

THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
ANKARA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

THE TRANSFORMATION OF UTOPIA FROM THE LATE TWENTIETH
CENTURY INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: A STUDY OF ERNEST
CALLENBACH'S *ECOTOPIA*, KIM STANLEY ROBINSON'S *PACIFIC EDGE*,
AND CORY DOCTOROW'S *WALKAWAY*

Master's Thesis

Perihan Sevde NACAK

Ankara, 2021

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ÜTOPYANIN YİRMİNCİ YÜZYILDAN YİRMİBİRİNCİ YÜZYILA
EVRİMİ: ERNEST CALLENBACH'IN ECOTOPIA, KIM STANLEY
ROBINSON'IN PACIFIC EDGE VE CORY DOCTOROW'UN WALKAWAY
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Examination Date: 20.09.2021

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work. (../../..)

Perihan Sevde NACAK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I: The History of Utopia as a Genre.....	7
CHAPTER II: Ernest Callenbach's <i>Ecotopia</i> : An Idealistic Utopia.....	23
CHAPTER III: Kim Stanley Robinson's <i>Pacific Edge</i> : A More Diverse and Complex Utopia.....	40
CHAPTER IV: Cory Doctorow's <i>Walkaway</i> : A Roadmap from Dystopia to Utopia.....	62
CONCLUSION.....	95
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	99
ÖZET.....	103
ABSTRACT.....	104

INTRODUCTION

From the philosophers of ancient Greece to the writers of the Middle Ages, from political agents of the 19th century to contemporary fiction authors, people have always imagined better structured societies where humans can live happier lives. These contemplations find form especially in fiction, as it provides both the excitement of establishing a new society, as well as social commentary on the existing society. In ancient Greece, such stories were told either as blueprints, such as Plato's *Republic*, or as blessed island stories where humanity lived pain-free lives. In later eras, these stories appeared in the form of imaginary journeys, More's *Utopia* being named as one of those works by Denis Veiras in his preface to *History of Sevarambes*, his own utopian novel. Utopian literature was only been recognized as a genre in its own right in the 19th century and the canon of English utopian literature was only established in the middle of the 20th century, with the definition of utopianism as a concept by Lyman Tower Sargent in his 1967 essay "Three Faces of Utopianism" as "social dreaming [...] dreams and nightmares that concern the ways in which groups of people arrange their lives and which usually envision a radically different society than the one in which the dreamers live" (3). Utopian literature's popularity has waxed and waned over time. The end of the 19th century saw it rise as it was a useful political tool for the era's socialist thinkers. Later, after World Wars I and II, it lost its popularity as more pessimistic works stepped under the spotlight. In the politically charged and hopeful atmosphere of the 1970s, utopia was revived again with the publication of some examples before it was swallowed by the wave of the dystopian genre's growing popularity.

Today, utopia, as a genre, can provide both an exploration of alternative ways of living as well as social and political criticism about the contemporary society. Utopia is still utilized by authors and enjoyed by readers, even if it is not the most popular genre

in speculative fiction. This study will explore how utopian genre changed from the late 20th into the early 21st century, how it overcame the criticisms the genre received and developed a style more grounded in reality where conflicts and problems a utopian society might face are examined and solved, and how it took its current form, by examining three utopian novels written in this time period. The first example will be Ernest Callenbach's 1975 novel *Ecotopia*, showcasing the overly optimistic outlook of its time. The second example will be Kim Stanley Robinson's 1990 novel *Pacific Edge*, taking a more realistic angle as the 1970s' hopeful prospect of the future of society had diminished. The last example will be Cory Doctorow's 2017 novel *Walkaway*, which can be regarded as one of the pertinent examples of contemporary understanding of utopia as a genre.

This thesis will argue that as utopia changed from the 1970s to today, and become more realistic, albeit more pessimistic at the same time, in representing social change. Unlike the early examples of the genre, Utopias today offer both social criticism of the current society and hope for change. The earlier utopias with overly optimistic visions were necessary steps in the evolution of the genre but now it is more than just fantasies; it is a hopeful yet still realistic map for reaching that better society earlier authors have dreamed. For example, in *Walkaway*, the hardships and struggles building a new society might bring are portrayed realistically and solutions are offered for them, instead of a perfect fantasy where everything is close to perfection. Its characters are humans with flaws, disagreements and struggles while the story focuses on their will and effort to reach a better society, rather than a perfect and impossible one. The last two novels will be considered "critical utopias", as defined by Tom Moylan. A critical utopia, Moylan writes in his book *Demand the Impossible*, is a literary work that does not lose its hopeful core while critiquing the utopian tradition (10). It explores the limitations and imperfections of the utopias, while also defending

the utopian vision. *Pacific Edge* and *Walkaway* explore both the possibility of utopian communities being corrupted and having flaws, and they offer solutions to these problems.

The genre's evolution will be traced alongside the utopian thought and activism of its time, as well. The transformation of revolutionary philosophy and praxis have had effects on the utopian imagination and literature. In his article, "The Transformation of Critical Utopia", Bernard Harcourt examines how the idea of social transformation, as well as the utopian philosophy around revolutionary ideals have changed over time and experiences in the leftist circles. Therefore, the changing face of utopian literature will be examined in parallel to the changing revolutionary thought in this study. *Ecotopia* will correspond to the first step in the historical idea of revolution; a sudden revolution and overhaul of the society. The second step is represented by *Pacific Edge*; embodying an idea of personal, inner revolution. The third step is portrayed by *Walkaway*; a revolution that starts with small activist groups that gain traction and enough power to slowly erode the old system away.

Ecotopia is chosen as the first novel since it is a standard example of the hopeful atmosphere of the 1970s with its struggles for social justice – such as feminist, queer, anti-war and civil rights movements. It is one of the most popular utopian novels, explaining how society could be better in a very straightforward manner reflecting Callenbach's time and social circle perfectly. The idea of a sudden revolution and restructuring of the society is embraced in the novel as it mirrors the period's popular utopian views. *Ecotopia* is an attempt to show how it is possible to live in a better world without any futuristic technology but only through a restructuring of the society with reference to the 1970s' American society.

Pacific Edge (1990) was written after the political atmosphere changed and became less optimistic as the rise of the dystopian genre during this period also proves. While the 1970s' hopes for a radical social change did not completely die away, they diminished significantly in the popular culture of the 1990s. *Pacific Edge* focuses on a world that has changed through a group of lawyers and activists lobbying for changes to laws regarding big businesses' exploitative and harmful practices towards the workers and it is set in a utopia that needs to be actively maintained and protected from corruption. The revolutionary thought in the novel is characterized by the personal transformation of two protagonists. After the 1990s, what was left of the optimism of the 1970s also diminished and dystopian outlooks for the future gained even more popularity.

Doctorow's novel *Walkaway* (2017) takes the most realistic view of social change; therefore, it seems more pessimistic than other novels to be analyzed in this thesis. It does not lose the utopian hope in its core while including a struggle more grounded in reality in that it chooses to illustrate the moment, or in this case, years of change. It revolves around a small band of characters trying to find better ways to live individually. Eventually they come together in bigger groups and begin posing a threat to the established social rule with their alternative lifestyle, embodying the latest step in the transformation of revolutionary activism. This study will investigate how the utopian genre evolved over these last five decades with special emphasis on the contribution that the utopian writers and their works in question helped the genre reach its contemporary form.

