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**Neither fish nor fowl: Travelling across genres and disciplines through 21st century
Australian Cli-Fi**

Abstract:

In 2014, Juliet McKenna wrote ‘The genre debate: Science fiction travels farther than literary fiction’ (McKenna 2014). This title aligns literature and genre with travel, but she also resorts to place-based metaphors to establish the distance between specific types of writing. ‘Speculative fiction’, she suggests, ‘prompts the reader to pay so much more attention, looking for the details that make sense of this strange world. Reading speculative fiction isn’t arriving in Manchester. It’s finding yourself in Outer Mongolia with no help from Lonely Planet or a rough Guide’. Cli-fi is notoriously difficult to locate generically, but thinking about it in relation to travel may assist in understanding how it works to develop contemporary identities. This paper therefore examines specifically Australian cli-fi, predominantly from the 21st century and its use of concepts familiar from travel writing. These include touristic alienation/authenticity, destination image perception as it relates to revisit intention, and mental time travel. This enables us to highlight local Australian literature in a global context in relation to cli-fi and travel. We argue that travel concepts as they are engaged in non-narrative travel literature enables an engagement with cli-fi that moves beyond debates about its generic or literary status to deeper more existentially relevant understandings of what it means to be human in the 21st century.

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In March 2014, science fantasy writer, Juliette McKenna participated in the Genre Fiction Debate at the Oxford Literary Festival. Chaired by Claire Armitstead, literary editor of *The Guardian*, McKenna's position quickly made it into print (18 April 2014). Her argument was that genre fiction is as effective at creating debate around complex issues as literature, if not more so. It recruits and motivates readers to engage with real world issues. She used a delightfully geographic metaphor to make her point, suggesting that if a reader is engaging with a novel set in Manchester:

[E]ven if you've never been there, you have a mental image of 'Manchesterness' from other cities you've visited and what you've seen on the television... Reading speculative fiction isn't arriving in Manchester. It's finding yourself in Outer Mongolia with no help from Lonely Planet or a Rough Guide. (McKenna 2014)

This alignment of genre and place also implies a form of *mental* time travel – the use of pre-existing images to conceptualise the future unknown. This opened up some ideas about cli-fi as writing that is not only globally oriented in pasts and possible futures, but that also travels across the categories of speculative fiction, literature and sci-fi *using* concepts from travel literature. This paper therefore examines how some 21st-century, Australian 'cli-fi' is permeated with travel-writing concepts. We argue that travel concepts, as they are engaged in non-narrative travel literature, enable an engagement with cli-fi that moves beyond debates about its generic or literary status.

Firstly, we sketch the origins and development of cli-fi, and the debate concerning its status. We then explicate three travel-related concepts: first, the alienation/authenticity binary as catalysed *through* the experience of place; second, the role of destination image perception in relation to revisit intention to better understand reader positioning within alternative realities; third, mental time travel in relation to future intentions. As we explore these travel-related concepts, we explicate their presence in recent Australian cli-fi: *Lotus Blue* by Cat Sparks (2017), *Clade* by James Bradley (2015), and Briohny Doyle's *The Island Will Sink* (2016). This enables us to think about contemporary identities, and spotlight geographically peripheral narratives that engage with global issues.

Cli-fi is rapidly gathering strength and depth. The term was coined by journalist, Danny Bloom in 2008 (Tait 2014: 29) with Arthur Hertzog's 1977 publication, *Heat*, nominated as the first climate change novel (Trexler 2015: 25). Indeed, by 2015, cli-fi was sufficiently popular that American, Ellen B Szabo, found a market for a how-to manual, *Saving the World One Word at a Time: Writing Cli-Fi*. In 2017, two European researchers, Susanne

Leikam (Germany) and Julia Leyda (Norway), organised a two-hour roundtable on approaches to cli-fi in American studies (2017: 109-38). Subsequently claiming to be the first bibliographers of secondary literature engaging with cli-fi, they noted that ‘the global landscape of cultural production has been teeming with a cornucopia of fictional texts ... engaging with the local and global impact of advanced human-induced climate change (Leikam & Leyda 2018).

