look. They are depicted as beings of stone, who appear as humanoid statues. Furthermore, they possess the ability to “move through rock like it’s air” (*TFS* 284). As stone eaters are immortal unless killed, their perspective on everything is different. This also affects their conversational patterns, and their unpredictable and slow movement “emphasizes their uncanny nature”. They are “so like humanity and yet so wildly different. It would be easier if they were more alien. When they move like this, you can see what they once were” (*TSS* 27).

The stone eaters, who were originally human, are from the perspective of Essun no longer human. However, Hoa, a stone eater, remarks that he, quite contrarily, feels himself to be human. Freed from the boundaries of gender, race and class, the grotesque stone eaters provide an inwards imaginative shock both for the characters internally in the universe, who

find them disgusting, but also in the reader, who, ideally, psychoanalytically deliberates on the boundaries of bodies and what it means to be human. They are uncanny beings, which relates to Rosemary Jackson's ideas of a secular economy within otherness, in which what one views as an other reflects inwardly desires or fears (14).

The discoveries of the first chapter, provide a framework for the second chapter of the thesis, which delves into a close reading of *The Broken Earth Trilogy*, and is further divided into two subchapters: *Sameness – The Problem* and *Otherness – The Solution*. Here, I investigate how Jemisin's fictional world critiques and draws parallels to the Anthropocene through depictions of anthropocentric ideals and their historically significant consequences. However, this grotesque landscape is also contrasted by portrayals of otherness as a solution to these detrimental ideologies.

As Jemisin tells the story of the Stillness, we are presented with an alternate speculative future, plagued with injustices, marginalization, discrimination and racism – connected to power structures dominant in the fictional world. The dystopian structures Jemisin presents us with, are largely due to the ideologies of the ruling classes. Simultaneously, a sense of patriarchy is apparent in the depiction of 'Father Earth'. The father of nature, who much like patriarchal societies have done throughout history, spreads his will subconsciously through the guardian's corestones.

These structures mirror structures evident throughout the industrious history of the Anthropocene, such as slavery, which is depicted both *of* and *by* alternate identities, in the orogenes and guardians respectively. Slavery was made possible through the dehumanization of both slaves and selves. A reconstruction of what it means to be human was needed in order to make the system of slavery seem true (Gilroy 178). This dehumanization of slave masters is apparent in the guardians, who are othered as the leash put into place to dehumanize and control orogenes.

Jemisin further presents examples of injustices directed towards marginalized groups, through the treatment of orogenes throughout the trilogy. This is particularly evident in the main characters Essun and her daughter Nassun. Orogenes are viewed by the dominant ideology of the Stillness as non-human entities; as tools for a purpose. Furthermore, when discussing the origin of orogeny and magic, we are present with the Niespeople, who the original tuners were based on when created. The Niess, who were originally part of a land conquered by Syl Anagist, were viewed as a threat due to their sensitivity for magic. Thus, they were systematically othered, dehumanized and removed from society entirely. They were different, but "differences alone are never enough to cause problems" (TSS 210). Processes of

otherness were used as tools for Syl Anagists own benefit. They desired their magic, and dehumanized them as a product of their greed. They later created the tuners in their likeness, continuing the cycle of oppression.

These depictions of marginalized otherness form the baseline for the characters' experience with the world, yet they learn to embrace it, as is evident through the narration techniques used. Each narrative uses different pronouns: Essun's narrative uses second person "you" pronouns, Nassun's third person "she" pronouns, and Hoa's first person "I" pronouns. Especially when reading the chapters pertaining to Essun, the second-person perspective feels personal, as if you are living through the story yourself. You learn about and experience Essun's life as if it is your own. As Hoa is the narrator of the story, this functions to let the posthuman other tell the narrative as he experiences the world to tell the story to Essun as she has become a stone eater herself. His narration functions to provide a post-anthropocentric view on posthuman truths, as we embrace the 'other'.

As result of this investigation, it is evident that sf is a genre that in a unique manner is able to help us imagine otherness, which means that is also is, perhaps, the only genre which is able to accurately depict the posthuman, and to help us see beyond the Anthropocene. The various depictions of otherness in the trilogy, provides insight into the treatment of others in the Anthropocene and Capitalocene, as well as the solutions apparent in posthuman thought, as the concept of other comes from within.

4.1 Final Thoughts

Throughout the conception of this thesis, several ideas and notions about *The Broken Earth Trilogy* have been necessary to discard, as there simply has not been enough time to discuss everything that has been of interest. The narratives Jemisin depicts, have a depth to them which opens up endless possibilities of readings, comparisons and criticism. For instance, I have not been able to delve into topics of queerness and gender, which is an interesting topic for the trilogy, as examples range from Essun's polyamorous relationship with Innon and Alabaster, stone eaters as genderless beings, and depictions of trans identities through the character of Tonkee.

The trilogy provides a depth of commentary on eco-conscious issues, in which this thesis' focus on the Anthropocene could have delved more into the collapse of ecosystems and consequences of climate change. It is a timely issue that has an enormous effect on the Anthropocene, and it is evident that Jemisin critiques concepts of the climate through the depictions of disaster, as result of humanity's influence on the deterioration of the planet. Specifically, in the case of the personification of Father Earth and his rebellion against humanity, the planet comes to life to warn humanity of the dangers of the detrimental human effect on nature.

4.2 Future Work

Future work in this field of thought can develop upon ideas apparent in this thesis, as well as discuss each of the concepts in more detail, especially in relation to posthuman thought and the Anthropocene. I have tied important pieces of pre-existing theory to a single science fiction trilogy, but there is a variety of authors who delve into each of these topics in much more depth.

As the modern age progresses, so does post-anthropocentric thought, and the way literature interacts with these ideas holds endless possibilities. It will be interesting to see how the genre, or mode, of science fiction and speculative fiction will evolve as time progresses, and if this will cause changed and alternate mind-sets among its consumers. Particularly with the development of robotics, cybernetics and artificial intelligence, it will be intriguing to see if the science fiction literature already produced within the field will measure up with reality.

Finally, it will be of similar interest to follow how the development of –cenes will progress, as new terms to develop of current predicament are developed. The Anthropocene and Capitalocene are merely fractions of the past, present and future of humanity, post-humanity, its effect on the planet, and what the future has in store for us.

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