In the first chapter of this study, the history of the utopian genre, its development up to the 1970s, its function and necessity, the main criticisms it has received, and its changing face parallel to utopian thought will be examined. The development of the genre from the 1970s onward will be elucidated in relation to the analysis of the novels

in the succeeding chapters. To that end, the second chapter will be about Callenbach's attempt in *Ecotopia* to realistically reflect social change and demonstrate what a better society might look like. *Ecotopia* will be examined along with the criticisms utopian genre has faced over the years and its place in the evolution of the utopian genre will be discussed in detail. The third chapter will focus on *Pacific Edge*; this novel will also be criticized in regards to how it answers to the criticism utopian genre receives regarding being impossibly perfect with unrealistic characters and almost zero conflict, and also having the potential to slide into totalitarianism. The novel will be compared to *Ecotopia* in terms of their differences, showing how the genre has grown and changed from a technologically viable but socially overly optimistic fantasy to a more realistic narrative regarding its characters and social order. The last chapter will be on *Walkaway*; it will not only be compared and contrasted with the other two novels but also how this contemporary utopia manages to become a critical utopia that focuses on the journey to reach utopia and its focus on individualism within a communal lifestyle will be examined.

This thesis aims to examine where utopian literature was in the 1970s with examples such as *Ecotopia*, how it became more grounded and focused more on exploring social and personal narratives while depicting attempts to build and live in better societies as in *Pacific Edge*, and finally, as in the example of *Walkaway*, how it transformed from an almost perfect fantasy in its social aspect to a down-to-earth exploration of the struggle to build a better world with more human characters. As these three novels are spaced between 1970 and 2017, they shed light on the gradual change the genre experienced, as well the utopian authors' reactions to the social, political and economic structures of their times. Through examining these novels, a deeper understanding regarding how the utopian genre responded to the criticisms it received and how it came to be more realistic, albeit less optimistic, narratives about social and

personal change, rather than hopeful fantasies that leaves the reader with the question if they are too perfect to be realized can be achieved.



CHAPTER I

The History of Utopia as a Genre

The word utopia comes from Thomas More's classic *Utopia*. While the Latin root of the word – topos – means place, the two possible prefixes - “eu” and “ou” - change the word's meaning completely; as “eu” means “good,” thereby “good place,” and “ou” means “not,” thereby “non-existent place.” More points this out in “Six Lines on the Island of Utopia” as well and uses this name as a pun on the impossibly perfect society he narrates (Sargent, *Utopianism* 2). The name itself points out how a perfect society where everyone is always happy is just impossible. In his article, “Three Faces of Utopianism”, Lyman Tower Sargent points out that the word “utopian” has been used as a way to dismiss an idea as unrealistic since early times (5). However, today, utopian genre no longer represents the unrealistic perfect future which is impossible to reach, but has developed into the portrayal of worlds the authors present as alternatives to their contemporary societies' ways of living (Rothstein, “Utopia and Its Discontents” 3). While contemporary utopian societies are presented as always better than the society the author lives in, contemporary authors of utopias have also attempted to create alternatives that seem achievable, though how successful they have been is a matter of debate.

Since ancient Greece, authors have depicted better worlds; most of the ancient Greek utopian stories describe heavenly perfection and a fantastically beautiful world. However, perfect islands of heavenly bliss, which were believed to be protected by gods to stay that way, were not the only examples of literary utopia. Plato's famous *Republic*, which is sometimes taken as the first example of utopian literature, actually exemplifies another form of utopia, one that is more grounded in reality and based on human ingenuity, rather than divine intervention. Sargent calls these two types of early utopias

“body utopias” and “city utopias” (“Three Faces of Utopianism: Revisited” 4). While perfect heavens have always been a part of human imagination as body utopias, city utopias are the ones that focus on social change and criticism of one’s own society through fictional alternatives.

Apart from body utopias such as the biblical heaven, 16th and 17th centuries saw several works that depict happier societies built by changing society in the way it was ruled, run or in its social and economic customs. These utopias were often theocratic but they were societies more egalitarian than the author’s own society while also staying more grounded in reality compared to body utopias. The most famous example of this is More’s *Utopia* (1516) which also gave the name to the genre itself. More’s attempt was to criticize his own society and show his readers alternatives to the European norms of the time. For example, Utopia has no class structure like England does, so all citizens participate in agricultural work. No one lives the life of an aristocrat in England in the 14th century; everyone works on the land and everyone joins in the harvest. Another interesting point More makes is the fact that Utopia is a moneyless society and is able to function in a more egalitarian way; excess food is sent around the country and bribery, thereby privilege, is obliterated. *Utopia* offers alternatives to education, healthcare, foreign affairs and even to the institution of marriage. While it is unclear if More actually thought every one of these alternatives as better, as he was not so keen on Protestantism but Utopia is known to have religious freedom. *Utopia* is, both because of its name and its people being described as happier than Europeans, seem to be a more ideal world for More than England.

Later, in the 19th and 20th centuries, some socialist authors found utopian genre useful for illustrating different societies where economics and politics could be thought and run in different ways, as an attempt to point out the flaws of their own communities and offer better alternatives. The most well-known examples of such attempts were

American author Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) and, on the British side, William Morris' *News from Nowhere* (1890), both of which were future societies that were distinctly anti-capitalist. H.G. Wells also wrote utopias alongside his dystopian works, *A Modern Utopia* (1905) being the most well-known example. It describes a country where a group of men and women, called Samurai, are tasked with ruling the country and they have to follow a strict code of conduct. This utopia is also anti-capitalist and against private property, though not as strictly as in *Utopia* or *News from Nowhere*.

These authors believed their fictional worlds could be the future reality and strived to explore how humanity could get there as well. Morris' work, for example, attempts to show the path to a utopian society, described through its characters telling the displaced, time-traveling protagonist how they protested and held country-wide strikes to have control over the rulers of the country. Morris included imperfections, such as what he calls "passion crimes" to emphasize that the utopia cannot be perfect either but it can get as close to perfection as possible.

Utopia has never been solely a socialist endeavor, though. Early 20th century saw the rise of Nazi utopias as well, such as Ernst Bergmann's *Deutschland, das Bildungsland der neuen Menschen* (1933), and just like the theocratical utopias of the 16th century and utopias under philosopher kings in ancient Greece, the concept of the perfect society has continued to change from author to author and society to society. Utopia has always been about what the particular author considered better than their current society, regardless whether other people considered their vision a utopia or a dystopia.

Utopian literature, as a distinct genre, does not seem to be established until the 1920s academically in the English-speaking world. Before the appearance of the first

anthologies with Utopia in their titles, such as Joyce Hertzler's 1923 book *The History of Utopian Thought*, trying to explain the genre and compile examples, most works considered utopia today were categorized as imaginary journeys, state novels or romances (Fitting, "A Short History of Utopian Studies" 2). While utopian works were compiled together under these names occasionally, they were also accompanied by several other works that would not be classified as 'utopian literature' today. More's *Utopia* and Plato's *Republic* were extensively studied and the link between socialist movements and utopian fiction was mentioned before the 20th century, (Fitting, "A Short History" 2); however, the genre gained more work specifically done on utopianism and utopian literature through the 20th century and has risen to a more salient position around 1960s and 1970s. During this period, attempts to define the utopian genre, separate it from other forms of utopianism in response to the criticisms the genre received have been more and more common. Some well-known examples are Lyman Tower Sargent's 1967 essay "Three Faces of Utopianism", Darko Suvin's "Defining the Literary Genre of Utopia" (1973) and Robert Elliot's *The Shape of Utopia* (1970).

The 1970s were a time when the youth was seen more involved in politics; social and political movements, such as anti-war movements, several liberation movements, environmentalist movements and sexual revolution were at their peak. As politically engaged people demanded change, ideas about how those post-change societies could be were published as well. During this time, utopia experienced a second revival, in both the amount of works produced and the study of utopianism in the academy. During this period, Lyman Tower Sargent set out to describe utopia definitively, in his 1967 essay, "Three Faces of Utopianism". Sargent gives the definition of "utopia" as "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space", "eutopia" as a positive utopia, a world better than

the author's society according to the author, "dystopia" as a world worse than the author's society according to the author and "utopianism" as "social dreaming" (Sargent, "Three Faces Revisited", 9).