In a special issue of *Philological Quarterly*, called ‘Genres of Climate Change’, new materialist ecocritic Frederick Buell suggests that environmental crises have ‘moved from a passive constituent of the background to becoming a strange kind of entangling, nonhuman actor or active presence, one with which the characters engage, in a decidedly unequal agon’ (2014: 264-65). Philosopher Bruno Latour also observes that crisis implies an acute and temporary situation, but that environmental concerns are now so thoroughly historicised that 21st century humans live in a permanently new relationship with the Earth. It is impossible, he says, to ignore a ‘*profound mutation in our relation to the world*’ (2017: 8, original italics).

In Australia, scholars Andrew Milner and JR Burgmann, also say *Heat* ‘seems to be’ the first cli-fi novel, (2018a: 26), though elsewhere consider it ‘rash’ to be overly definitive (2018b: 16). They also nominate fellow Australian George Turner’s *The Sea and Summer* (1987) as another ‘unusually early’ example (2018: 16). They unequivocally position cli-fi as a ‘sub-genre’ of science fiction usefully classifying it as: anthropogenic, caused by humans; xenogenic, caused by aliens; geogenic, due to natural events; and theogenic, geogenic events with divine instigators. They establish a long history of global warming, cooling and flood narratives preceding the common era by several millennia and argue that cli-fi is not a contemporary phenomenon.

To position cli-fi as a sub-genre of science fiction (despite its long, pre-science history), Milner and Burgmann oppose Bloom’s recent categorisation of it as a new literary genre (2017). Within the academy, they disregard Adam Trexler’s influential *Anthropocene Fictions* (2015) where Trexler clearly associates cli-fi with literary discourse and popular sci-fi. Ian McEwan’s *Solar*, and Barbara Kingsolver’s *Flight Behaviour* are both, for example, considered cli-fi, and Milner and Burgmann’s insistence that these are, ‘clearly science-fictional’ (2018: 2) remains unconvincing, no matter how science fiction is defined. Whatever Anthropocene may mean, (Haraway 2016, Usher 2017, Bauer & Ellis 2018) Milner and Burgmann’s anthropogenic cli-fi clearly responds to 21st century concerns in tandem with and beyond the techno-scientific. The generic debate occurs precisely *because* cli-fi extends beyond climate science *per se* to engage cultural responses to such issues as population pressure, technology and its ramifications on human physical and mental health, virtual realities, food security, pollution, and over-consumption of natural resources.

Margaret Atwood resists science fiction as the appropriate genre to describe even *The Macaddam* trilogy (Gadpaille 2018: 20). For Atwood, Jules Verne is the progenitor for speculative fiction representing a future ‘that really could happen but just hadn’t completely happened when the authors wrote the books’ (Atwood 2011). Science fiction is about the

impossible or the extra-terrestrial, and is descended from HG Wells. Generic borders, she insists, 'are increasingly undefended, and things slip back and forth across them with insouciance' (Atwood 2011). Given this debate concerning genre, it is timely to find alternative ways to reframe an engagement with cli-fi; concepts in travel literature can be productive in precisely this way.

Professor of Geography, Daniel Knudsen, and fellow authors, suggest that the concept of 'alienation and its dialectic authenticity' (2016: 34) has long been a focus for tourism studies. They rehearse the complexities of alienation in its Marxist and Existentialist formats (35-37) but focus on the Lacanian psychoanalytic conceptualisation of alienation. This understands alienation as unable to be transcended because it is constitutive of the Subject as a social being. Any social being must recognise itself as a coherent, unified Subject *as society dictates*. For Lacan, the big 'O' Other (that is the social domain) reflects social identity to the psyche. A person is not a socially scripted Subject until this occurs; furthermore, socialisation must occur *despite* the psyche experiencing its 'being' as separate from the (socially mirrored) image it internalises. Being, in other words, *exceeds* and stands apart (is alienated) from the Subject. In other words, the Subject learns to (*mis*)recognise (truncated) being *as* complete, coherent and unified. Nevertheless, each Subject experiences its socialised being as lacking something (the disavowed excess). In this way, desire is formed as the drive to engage with little 'o' other/s: things, experiences, people, bodies, places, events, movement, nature. Any little 'o' others potentially restore what was present in pre-subjectification, pre-linguistic, authentic and originary being. Such *authenticity is a fantasy* emerging from constitutive alienation and is a part of the alienation-authenticity dialectic of being (Knudson 2016).