In the 1980s, the social dreaming of the 1970s slowed down and was replaced with darker visions of the future, hence the revival and popularity of the dystopian genre. As the right-wing politicians took power in the USA, the UK and several other countries, political atmosphere changed and changing the world for the better seemed less possible. Dystopian fiction grew in popularity, reflecting this loss of hope. While some dystopian novels involved utopian visions or possibilities in themselves, these works only had utopia as a small contrasting existence from the larger dystopian system they were centered around. However, the two genres did merge in some works and utopias' existence continued through dystopian fiction as well.

Raffaella Baccolini, in her 2004 article "The Persistence of Hope in Dystopian Science Fiction", makes the point that dystopian literature has the utopian impulse in itself, saying, "Utopia is maintained in the dystopia, traditionally a bleak, depressing genre with no space for hope in the story, only outside the story" (520). She gives the example of open-ended dystopian novels and suggests that these novels "allow readers and protagonists to hope" (520). Baccolini points out that the blending of different genres was another aspect of these novels that made them "sites of resistance and oppositional texts" (520). She refers to Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* as an example of this line of utopian writing as the novel presents two different future scenarios, one being a utopia and the other one a dystopia. Piercy makes the point that people's choices can lead them to either future, making this novel both a text that is in between utopia and dystopia, and a text that maintains the utopian hope with its open ending, as Baccolini points out. In his article about Piercy, Keith Booker concludes his analysis of two opposing sides of Piercy's visions, claiming that "the mixture of utopian

and dystopian energies that characterizes much recent feminist imaginative writing shows that dystopian warnings in no way require the complete surrender of any hope of a better future” (Booker, “Woman on the Edge of a Genre: The Feminist Dystopias of Marge Piercy” 348).

Peter Fitting also points out that the utopian impulse had existed in several Science Fiction (Sci-Fi) works despite these novels not being complete configurations of a utopian society. Fitting tells of several ways SF novels explore humanity’s betterment; some through a “New Mythology, the contemporary diversion and reinvestment of the utopian impulse in the yearning for false security offered by messiahs and dictators” and some through an outside force rising humanity up to which he gives the example of *Childhood’s End* by Clarke (“Utopian Longing and Capitalist Cooptation” 68). As dystopian literature’s growth continued, authors continued to mix aspects of both utopian and dystopian genres to point out the problems of the societies they lived in, as well as to offer their own alternatives to such societies. An example to such novels is Ursula K. Le Guin’s popular work *The Dispossessed* subtitled “An Ambiguous Utopia”; the novel explores two differently structured societies with utopian and dystopian aspects. As genre blurring became more common during this era, utopian visions continued to live on in dystopian and other SF fiction as well, despite the growing scarcity of fully utopian novels.

Even though they lost their popularity after the 1970s, fully utopian novels did not completely disappear. The 1980s and 1990s saw new, though few, utopias emerging as did the 2000s. As a political genre that centers on the question of how different human lives can look under different economic, political and social conditions, utopia has always found a new emergence in politically heated times. As the 2010s saw the political and social landscape change, the popularity of the internet, changing economies and world powers, and new political and social movements, utopia has

emerged once again to offer alternatives to the contemporary society. However, this time utopia does not carry the naiveté of the 1970s' hopeful visions. While it seems more pessimistic than its earlier examples, contemporary utopian literature tries to explore what our future could be realistically and still without losing hope for a better future.

As utopia has changed and evolved mirroring the world around it from the 1970s to today, the way the utopian authors responded to the criticisms the genre has received, their solutions and structures they found more ideal have also changed. As a “sociopolitical subgenre of science fiction” (Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* 61) in 20th century, utopian fiction and utopianism itself has, naturally, been criticized for several reasons over the last century. A very popular criticism, which could still be seen in just how the word “utopia” is used today, is the assumption that utopia is no more than dreaming, that it is unrealistic and impossible. Philosopher Paul Tillich, in his article “Critique and Justification of Utopia” critiques utopia for being “unfruitful”, saying, “[t]he unfruitfulness of utopia is that it describes impossibilities as real possibilities – and fails to see them for what they are, impossibilities” (300). Similarly, Marx himself has used utopia to imply a plan for a society that was not scientific or possible and in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, Frederic Engels aligns socialism with scientific possibilities and divorces the ideology from utopian ideas, citing them as unrealistic, due to the failures of experimental utopian communities of their age (Paden, “Marx’s Critique of the Utopian Socialists” 72).

The impossibility of utopia and naiveté in imagining utopian communities are emphasized in the anti-utopian thought so much that today, the word utopian is sometimes used to refer to impossible perfection. In “Three Faces of Utopianism”, Lyman Tower Sargent, a supporter of utopian thought, points out that according to anti-utopian thought, “Even if Utopia is realizable, the costs are too high, and people are

simply incapable of Utopia. And, of course, the most complete success of the anti-utopians was to make the label "Utopian" take on the meaning of fanciful, unrealistic, impractical" (22). The rejection of utopianism as an unrealistic way to bring about a better society dismisses not only utopia's possible contribution to the debate over how a better society could be, but also its ability to give its readers hope for the possibility of better social, economic and political structures. In her article "Utopia, Dystopia: The Pragmatic Value of Visions", Marjorie Suchocki explains the contribution of utopian vision to the future saying, "Utopias are not only fantasies of what might be in a perfect world, they are also catalysts toward the actual futures that we create. For we will create the future; the question is not "if," but "how." Utopias shape the goal and suggest means consistent with that goal" (59). One contribution utopia provides is the discussion of the direction the author wants the society to take. As the author establishes their exemplary society, it becomes easier to see an alternative system at work.

While utopianism is sometimes described as social dreaming, it is also most of the time, a project, a blueprint for a new society. Utopian literature is not fantasy but speculative fiction because most authors believe their imaginary societies are positive future possibilities that can be established in real life. In most cases, authors strive for realism to give a political message in their works and that message is that alternatives exist and it is possible to transform society into a better version. William Morris, like some other socialist authors of the late 19th century such as Edward Bellamy, used *News from Nowhere* as a study into how society can change and develop into one that prioritizes human happiness and health rather than profit.

Ernest Callenbach, in his afterword to *Ecotopia* in 2004, says, "In technological matters, the book was carefully conservative: when it came out, we could have been doing anything the Ecotopians did, and of course we could be doing it now. But in its portrayal of a worker-controlled economy and relaxed folkways, *Ecotopia* was, and

remains, profoundly radical” (170). Callenbach does not make *Ecotopia* a utopia that can only be achieved by technological advancement; the only change required is for the economy and society to revolve around human needs and happiness, rather than profit. From the 19th to 21st century, in literary works, utopian worlds are less and less portrayed as perfect and, therefore, impossible. Authors of the utopian genre aim to show their readers another way to structure society and for this purpose they mostly refrain from making their utopias perfect fantasylands: hence, they add real-life conflicts, flaws and problems to be solved, without losing the utopian hope in the core of their works.

The other, most significant criticism the genre has faced was the 20th century American philosopher Karl Popper’s opinions about how utopia would inevitably have a violent and totalitarian nature. Popper also saw utopia as unrealistic and impossible but apart from that, he suggested that utopia would inevitably lead to violence as well because it is about implementing a certain plan for society and not everyone can possibly agree on one plan (Popper, “Utopia and Violence” 4). According to Popper, these disagreements would mean someone would eventually subdue others to create their own utopia which in that case would be a dystopia for the subdued. He makes the point that, “rational political action must be based upon a more or less clear and detailed description or blueprint of our ideal state, and also upon a plan or blueprint of the historical path that leads towards this goal” (5). This is why he thinks of utopia as an attractive theory. However, he finds the agreement of this end goal impossible: “That it [utopian theory] is self-defeating is connected with the fact that it is impossible to determine ends scientifically” (5). He adds that it would be impossible to argue about the desired political ends with someone who venerates violence over argument: “But you cannot, by means of argument, convert those who suspect all argument, and who prefer violent decisions to rational decisions” (6). He concludes his argument by saying

that as utopian goals of a powerful group or individual are criticized by citizens with differing utopian goals, violence will become necessary to silence them so the process to reach their utopia can be concluded: “Utopian rationalism is a self-defeating rationalism. However benevolent its ends, it does not bring happiness, but only the familiar misery of being condemned to live under a tyrannical government” (7). Popper believes utopian re-designing of society is a totalitarian act and therefore sees utopianism as dangerous. However, many utopian works recognize that not everybody will share the same idea of utopia and some literary works address what could happen in such situations, an example being *Walkaway* with its diverse cast of anti-capitalist characters that aim for different better worlds. In the fourth chapter of this study, how Doctorow deals with this particular problem in *Walkaway* will be examined as well, proving a clear development in utopia’s realistic tackling of the issue as the genre has evolved over time.

Defenders of utopianism and utopian fiction emphasize utopia’s immense usefulness in the betterment of society and disagree with the claims that it is impossible to achieve or that it will lead to violence inevitably. Lyman Tower Sargent brings two opposing views to Popper’s arguments in his article, starting with Frederick L. Polak’s insistence that freedom and creativity can only be possible through utopia and western civilization could not continue without imagining better futures as it “shuts himself up in the present” (“Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited” 25). The second proponent of utopia Sargent cites is Ernst Bloch: “For him Utopia is a standard by which to judge existing practice. Far from being the road to totalitarianism, it is the road away from totalitarianism” (26). Sargent defends their arguments for the necessity of utopia against Popper’s declaration that utopianism is dangerous and will only breed violence:

Their [Polak and Bloch’s] essential argument is that our images of the future help to shape our actual future. Put another way, social forms follow expectations or,

negatively, forms that are inconceivable are unlikely to arise. The corollary is that if people's expectations are positive, if they believe that they can or will improve their lives, they are more likely to do so than if their expectations are negative.

(27)

Sargent defends the idea that a future not imagined can never be realized. He concludes his article emphasizing that utopian imagination is the only way society can progress to a better future. He points out that "People can be strongly motivated by a vision of better future for themselves and their children" (27), and this motivation leads to effort and effort is more likely to achieve progress.

Utopia's usefulness and positive effects on readers and society are defended by Peter Fitting as well. Fitting points out utopia's power to bring pleasure to its readers by allowing them to experience the "brief moments of textual pleasure in which disalienation and end of repression" ("Utopian Effect/Utopian Pleasure" 94) are achieved. He gives the example of a dragon hunt in Samuel Delaney's *Stars in My Pockets Like Grains of Sand*; in the book's context, dragon hunt does not mean tracking a creature and killing it but finding a dragon and flying with it while sharing its sensory abilities. Fitting points out that utopian pleasure is achieved by this change of context, by redefining what hunting means and turning it into an experience that is positive for every creature involved (94). Another positive effect that is specific to utopian literature, Fitting argues, is the experience of seeing "how the ideals and promises of freedom and equality might be realized; in seeing how an author goes about working out the structures and details of an imaginary society which would make possible a realm of human freedom" (95). Utopia's aim to show the possibility of such worlds has the power to give the reader a vision of a better world thus helping the reader gain a new perspective of their own world and ways to improve it. On top of this, by presenting entire new ways to see the established concepts (such as the new concept of "hunting"

in the dragon hunt example), it helps the reader see the possibilities of reconfiguring a new understanding of their own world. In his book *Archeologies of the Future*, Frederick Jameson defines utopian literature's goal and distinct power as "a representational meditation on radical difference, radical otherness, and on the systemic nature of the social totality, to the point where one cannot imagine any fundamental change in our social existence which has not first thrown off Utopian visions like so many sparks from a comet" (xii). Jameson ties all visions of radically different futures to utopianism; utopia gives the reader a new world to imagine and hope for. Marge Piercy's words on imagined futures also emphasizes this idea: "What we imagine we are working toward does a lot to define what we will consider doable action aimed at producing the future we want and preventing the future we fear" ("Telling Stories about Stories" 1-2). Utopia gives the reader a world to strive for, a structure and context to reach for, as well as the motivation to work for it as that positive future seems doable to them.

Utopian literature reflects the society it is written in and its expectations for the future as well. Bernard Harcourt draws a correlation between the changing opinions and expectations around society-wide transformations and the utopian thought. He explains how the idea of social change has evolved in the second half of the 20th century, writing, "the so-called modern concept of revolution signified a watershed social transformation or a binary break, a singular moment represented by the collective concept of 'Revolution,' with a capital R and in the singular" ("The Transformation of Critical Utopia" 233). This idea is established as the background of the Ecotopian society in Callenbach's novel.

Harcourt continues to explain that Maoist writings started to loosen their grip on the historical idea of revolution, claiming, "revolution has collapsed under the weight of its own exigency" (233). He ties this change to several aspects of the early revolutionary

thought, such as the fear that it would lead to violence and totalitarianism, as Karl Popper also emphasizes in his article about utopian thought. Maoist reconfiguration of the revolutionary ideal is then interpreted by the western left as a pivoting to the inner landscape of the revolutionary which will bring in a personal revolution, according to Harcourt (240). This idea of personal transformation which leads to social transformation is also established as the background of *Pacific Edge* in the revolution the protagonist's grandfather joins in. With the protagonist Kevin, the importance of the continuing necessity of personal transformation to maintain utopia is emphasized.

The final step in utopian thought becomes the belief in small-scale movements that revolutionize both the individual and, by spreading through rest of the disillusioned masses, eventually the world. Harcourt explains this, writing:

The resulting revolutionary critical utopias were very different. They did not rest on a union of workers uniting to take power or end with the withering of the state; instead, they started with a small cell of activists disrupting and causing havoc, or an assembly prefiguring a new democratic form, without much of an end game. (240)

The three novels studied here follow the line he draws with *Walkaway* representing this ideal of small, insurrectionary groups achieving a greater change in the end through countless struggles against the established order. The novel does not end with a great war to end the state either, the goal seems to be surviving in an alternative society among walkaways but they resonate with rest of the society and grow unexpectedly.

On top of its usefulness as a goal and a reflection of the ideas around social transformation of its time, utopian literature has been self-reflexive in the 20th and 21st centuries, as exemplified in its subgenre critical utopia. According to Tom Moylan, "A central concern in the critical utopia is the awareness of the limitations of the utopian

tradition, so that these texts reject utopia as blueprint while preserving it as dream” (*Demand the Impossible* 10). He points out that critical utopia connects with its emergence point of the existing society, thus emphasizing the required social transformation to reach utopia, while also focusing on the imperfections of the new utopian society to “render more recognizable and dynamic alternatives” (10). Utopian tradition develops itself by reflecting on itself and the criticisms it receives, and Moylan explores how utopian novels achieve this critical view. Critical utopia both critiques and reclaims utopian ideals. While utopian hope and possibility is kept alive, the negative implications of the earlier utopian works are thoroughly explored and criticized. The alternatives offered are more communal, centered around protecting the human aspect of the utopian ideals. In that context, *Pacific Edge* focuses on imperfections of utopia and offers solutions to them in a utopian fashion while *Walkaway* embodies every aspect of a critical utopia as Moylan has defined it.

In his article “Beyond *Triton*: Samuel R. Delany's Critical Utopianism and the Colliding Worlds in ‘We, in Some Strange Power's Employ, Move on a Rigorous Line’” Mark Tabone claims that Delaney’s works *Triton* and “We, in Some Strange Power’s Employ” are critical utopias because these works scrutinize the utopian tradition. He argues that “Through its problematization of the monological utopian ‘program,’ the text intercedes in its heated sociopolitical context by critically scrutinizing aspects of the ‘two sides’ of the cultural debate that raged during the late 1960s” (190). *Pacific Edge* and *Walkaway* also embody these aspects of critical utopia; they criticize the monological utopian program as well as the existing society the authors live in, scrutinizing both sides of the cultural approach towards the future. Critical utopia is critical not only of the society it was written in but also of the utopian tradition that is, sometimes, rightfully criticized. This self-reflexivity allows the reader to understand that the utopian imagination is not an imposition of a program the author deems right

but an open debate where the author is ready to engage with several differing opinions. As utopian literature becomes more diverse, dynamic, realistic and closer to an achievable dream, it inevitably evolves into critical utopia.