The potential is clear for engaging with cli-fi via travellers or tourists in relation to little 'o' others (people, places, experiences and things) as well as the culture shock of alternative 'Others' (different societies). Cat Sparks' young adult, post-apocalyptic novel, *Lotus Blue*, is entirely focussed on travelling characters. Benhadeer, the 'caravan master' (Sparks 2017: 1) of the chain of thirteen solar-powered wagons and its 'regular' (2) occupants, traverses the Sand Road (2) across the Dead Red (6) of the Australian desert landscape. They carry with them any who can pay the fee. Three customers are particularly worrying. They dress 'in fancy kit' (1) and do not understand the terrain (30). They behave differently from travellers, so are quickly labelled 'tourists' (8). Their pretence at being 'tankerjacks' (salvagers) heading for the trading port of Fallow Heel becomes farcical. Again, the term tourist is applied, with the wry observation that the 'Van's crawling with them this time out' (33).

Unlike tourists, Van travellers (Subjects of the Van) understand the desolate territory, why the Van is flanked by armed point riders (5, 19), and why it sends out scouts on camels (18). Driven 'hard and fast' by Drover Jens, (18) the Van skirts hostile underground fortress cities (8), repulses giant lizards 'with leathery, pockmarked hide[s]' (34) and avoids half-starved refugees and violent warlords (6). This last necessity forces the Van to detour via the Vulture, an oasis protected by a bird-shaped technological Sentinel (45). Again the 'tourists'

demonstrate their difference from seasoned travellers by challenging the decision: ‘Why do we linger here in the middle of nowhere? Why do we not press on?’ (50). When they flaunt their wealth and ignorance by trying to buy three camels to continue alone, it is clear ‘they’re clueless’ and that ‘wherever they’re from, it’s nowhere around here. Not from the coast neither. Nowhere we’ve even heard of’ (55). They’re no longer frivolous, sightseeing, hitchhikers their difference restricted to the superficialities of clothing, cleanliness or minor behavioural anomalies. Indeed, during a storm that destroys the Van, they murder a traveller and steal what they need.

The narrative engages more deeply with identity issues, however, as it follows the *bildungsroman* journey of the amnesiac Van traveller, Star. Star has a ‘metal splint’ (5) in her arm and is apprentice healer to her sister, Nene. The splint, understood to be the result of a broken arm, marks Star’s misrecognition of her coherent, socially located identity as traveller. She is a split subject: parts of her are known to her, others unknown. Rejecting her role as healer, a restless and disgruntled Star realised ‘the Road was dying, its foliage more mean and shrivelled with every passing. Its people running feral ... she wanted a better life’ (5). *Because* it is stable and defined, Star can take a stand against her social identity.

The Van (as ‘Other’) has defined her, but she feels something is missing and seeks to fill the gap (through small ‘o’ others) to feel authentic rather than alienated. This gap or lack expresses itself as the desire to leave the Van and settle in Fallow Heel. It is strengthened by a previous ‘chance encounter’ (6) with Allegra, daughter of a rich, powerful, Fallow Heel merchant. Only leaving Nene makes Star’s courage falter (7). Nene tells Star ‘that rich Heel girl you met last year is not your friend. She isn’t going to help you ... they’re not our people Star. If that girl was kind to you, it could only have been because it amused her to be so’ (53). Nene’s description of Allegra is prophetic, but Star (also nominatively determined as the heroine) is now even more determined. When the Van is destroyed at Vulture, her plan is catalysed through the removal of the place that was home. When they reach Fallow Heel, Nene reveals to Star that they are not really sisters:

I don’t know who your people are. I don’t know where you’re from. I pulled you out of the wreckage of those things that looked like giant eggs, half buried in yellow sand. Some old-world relic no one had ever seen before... Giant eggs filled with dead kids, all packed up tight and frozen. (111)

The final link is broken. Star has now lost the social setting for her identity (the Van), her familial identity (sister Nene) *and* her identity as human. The splint is not because her arm was broken, her amnesia was not fever induced. The metal splint becomes the signifier for another identity altogether.

Identity is central to Star’s quest to decommission the Lotus Blue. Lotus Blue seeks control over the remnants of humanity and sentient mecha alike. It is the General, stirring in the vast underground bunker that houses its disembodied consciousness. Star is a Templar, a ‘supersoldier’ (14) capable of destroying Lotus Blue (while the ‘tourists’ and Allegra try to recruit and control it). The activated metal splint grows (163) and Star, outed to herself and those around her, is horrified by the loss of her human identity:

Not one of the former Dogwatch crew would look her in the eye since Quarrel had exposed her. Not even Bimini. They'd kept their distance, hanging back even though it placed them at greater risk. It was better to be attacked by wild dogs or strangers, apparently, than walk in the company of templars.

If only Lucius were walking by her side.

If only Nene were here. Or Yeshie, who'd never cared if folks were tainted... She walked in silence, in complete acceptance of the pain returning to her arm. (246)

Here Star positions herself in new relation to both the 'Other' – the organically human Van society – and various others who now fear her excess. Eventually the mesh will feel 'like part of her own true skin' (305) rather than embedded metal. But her capacity to now recognise what it means to be human and humanitarian, in ways she never had when rejecting Nene's compassion towards the tainted, makes Star *more* human. The desire for authenticity as a unitary identity (to have her 'own true skin') is therefore a thwarted fantasy because she lives the reality of being forever a hybrid creature forced to recognise both the organic and metallic elements of her identity.

As young adult fiction dominated by the *bildungsroman* quest, *Lotus Blue* is necessarily associated with its protagonist's psychological and moral development. Journeying through dangerous landscapes embodies the psychological movement towards becoming fully, because only partially, human – an eternally split subject. The tension between alienation and authenticity is triggered by Star's physical and psychological challenges in each location. This literary *modus operandi* undercuts the notion of speculative versus literary fiction. It hybridises generic identities and evokes Atwood's comment that generic borders 'are increasingly undefended, and things slip back and forth across them with insouciance' (2011). A *bildungsroman* nevertheless insists that protagonists visit a destination that enlightens them about identity.

Destination representations in non-fiction travel literature are dominated not by this philosophical, literary or narratively driven teleology, but by the forces of market places that position customers for service consumption. Market research can also help understand how cli-fi positions its 'customers', firstly by aligning or opposing readers to alternative 'destination' realities and secondly by motivating them to revisit real climate change issues. As Stephanie Le Menager, cofounder of *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*, says:

The conversion that these cli-fi narratives ... perform may be a slow re-mediating of the cultural scene so that it becomes impossible not to see climate change as its background condition, impossible not to recognise every shift in seasonal temperatures, or in the time when a favorite bird arrives at your feeder or when the tomatoes need to be planted, as related to climate change. (Le Menager qtd in Ramuglia 2018: 161)

Assuming the cli-fi is geared towards ecological sustainability and not intentionally creating a *State of Fear* (Michael Crichton's climate change denial novel) then cli-fi is about calling

on a ‘background condition’ to strengthen it. Cli-fi is a textual environment in which readers become immersed. If it is to be effective as a change stimulus (conversion being too strong a term) readers must find remnants of narrated experience clinging to them as they resurface. Real world future ‘destinations’ for humanity and the planet can be recognised as imminent but potentially avoidable. So, what is destination image, and how might cli-fi engage with it as a mechanism for ‘slow re-mediating of the cultural scene’?