Alongside the historical zeitgeist around revolutionary ideals Harcourt mentions, Moylan ties utopian literature's transformation to the existing societies being declared as already utopian. In *Demand the Impossible*, he writes, "[u]topian figures of hope were transmuted into an attack on present social systems which claim to be already existing utopias" (8). He identifies these societies as "Stalinist Russia, Nazi Germany and the corporate United States" (7). He makes the claim that the more negative critiques of the genre have become the dystopian literature while some works both explored the "boredom of the traditional utopia" (10) and has risen against the cooptation of utopia by the existing societies.

The premise of a utopia is a better world and it requires meticulous planning both as a story and as a political device to illustrate how society could be different. With the emergence of the new subgenres such as critical utopia, more recent utopian works have begun to deal with the limitations and imperfections of the genre, as well as offering solutions to these issues. The three novels examined in this study are judged by how well they handle these criticisms directed at the utopian genre; if they seem totalitarian, if they consider differing views of people on what a utopia is, if they consider the problems and conflicts their human characters and fictional society can face and address them and what their solutions are to common problems encountered while trying to create a better society, such as, how crime is defined and dealt with, how opposition to utopian ideals are handled, how government works, or if it does not exist, how the rules are enforced, and so on. Their responses to these criticisms and different ideas of utopian futures will be compared and contrasted. Through these novels,

utopia's evolution from blueprints of idealistic futures to critical roadmaps filled with realistic struggles to reach an ideal future will be presented.



CHAPTER II

Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia*: An Idealistic Utopia

Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* was published in 1975, in a politically charged period full of several civil rights and social justice movements, such as feminist and sexual liberation movement, Black Power movement, queer rights movement and it carries 1970s' hopeful promises about equal rights, justice for persecuted groups and action against climate change. *Ecotopia* is an attempt at a realistic world with its technological systems available in the 1970s, in that sense it was a step forward to more realistic depictions in the utopian genre as it did not rely on a future technological development to save people from their problems.

A famous example of the utopian genre, *News from Nowhere* (1890), for example, eliminates the need for work through machines that take on all the necessary labor, leaving humanity to enjoy their time on earth. *Ecotopia* differs from this older utopia by Callenbach's careful structuring of an ecologically sustainable society with only the available technology of the 1970s' America. However, as a utopian novel, *Ecotopia* still carries the older utopian tropes about restructuring society and depicting a better life in a world where values regarding economy, politics, social relations and relationship with nature were different from the American society in quite significant ways. *Ecotopia* paints a society where desire for profit is eliminated from the economy, where land and everything produced on it is used communally, where political structure is closer to an anarchic system in which hierarchy between the people and their rulers does not exist and the job of the rulers or the representatives is not seen as more important than any other kind of work, where social relationships are based on an understanding of equality between all people as this is a classless and moneyless society and no work is deemed more important than any other, and most significantly, as it is in

the name of the novel, a deep respect and worship towards nature is common and expected from all citizens. From *Utopia* to *News from Nowhere*, these tropes were common in utopian fiction but *Ecotopia* focuses more on how the systems of food production, distribution, waste disposal, schools and hospitals, work places and communal living could be structured in detail. Through these systemic changes, *Ecotopia* tells the story of how human life could be improved compared to 1970s' American lives, using the beliefs popular among the youth of the period, such as anti-capitalism, feminism and equal rights. In his article "The Transformation of Critical Utopia", Harcourt traces the evolution of utopian imagination in parallel with the idea of social revolution and claims that the first step of this transformation was the belief in a binary class system and a revolution that would radically change the structure of society in an instant (239). *Ecotopia* embodies this idea of revolution with its people revolting against USA and separating to build their own country, complete with an independence war. This marks the first step in the evolution of utopian thought paralleling revolutionary thought.

Callenbach's utopia follows the familiar structure of imaginary voyage narratives. His protagonist William Weston is a journalist sent to be the first American to observe and write about what this newly-built utopian state is like. *Ecotopia* is a 20-year-old country, separated from America, built upon Washington, Oregon and Northern California. As Weston passes the border and becomes the first American in *Ecotopia*, he decides to keep a separate, personal journal as well to be able to tell his history without any restrictions from the American government. The American government, in this novel, wants to prove to its citizens that a society built on common property and resources, an anti-capitalist economic system and anti-individualist way of living in the social sphere would not last long, and Weston is implicitly tasked with writing articles that prove this opinion to be correct. Weston uses the articles to tell the

readers about the newly-found systems of food production, distribution, sewage, transportation, etc., as well as how schools, hospitals, work places, common living spaces are organized. His personal journal entries, on the other hand, focus on his personal relationships with Ecotopians he meets. Weston gradually comes to understand the Ecotopian way of social life and their norms, and gets used to them, revealing to the reader his change of heart over the course of the novel.

Ecotopia is a utopia that seems possible to the audience of its time, as the youth movements of the 1970s aimed at building a world that was different from America in several ways, from the economic system to the political and social structure. In his afterword to the 2004 edition of *Ecotopia* Callenbach says, “[...] when it [*Ecotopia*] came out, we could have been doing anything the Ecotopians did, and of course we could be doing it now” (170). *Ecotopia* is meant to be a utopia that is achievable, and at least in its technology and structure of its systems it seems possible to achieve. However, *Ecotopia*’s social aspects are not above the criticisms utopian genre has received over its unrealistic approach to human relationships and social structures. According to Karl Popper, utopian thinkers and planners would have to eliminate all other ideals different than their vision in order to achieve their utopia (Popper, “Utopia and Violence” 3) and *Ecotopia* fails to present a system that could avoid being read as restrictive and even violent. In this context, *Ecotopia*, represents the first step in the evolution of the utopian genre in the 1970s before the shape it took in the 2000s. As will be explored in the following chapters, it demonstrates an example of the genre that was a step in the direction of realism but still too far away from it to be seen as a work that was able to refute the criticisms the utopian genre had been facing until then.

Ecotopia does not contain enough characters with differing beliefs and values, leaving the characters lacking in depth and complexity, thereby making them less realistic. Because of this, the novel misses the chance to respond to criticisms utopian

genre receives regarding its unrealistic approaches to human nature and ineffective solutions it offers for disagreements and differing values. Karl Popper explains the impossibility of having an argument with a person that would prefer violence, saying, “But you cannot, by means of argument, convert those who suspect all argument, and who prefer violent decisions to rational decisions (“Utopia and Violence” 6).” Popper makes this argument for any utopian planning; however, utopian literature is in a position that can respond to this argument by exploring how a utopian society can deal with people who prefer violence over coming to an agreement through argument. However, *Ecotopia* is narrated as a society where every citizen Weston meets seem to be in agreement about being emotionally and verbally open and honest with each other without any differing attitudes about self-expression or even slight disagreements in their opinions about Ecotopia itself. This makes Ecotopia a society where individualism is weakened and uniformity is a lot stronger. This uniformity means less diversity of characters and opinion, which leads to less chances of exploring a utopian future realistically. Thus, the characters feel flat and one-dimensional and the novel feels unrealistic.