At the broadest level, ‘most [tourism and travel] researchers agree that the image of a destination is a set of impressions, ideas, expectations and emotional thoughts an individual has of a specific place’ (Stylos et al 2016: 41). These include formulations via what is known or believed about a place (cognitive image formation), actively processing thoughts or behaviour concerning intention (conative image formation) and emotional judgements (affective image formation). A nexus of destination image perceptions creates a ‘holistic image’ greater than the sum of its parts. This is developed most effectively when travellers’ conative image formation (intention) is reinforced by personal normative beliefs (Stylos et al 2016: 41-44). In other words, norms impact on intention. To use a crude but clear example, if family, friends and culture disapprove of sex tourism, destination image and revisit intention will be impacted, probably negatively, or at least through a mediation of intent transparency. This is because potential tourists tend to ‘project themselves into imagined or idealised future situations as though they had already experienced it’ (Stylos et al 2016: 49). Recognition of mental time travel (MTT) in travel literature is *not* drawing on science fiction; it is central to destination marketing.

Cognitive psychologists define MTT as ‘the faculty that allows humans to mentally project themselves backwards in time to re-live, or forwards to pre-live events’ (Suddendorf & Corballis qtd in Winfield & Kamboj 2009: 321). It is an essential component of autobiographical identity. Zlomuzica et al (2018: 43) link the definition to Ender Tulver’s work on episodic memory (1983, 1985). Episodic memory is contextual, relating the what, where and when of context to what has already happened, or may happen, to a person. It is characterised by perceptions, thoughts and emotions that generate auto-noetic consciousness – self-knowing. Zlomuzica et al remind readers, self-knowing is an evolutionary development that prepares humans for ‘future needs’ enabling the ‘formation of intentions to perform actions at a specific time point in the future’ (2018: 43). In the ‘remember-know paradigm’ (Gardiner 2001: 1352) episodic memory is opposed to semantic memory (Gardiner 2001: 1351). The latter does not involve MTT and is not characterised by personal inflections and contexts; it is a state of ‘knowing’ something (noetic consciousness – Brisbane is the capital of Queensland) rather than self-knowing (auto-noetic consciousness, recalling or anticipating humid Brisbane summers).

MTT based on episodic, autobiographically inflected memory or anticipation is common to both travel literature and understandings of how readers engage narrative. David Herman, for example, calls it ‘contextual anchoring’ by which he means ‘stories trigger recipients to establish a more or less direct or oblique relationship between the stories they are interpreting and the contexts in which they are interpreting them’ (Herman 2002: 331). Whether

advertising or novelistic stories, ‘recipients’ project themselves into the context because, in evolutionary terms, episodic memory is a survival mechanism relating to risk management. Indeed, travel marketing literature has a deep engagement with understanding the relationships between risk perception (financial, socio-psychological, health/physical) destination image (desirable, dangerous, dirty, disappearing) and revisit intention (Salvatierra & Walters 2017; Stylos et al 2016; Chew & Jahari 2014).

This same cluster of concepts, all facilitated or triggered by the capacity for tourists to engage in MTT via episodic memory use, is easily transferred to analyses of cli-fi where survival is also at stake, always for characters and variously for readers, depending on revisit intention beyond the narrative context. In what follows, we highlight two Australian novels, James Bradley’s *Clade* (2015) and Briohny Doyle’s *The Island Will Sink* (2016), a more ‘literary’ engagement with future destination images ‘as survival’.

On an evolutionary tree, a clade occurs at the tips of the branches, representing organisms with a common ancestor. Bradley’s novel is very loosely organised on this idea. This enables him to sketch climate-based generational shifts. Within four generations, the narrative world moves from a recognisable place or ‘destination’ to one where eco-collapse (Bradley 2015: 130) has impacted on both biological and adopted generations descended from (a rather overtly named) scientist, Adam. The narrative opens in Antarctica where he is wondering how his artist wife, Ellie, is coping with their *in vitro* fertilisation. Climate becomes a globally threatening feature in *every* landscape as Bradley deploys scenarios already familiar to 21st century readers: ice melting in Antarctica (4, 13, 16-17), power shortages (22), missing monsoonal rains (23-24), increases in asthma attacks (26), sudden bird and fish die offs (27), failed international climate negotiations (27), beach erosion (36), coffee crop losses (43), blizzards in America (47), bushfires in Australia (66-67, 172), bee colonies collapsing for multiple reasons (40, 116, 128-130, 133, 138), breakdown of the human social order in Bangladesh (128), leading to illegal refugees in Australia (134-43), health pandemics in Asia (148, 150, 154,) migration of tropical illnesses to sub-tropical and temperate zones (83, 156, 185) and catastrophic flooding in the United Kingdom and Europe (84-85). These are global climate change events. This cataloguing of contemporary anxieties taps into readers’ noetic consciousness – what they *know*, through semantic memory, to be happening in the ontologically real world. The remember-*know* paradigm is at work in this didactic narrative catalogue.