No Ecotopian attempts more violent ways of persuasion, let alone having any discussions where conflict is not solved through an emotional outburst. As an example of such a conflict, when Weston first settles in his hotel room, he hears a couple fighting outside of his door. Weston describes it as, “[a] man and a woman, threatening each other with what sounded like murder” (22). Weston goes out to the corridor and watches their fight. “The woman [...] screamed at the man and kicked at him viciously [...] The man, his own face red with anger, took the woman by the shoulders as if he was about to bash her head against the wall” (22). The fight goes on with the onlookers other than Weston also watching the couple and then ends with the couple crying in each other’s arms: “They stood limply, looking at each other, and then fell into each other’s arms,

crying and nuzzling each other wetly, and staggered off down the corridor to their room” (22). This interaction is the first example of the emotionally open attitude of Ecotopians in their interpersonal relationships for Weston. The disagreement is overshadowed by the solution provided for it; an emotional release seems to be the necessary action and enough to end the disagreement between two characters. Compared to older utopias that were more focused on the economic and political structures of the society, *Ecotopia* focuses on personal relationships and emotional growth more. Personal feelings and resolving them seem to be one of the most important solutions to many of this utopian society’s problems. *Ecotopia* emphasizes the effect on personal wellness on every aspect of life and takes it out of the realm of personal. However, at the same time, it is so reliant on this way of solving problems that it does not give enough space to different political, economic and social alternatives that could be discussed or explored. This attitude makes the problems in the novel seem entirely about emotional wellness, not dealing with the criticisms the genre received directly.

An article Weston writes about women-led ruling party of Ecotopia makes the point that even the political disagreements and discussions are led this way: “There are no Robert’s Rules of Order, no motions, no votes – instead, a gradual ventilation of feelings, some personal antagonisms worked through, and a gradual consensual focusing on what needs to be done” (85). Despite Weston joining these meetings, the narrative stays surface-level on how the “gradual consensual focus” is achieved. In the exploration of Ecotopian politics, emotional wellness is emphasized several times but the problem-solving methods and how meetings are done in depth are not explained. This narrative choice does not allow the novel to realistically paint an in-depth picture of how Ecotopia continues its existence, leaving the novel shallow at places. Even in political discussions and problem solving, focus on emotional openness and pulling the

discussion to more personal concerns seem to be the expected form of discourse in Ecotopia.

Nevertheless, there is an Opposition, namely Progressive Party in Ecotopia, in the form of the Progressive Party. The party members are the only people in Ecotopia with different views on how the society should be structured but while the protagonist seems sympathetic with their reasons when they meet, they are immediately dismissed, threatened and then completely forgotten. Weston secretly meets them as they want to discuss the possibility of America helping them change the economic structure of Ecotopia. However, they are characterized as either greedy people who want to be rich as they would in America or overly emotional young people. Weston describes them as such: “A couple of them are over 50, people who in the U.S. would be members of Rotary or country club [...] A couple are young hot-eyed, resentful, dangerous. How they got that way, I have no idea but they would probably be against the regime whatever it was or did” (49). Rotary is a businessmen club and Weston calls them “productive” and “normal” which denotes them as capitalists seeking personal profit. Young people involved in the movement are defined as hotheads that would be against any regime; Weston’s descriptions of them belittles their convictions and worries for the future of their country, reducing them into angry youth without a cause. These characterizations of the Opposition are too simplistic and for a utopian book to reduce the people with opposing views in it into caricatures of real people with real concerns for themselves or for their future is not an answer to any of the criticism Karl Popper makes about utopian genre’s inability to handle differing views.

In his 1984 article “Despotic Reason in Arcadia? Ernest Callenbach’s Ecological Utopias”, Heinz Tschachler criticizes this aspect of *Ecotopia*: “Then, too, there is very little human variety in Ecotopia; instead, the inhabitants of the ideal world are almost standardized types, ‘bokanovskified’ versions of Rousseau’s ‘natural man’ doing their

stint of 'tree service' (6)." He is using "bokanovskified" as an expression of how people seem to be clones of each other, as the Bokanov Process refers to a cloning technology in Aldous Huxley's 1932 novel *Brave New World*. Indeed, the characters exist on two sides of utopian/anti-utopian spectrum and they lack depth because of the dominant uniformity among them. The Opposition is representative of two simplistic character traits; the old, capitalist businessperson and young, fierce revolutionary without a real cause. With Rousseau's "natural man" Tschachler refers to the simple and primitive image of man in nature before civilization that is not concerned with philosophy or even his own future (Rousseau, "A Discourse Upon the Origin and the Foundation of the Inequality Among Mankind"). Ecotopians are portrayed in a similar vein with Rousseau's natural man since they are painted simply as one with nature, without any depth and lacking in complexity of character or opinions. Tschachler criticizes the lack of diversity in opinion and attitude of these characters as well. This too simple depiction of conflict and method of conflict-solving seems unable to be a convincing depiction of a realistic society. For a utopia that strives to look achievable, *Ecotopia* falls short in its depictions of diversity of opinions, discussions and conflicts around such diversity, as well as in terms of the realism of its characters.

This simplicity of the characters causes yet another problem: without depth or complexity, the characters fall flat in their more positive interactions and emotions as well, making the peaceful lives they seem to lead less convincing to the readers. Tschachler criticizes this as well, saying, "[...] the happiness of Ecotopians is enforced by what can only be called a mild form of mind control" (6). As the blueprints utopian genre presents are criticized for being unrealistic in their ability to satisfy most of their citizens' needs and bring them a better life style, falling short on depicting characters' inner worlds with as much depth and realism as possible causes the genre to be unable to answer such criticisms.

This simplicity spreads to the political structure of the Ecotopian life as well, making the utopia seem unrealistic in its approach to politics. Karl Popper makes the point that the political differences (which only exists as Opposition in Ecotopia) cannot be overcome through argument alone, asserting saying “Since we cannot determine the ultimate ends of political actions scientifically, or by purely rational methods, differences of opinion concerning what the ideal state should be like cannot always be smoothed out by the method of argument” (“Utopia and Violence” 6). However, Ecotopia chooses to reduce the political decisions to personal and emotional discussions as well, presenting this system as a solution to more bureaucratic systems of politics. Weston describes the political discussions and decisions taken at the highest office of the country as such: “[...] in those three hours, a great deal gets done: a political problem is indeed faced, defined and a decision made about it, though only along with a great amount of attention to things that would be considered, among us, as more in the realm of social life than politics” (85). As mentioned above, how the political problems are faced and the decisions are made are not narrated; they are only mentioned as “in the realm of social life than politics”. Weston’s expression here causes the reader to see these political as simple as personal discussions. Furthermore, while there are no details or snippets of the discussions, the narrative makes the decision-making process seem smooth and easy which leaves the political structure shallow since it is not really explained, explored or discussed.

Ecotopian politics, as a criticism of the American politics of the 1970s, focuses more on the effects of laws and political decisions on the well-being of individuals, including the people in charge of making decisions and passing laws. Ecotopia, in both its social and political stances, focuses on bringing humans closer to their own emotions, accepting and releasing them as a solution for social and political problems, as it is exemplified by both moments of interpersonal conflicts and political decisions in

the novel. However, this attitude comes with the presupposition that all the parties involved will believe in the same way of self-expression and problem solving. This premise simplifies the political action taken in *Ecotopia* to the level of interpersonal conflict as well, disregarding any other possibility of a more complex political system that takes into account that rational discussion and agreement will not always occur between different parties. This simplicity is also criticized by Werner Christie Mathisen in her 2001 article, “The Underestimation of Politics in Green Utopias”. She makes the point that Callenbach’s *Ecotopia* (besides two other utopias) does not pretend there is absolutely no conflict in this utopian society but Callenbach underestimates political solutions in their creativity and thus, limits human discussion and autonomy:

In other words, these literary utopias are not utopian enough in their description of politics. Their criticism of top-down politics, politics as a power game, is not adequately followed up by an alternative vision of politics as a privileged and autonomous kind of deliberation. [...] It is disappointing that they do not give us richer descriptions of how radically improved political institutions deal with differences and disagreements. (19)

As Mathisen points out, the proposed political system does not explore the wealth of possibility in the political expression, nor does it take into account that, as Popper points out, not all political differences occur only between people that are both willing to discuss the matter rationally. *Ecotopia* is an attempt at an achievable utopia; however, the fact that it does not explore how these political decisions are made and how these discussions take place causes it to stay shallow in the political alternatives it offers. This poverty of political opinion, discussion and conflict solving methods undermines the utopian genre as it casts the genre in an unrealistically and superficially perfect light, leaving it weak in the face of criticisms regarding utopias’ simplicity.