Though less successfully due to the number of characters, the narrative also represents fictionalised emotional responses to climate change. The dominant emotions are fear, anxiety and loss. Though lacking any real depth due to the novel’s saga-like reach, emotions generate the characters’ auto-noetic consciousness through episodic memory. Remembering the past and anticipating futures, they become increasingly aware of the risks they must confront. In the chapter called ‘Solstice’ (3-17) Adam recalls courting Ellie, and early tensions in their marriage; in ‘Clade’ (35-58) Maddie traces familial relationships with Ellie and Summer, her marriage to Tom, and his death. Intrinsic to much of the narrative, episodic memory is most evident in ‘A Journal of the Plague Year’ (147-172) because the diary

format is *necessarily* retrospective even if written in present tense. The remember-know paradigm sits in an uneasy relation that nevertheless draws on, and generates, both noetic and auto-noetic consciousness to tell and show the story. Eco-collapse is creating a singular world destination image defined by climate related constraints, and *embodied* human travel becomes increasingly limited through all forms of personal risk.

By the close of the novel, travel beyond even the local terrain of the body is achieved mostly through technology. The local and global come together *through* the virtual. It is only by looking through ‘overlays’, for example, that Izzie, Adam’s *de facto* great grand-daughter, is able to experience music; by looking through a telescope Noah, Adam’s autistic, astronomer grandson, detects ‘alien transmissions’ (208) that may offer hope to a dying Earth. Auto-noetic consciousness shifts to anticipation rather than remembering. Izzie is enjoying her world rather than cataloguing what she has never known. The final words engage episodic memory, generating auto-noetic consciousness through mental time travel that engages past and future simultaneously when Izzie acknowledges ‘that whatever else happens, this is not an end but a beginning. It is always a beginning’ (326). This iterates Noah’s quantum understanding of time as an ‘illusion’ and his belief that ‘all possible worlds are present in every moment’ (223).

Clade is ultimately that rare thing, a potentially hopeful cli-fi narrative. Technological management of climate change impacts are part of this hopefulness. Adam works in adaptation strategies (84), trees are engineered to absorb carbon (78-79), self-driving cars and solar gliders exist (78, 203), a corporation called Semblance simulates the dead (178-80, 183-84, 196-97). Their sims respond to humans, believe themselves to be ‘real’ on the ‘inside’ (196) and assuage widespread post-pandemic grief. Izzie delights in ‘engineered’ fish (234). As a destination image, Izzie’s final words, and these instances of hope, encourage readers to revisit the possibility that worthwhile life continues, albeit differently.

The tension between semantic and episodic memory, and therefore noetic and auto-noetic consciousness, is implicit in *Clade*. In *The Island Will Sink*, this tension is the defining feature in the non-identity of protagonist, Max Galleon. Galleon experiences autobiographical discontinuity because he has no episodic memory; his amnesia means he has only noetic consciousness; he recalls information but cannot remember conversations and personal details (Doyle 2016:17). When challenged about being xenophobic, he responds: ‘I’m not xenophobic – I’m not frightened by the real place or the people, just the idea of the place’ (138). Galleon possesses semantic knowledge because his secretary is a ‘memory machine’ (19), and, if he could only access them, his appropriately comatose brother would be ‘a human archive containing all the missing parts’ (36), his face ‘an ancient map to a place [Galleon] has forgotten’ (37). The coma is appropriate because, as Gabrielle, Galleon’s lover-doctor points out, ‘the past as a whole does not respond’ to him (132). Galleon’s wife, Eloise, is ‘crafty’ (24) because able to gaslight Galleon at will, she leads him, leaving ‘clues around the house’ (151) to help him remember what *she* prioritises (65, 86). Confronted with a rival, Galleon’s work colleague, Jean, feels displaced and says, ‘You have me. I’ll tell you what you feel. I’ve been doing it for years’ (71). Galleon therefore has