Utopian genre is criticized as a gateway to totalitarian planning and action in attempts to better the society and the fact that Ecotopian government does not allow its citizens privacy and the fact that characters seem to agree on every aspect of their society does nothing to persuade the critics that utopian attempts will not bring dystopian solutions in the name of a better future. Karl Popper ties utopian planning and action to violence as differing factions will try to eliminate each other to achieve their own utopia: “The use of violent methods for the suppression of competing aims becomes more urgent if we consider the period of Utopian construction is liable to be one of social change” (“Utopia and Violence” 6). This criticism is only strengthened by the treatment of the Opposition in *Ecotopia*.

Ecotopia’s Opposition is represented by the Progressive Party but they do not consider their party effective in bringing change to the economic practices of Ecotopia (48). They want Weston to be their contact to the American government and Weston does not refuse them (49). However, after a while, when Weston is in his hotel room, he is visited by the Ecotopian intelligence: “Unpleasant night visit from Ecotopian counter-intelligence, who have somehow heard about my encounter with the underground (Or have I been tailed?)” (60). This point is never brought up again but considering Ecotopian generals praise their intelligence prowess (115) during their independence war, it seems obvious that infiltration of communications of their own citizens is a likely possibility.

Another implication is that any faction with opposing views (although there is only one mentioned opposition) is under watch by the Ecotopian government, violating their citizens’ privacy. The Ecotopian agent prevents Weston from getting in contact with the American government about the demands of the Ecotopian Opposition: “‘Of course,’ they said, ‘you are perfectly free to talk with anyone at all while you are in Ecotopia. But you shouldn’t think we are naive about your government’s clandestine

operations. It would be wise of you to forget to deliver that message in Washington.’

‘And if I don’t forget?’ ‘It will just make more problems for your friends here’” (60).

This comment from the Ecotopian counter-intelligence is an obvious threat and Weston thinks so as well, answering, “I don’t like to be intimidated” (60). When he is told seeing the president with such conduct would be impossible, Weston agrees to burn the note that contains the communication information of the Opposition. This intervention gives the impression of silencing different voices in an attempt to achieve the utopian ideal of one group of people, as Popper argues. The Opposition wants another economic structure than the one Ecotopia has but they feel underrepresented by the political party assigned to their opinions. They want a more powerful entity to be involved in the creation of their own opinion of an economic utopia; however, the Ecotopian government violates their privacy and puts a stop to any other possible action they can take. This intervention brings the risk of Ecotopia taking such actions to any citizen that opposes the views that are held by the ruling party to the reader’s mind and such a possibility opens up the road to more totalitarian actions that could potentially turn Ecotopia into an oligarchy of the Survivalist Party. Rather than embracing the diversity of opinion, Ecotopia limits its citizens with opposing or even different ideals to express their opinions only through channels they have allowed, such as the Progressive Party which is seen as ineffective by the people it represents (48), and keeps them contained and defanged. This expectation of blind obedience and silencing of differing voices by the Ecotopian government is criticized by Heinz Tschachler, in his article “Despotic Reason in Arcadia? Ernest Callenbach’s Ecological Utopias” (1984):

What adds fuel to the critique of totalitarianism in *Ecotopia* is its visionary orientation, its blatant millenarianism, which stresses the Ecotopian order as an absolute norm. Callenbach’s blueprint purports to be not only antithetical to the status quo but far superior to it – i.e., more or less ideal. As a consequence,

Ecotopian institutions threaten to become rigid structures of a *gemeinschaft* dominated by ‘despotic reason’, ultimately endangering the existence of utopia itself. (6)

Ecotopian government shows the reader that the norms decided on by the ruling party will be absolute and better than any other option by limiting and silencing the opposition. This “despotic reason” causes this utopian vision to be unable to face the criticisms of violence and totalitarianism the utopian genre receives. Rather than answering such criticism, with this action of Ecotopian government, *Ecotopia* gives more fuel to such claims. Tschachler draws a parallel between Ecotopia and Puritan theocracies, declaring Ecotopia an unsatisfactory utopia: “What he [Callenbach] wants is to persuade his readers that his promised land can be built. Even so, his recourse to the time-honored convention of the alternative island appears aesthetically unsatisfactory. The ecological paradise is founded on an intolerance reminiscent of the Puritan theocracies of New England” (6). Intolerance for differing opinions, controlling and monitoring of the opposition and the restrictions on their actions brings *Ecotopia* closer to dystopian visions, undermining its own message about being the ideal society to live in.

Unlike the Ecotopian intelligence that are able to follow and closely listen to all their citizens, Ecotopia is written as a country with a rudimentary defense and military force but it is established as safe from the threat of war or invasion despite its neighbor, U.S., having overwhelming military force compared to it. This set up for the country makes this utopian society seem less realistic which undermines the utopian genre’s ability to present alternatives to the world its readers live in. The contrast between the power Ecotopia has inside to control their Opposition and the lack of military force it has to defend itself from outside forces in such a location causes Ecotopia to seem less realistic. Lyman Tower Sargent draws attention to the utopian fiction being painted as

unrealistic, saying, “Most complete success of the Anti-Utopians was to make the label ‘utopian’ take on the meaning of fanciful, unrealistic, impractical” (“Three Faces Revisited” 22). *Ecotopia* fails to address the military power imbalance between America and Ecotopia, does not give satisfactory reasons for Ecotopia’s safety, and makes Ecotopia’s military and intelligence strength seem both powerful and unrealistically simple, affecting negatively the believability of its world.

Ecotopia is built on a land that is rich in its production of both food and other goods, fertile enough to feed all of its citizens and has ocean on one side, making it possible to both connect to other countries and use the resources the ocean provides. Ecotopia’s secession from America inevitably causes problems for the American economy, as it is stated in the novel: “Nonetheless, many Americans still remember the terrible shortages of fruit, lettuce, wine, cotton, lumber and other western products which followed the breakaway of what had been Washington” (3-4). In addition to this, an Ecotopian assistant minister of food production and processing explains to Weston that Ecotopia had an immense surplus of food after their independence: “You must remember [...] that Ecotopia at the beginning was faced with a stupendous surplus of food production capacity. California alone had produced about a third of the food eaten in the United States” (19). However, despite this wealth, Ecotopia does not have a robust military power to defend itself, as Weston puts it after talking to an Ecotopian general: “Local arsenals; ‘men’ train yearly, do work projects for a couple of weeks” (121). The danger Ecotopia is in is explored in the story of how the country was able to separate from America and establish itself as independent, closing its borders entirely to all Americans. In the war of separation that the Ecotopians call the “Helicopter War” (113), Ecotopia is attacked by the United States. An Ecotopian tells Weston, “There were thousands killed on both sides” (113), making it clear that America possesses the military power and the motive to attack Ecotopia, and that motive is only strengthened

by the fact that an economic crisis was triggered by Ecotopia's secession, as Weston points out above. During its secession war, Ecotopia defends itself by building "anti-helicopter devices" (114), which are guided missiles that are used to shoot down helicopters. Their other defense strategy is disturbing the communication devices the U.S. army carries: "Also we messed up their communication channels a little bit. I've heard that half the time when they thought they were talking to each other, they were actually talking to our guys" (115). These defenses are left as they are, as Weston discovers after looking for a source on the Helicopter War from an Ecotopian perspective: "Their organization sounds more like guerilla bands than a real army but they evidently have excellent radio communications and a very efficient national command system. Denied that heavy fortifications exist on the borders" (121). No other attempts at interference, attack or invasion from America occurs since the Helicopter War. For Ecotopia to develop and become the utopia Weston visits, that time might be necessary. However, not exploring the realistic possibility of America attempting to get one of its richest lands during the earlier years of Ecotopia when their military power is not established causes the historical background of Ecotopia to seem unrealistic.