potential access to episodic memories that obliquely define him because other characters do his mental time travel for him.

The most constitutive source of Galleon's memory work in this postapocalyptic narrative, however, is achieved through the technological network to which all humans are automatically linked. Via wilful embodied control they also communicate with the network and its archive through breathing codes (111) or eye signals (109). The archive observes, measures and records everything, for everyone. This includes thoughts (7) and emotions: 'Guilt, 7:30am' (9), 'Anxiety, 8:43am' (16), 'Longing, 12:17am' (27). Galleon has emotions, but, measured globally, he retains them for less time than others, 'an average of just less than fifty-two seconds' (45). Even important moments, such as his son hugging him and saying, 'I love you, Dad' (247) swiftly disappear. Galleon accesses his life as movies, viewing his archived memories as 'reruns in third person' (10). Even the 'vidfeeds', however, are without context (61) and archive movies, can be (and are) erased (111, 120-21, 183). They remain, as Galleon knows, fundamentally unreliable (115). Galleon is, therefore, an example of 'living theory' (25) and his life philosophy views absolution from responsibility and complete surrender as the only significant salvation (44, 59, 97).

Galleon's lack of episodic memory means he cannot mentally time travel to retrospectively re-live his autobiography, nor can he make survival-based decisions. Nor need he because the network uses the archive to advise and direct future action. Galleon wears 'circulation support chinos' (17) that optimise the health of his veins, and a belt-buckle that is depth sensitive:

It measures my body fat percentage. My clothes disapprove of my body and offer prudent recommendations.

'Perhaps a jog?' my pants whisper, amicably.

'Not now,' I tell them. (18)

'Pre-emptive algorithms' (190) and 'programs' (20) also establish the need for vitamins or medication, the appropriately balanced pre-prepared food combinations, necessary reading on personalised reading and viewing lists (3, 15, 65, 34, 47, 273). All personal needs are anticipated. Likewise, the physical environment is fabricated to augment overall sustainability alongside human well-being (251-58) and prevent anticipated risks. Galleon's home is 'flood-proof. Fire-proof. Rape and pillage-proof. The SereniTech homes of Bay Heights are optimised to withstand any of over five thousand disagreeable scenarios' (8).

This all makes Galleon a tourist in his own life, little better than the 'disaster tourists' hovering around Pitcairn Island in case it sinks in a sightseeing event organised by End of the World Touring (169). Travel literature calls this 'last chance' tourism' (Salvatierra & Walters 2017). Eloise describes him as a 'colonial reconnoitrer' (100) because he is a film auteur controlling every aspect of the production of immersive disaster films. By inclination and occupation, he colonises reality through his power to represent. He understands himself as a split subject, too:

I sit in my haptic chair, sandwiched between two images, two lives. On one side of my body, the archive shows a real-time recording like a mirror, exposing me in wretched full-colour. On the other, I compose and recast. I steal people's memories and inhabit them as my own. I am the camera and the subject. This is total visibility. This is war. (30)

Named after a ship designed for war, Galleon makes his money by creating immersive cinema based not on narrative 'content' but on 'experience' (50). His latest development is 'entire-body experience' that, as his secretary summarises for him, is 'realer than real' (67). Galleon's films allow people to immerse themselves in disasters but emerge as survivors (206) just as the characters have post-apocalypse. His wife describes the films as 'neurological bombardment followed by a cathartic moment of complete rest ... feeling finally and totally connected to one another' (163). They are Galleon's way of feeling something for longer than fifty-two seconds.

The novel is, by Doyle's own definition, postapocalyptic (without a hyphen):

a story of catastrophe that does not culminate in revelation, or through which revelation itself is framed as a problematic narrative strategy. Postapocalypse does not lend significance to a historical moment or define a new age. Rather, its sense of time and history becomes abstruse, (dis)located in the ambiguous aftermath of catastrophe. (Doyle 2015: 100)

Galleon's amnesia frames revelation as problematic. His doctor-lover tells him that his 'kind of memory loss ... is incredibly rare. It's generally more of a plot device than an actual neural affliction' (112). Indeed, withholding revelation as a problematising strategy is also Doyle's pattern of interaction with climate change survival. The novel engages with the 'potentially real devastation' (75) of a catastrophic event: the sinking of Pitcairn island. This event remains postapocalyptically 'abstruse, (dis)located [and...] ambiguous' because it may or may not happen (83, 122, 275). If it does, it also may, or may not initiate the GMCC or 'global micro-catastrophe chain' (242) leading to the final catastrophe. Appropriately then, in one ending of the novel, Galleon has an experience he is completely unable to interpret as real, imaginative, memory or fantasy; stressed, he erases the experience from the archive and 'stares out at the blissful, lossless blue' (285). Later Eloise tells him Pitcairn has sunk and '[s]o far, the consequences are minimal' (285). When he receives a digital file called 'The Last Film', though, it seems clear that Jean has been on the sinking Pitcairn and deployed their new immersive technology. When Galleon accesses it, he perishes – the story ends.

Did Galleon survive his viewing? Would he be able, as with the previous uncomfortable memory/fantasy/imaginative moments, to withdraw, survive and feel cathartically confident enough to also erase *this* representation, too? If so, would he revisit the experience or remember any intentions he formulated? Was his final, conscious experience a matter of knowing (semantically remembering through noetic consciousness) or remembering? Was the 'Director's Cut Ending', in other words, *finally* his experience of auto-noetic consciousness – something personal that exceeded fifty-two seconds? It does, after all, take

longer than that to read the ‘Director’s Cut Ending’ (289-299). *Could* Eloise come in to find him dead? Or, immersed in the filmic experience, and existing only as ‘a proxy network’ (87), had he, like Pitcairn Island and its inhabitants, also disappeared from the face of the Earth? A final destination image is withheld.

It is now *readers* who are ‘(dis)located in the ambiguous aftermath of [a] catastrophe’ represented, not by Galleon, but by Doyle. It is readers who now are positioned, not with the content of the narrative, but with the very ‘experience’ of the postapocalyptic Doyle has engineered.

Bradley’s novel forces engagement with current climate-related scenarios and offers a hopeful destination image. Sparks’ novel, though, is more likely to trigger revisit intention because it has so much to offer. Its sci-fi leanings, or its categorisation as speculative fiction, its cli-fi oriented organisation of the narrative around the core issue of whether it is possible to survive a climate catastrophe in a chain of events, its imbrication of complex characters embedded through their textual, physical, emotional and conceptual environments, deeply engaged with authenticity and alienation, all these contribute to its ‘literariness’. Unlike young adult fiction, it is not teleologically bound to a ‘moral’ trajectory or destination. In doing all this, it invites a deeper future exploration of 21st-century identities in terms of posthumanism, new materialism and the importance of cli-fi. Furthermore, it uses sharp, darkly satirical humour to enable survival in the absence of answers to existential questions about the future.

In this paper, we have taken a fresh, new approach to thinking about cli-fi without invoking genre. Instead we have used the alienation/authenticity binary to examine identity shifts through tourism in Cat Sparks’ *Lotus Blue*; then we have used both Bradley’s *Clade* and Doyle’s *The Island Will Sink* to think about how climate change scenarios represent future destinations as alternative realities for the planet. This encourages readers to mentally time travel in relation to the technological, spatial and social issues that climate change raises. Geographically peripheral narratives that engage with global issues, each of these Australian novels sheds light on broader understandings of contemporary identities through a focus on climate change.

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