Utopian literature before *Ecotopia* had few examples that dealt with a situation where the utopian society is surrounded by societies with enmity towards them. H. G. Wells' *A Modern Utopia*, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and William Morris' *News from Nowhere*, as closer utopian works to Ecotopia, set their utopias in worldwide utopian societies. However, long before them More's *Utopia* takes this issue into consideration. More's *Utopia* is set on an island on the other side of the ocean (across from England) and his utopian society exists at the same time as other societies. In More's *Utopia*, utopians think of war as a necessary evil that should only be waged in defense, they prefer solving conflicts in diplomatic ways as much as possible. However, in Callenbach's novel, Ecotopia does not approach the problem of danger to their safety

from other countries as a serious topic, but rather focuses on the fact that Ecotopia's military system is a lot less strict than the America of the 1970s. This structure of the novel that puts non-utopian countries around the utopian society the author describes could have been an opportunity to explore the problems that could arise in the occasion that a country transforms into a utopian society before the rest of world, and it could have answered the questions of the place of military power in a utopia, setting itself apart from most of its predecessors in the utopian genre but the novel does not dig deeper into these issues. By leaving the implication that Ecotopia's existence is a problem for America and that it would have a hard time defending itself against American forces, *Ecotopia* does not satisfactorily explore this situation. In the analysis of *Walkaway* in this study, the difference between the two novels' approaches to defense and military power of the newly established utopian societies, their struggle of protecting themselves against governments that treat them as threats will be compared and *Walkaway*'s more realistic, as well as pessimistic, approach will be contrasted with this criticism of Ecotopia. Despite the lure of the country with its economic resources and despite its lack of defense systems, it is still allowed to develop on former American land after its secession. This aspect of the novel makes it seem too idealistic; a criticism most utopian fiction has received before.

Ecotopia is an example of the utopian vision inspired by the social change and social justice movements of the 1970s in America, and it pushes the utopian genre forward compared to its predecessors by its detailed depictions of Ecotopia's sustainable systems and alternative political, social, and economic structures; however, it fails to answer to the common criticisms the utopian genre has received and even strengthens some of them as discussed above. The novel places Ecotopia in a position where exploring relationships between utopian and non-utopian countries as well as the attitude of a utopian state towards war and violence but this exploration does not receive

enough depth to set an example for the utopian genre that did not have many modern examples discussing such topics. Moreover, *Ecotopia* fails to give its characters sufficient depth in terms of personalities and opinions. The novel has been criticized for using stereotypical depictions for its utopian characters and derisive, simplistic depictions for the characters that are against the economic aims and rules of Ecotopian society. This characterization costs the novel the chance to explore human diversity in a utopian context, takes away from the realism of the Ecotopian society and undermines the utopian genre *per se*, which has been criticized for being unrealistic in its depiction of human flaws and problems. The political structure of the Ecotopian government is also too simplistic, criticizing the American political system of the 1970s but falling short in introducing a complex enough alternative system. This is also a factor which makes the novel unable to rise above the criticism of the utopian genre that it is generally unrealistic and simple, especially in its alternative political systems. Lastly, Ecotopia's government is established as authoritarian and calls to mind the totalitarian depictions of dystopian works with constant monitoring of citizens with ideas that oppose to the general views of the country, and its intelligence operations hampering their attempts at bringing any kind of change. Such a depiction of a utopian government does not dispel the criticisms utopian genre receives for its possibility of sliding into dystopian narratives while attempting to imagine better futures.

Ecotopia builds a detailed utopian society, taking 1970s' political and social movements, especially the environmental concerns into consideration, and also offering a new economic and political model to criticize the American economic and political structures by comparing the two societies through its protagonist Weston's point of view. However, it is unable to dispel many of the criticisms utopian genre is often targeted with, lowering the believability of both itself and the genre, thus undermining utopia as a political tool to criticize and offer alternatives to the dominant order of the

time it is written in. This novel is presented as the first step in contemporary utopia's evolution in this study. It focuses on a revolution and a war right after it, and then the rebuilding of the society in a completely new configuration. After *Ecotopia*, utopian narratives become less idealistic and critical of the almost-perfect utopian image *Ecotopia* represents. As critical utopian works become the new face of utopia, more diversity among the characters and opinions presented in the novels are explored, as well as problems that are possible to arise in a utopian society are brought up and solutions to them are offered. In *Pacific Edge*, the focus of the utopia becomes the unavoidable negatives of human condition and how utopia cannot continue its existence unless it is actively protected.

CHAPTER III:

Kim Stanley Robinson's *Pacific Edge*: A More Diverse and Complex Utopia

The Late 1970s and 1980s saw the rise of right-wing politicians in the USA, the UK and the rest of Europe with leaders such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. After the 1970s, most politically-charged movements started to slow down. Protests and overt opposition to governments have dissipated, leaving behind a less hopeful literary world as well. Utopian dreams have been shelved to express the despair that has taken a hold of most of the English-speaking world during this period. This despair can be seen in the popularity of dystopian works published in the 1980s and 1990s. Tom Moylan describes the hopeless atmosphere late capitalism caused during this time as follows: “Then, as the capitalist system reached the end of its postwar profit curve and began the process of reconfiguring itself and commodifying everything in sight, the possibilities for a complex, equitable, just, and ecologically balanced world receded” (*Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, xiv). While dystopia provided relatable stories of hopeless and lost characters, and gave the reader the opportunity to “cognitively map” (Tally, “Jameson’s Project of Cognitive Mapping” 2) their place in the late capitalist society, which helped them understand the systems of oppression and how the individual fit in them, it stayed as bleak as the outside world as it was a mirror to it. This mirroring, or as Darko Suvin calls it, “feedback oscillation” (*Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* 71), is an effective way for a reader to see their world in the book they are reading but from a more objective point of view, thus understanding the systemic problems they are facing as individuals better. Moylan explains this as such: “Moving beyond the engaged utopianism of the 1970s and against the fashionable temptation to despair in the early 1980s, several sf writers turned to dystopian strategies as a way to come to terms with changing and enclosing social reality” (*Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, 186). In this way,

dystopia, as another political genre, has been a helpful genre in setting up the social, political and economic issues of the real world in small, easily comprehensible pieces.

Utopian literature, until this point, has mostly been about projects for a better world and close to perfection, as seen in *Ecotopia*. However, despite the bleakness of the political world during the rise of dystopia, utopia has not completely died. Of course, the new political and social reality's shadows have fallen on utopian works as well, so utopias were now more grounded in reality, a little less overtly hopeful and positive, however this did not mean they have lost the hopeful core that makes the genre utopia or that the authors abandoned the desire to imagine better worlds. Bernard Harcourt deems this the second step in the transformation of utopian thought which focuses mainly on a personal transformation, rather than a revolution, as in the example of *Pacific Edge* which focuses on the same idea with a larger societal change in the background. Harcourt describes the mentality of this period in the words of young leftists of the time, saying, "Instead of forming organizations, we need to turn inward to transform the self" ("The Transformation of Critical Utopia", 237). *Pacific Edge* embodies this view while also becoming a critical utopia that explores the problems that might arise in a society that is restructured with more human-centered points of view.

Tom Moylan describes this change as the rise of critical utopia, saying, "Utopian writing in the 1970s was saved by its own destruction and transformation into the 'critical utopia'" (*Demand the Impossible* 10). He argues that critical utopia was a utopian vision more grounded in reality:

[...] a central concern of the critical utopia is awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition, so that these texts reject utopia as a blueprint while preserving it as a dream. [...] Finally, the novels focus on the continuing presence of difference

and imperfection within the utopian society itself and thus render more recognizable and dynamic alternatives. (10-11)

By making the social structures and characters more recognizable, critical utopia tries to overcome the criticisms of unrealism the utopian genre faces. While the utopian core of hope for a better future remains in the utopian vision, bringing it closer to reality by envisioning the imperfections and problems that can arise, the utopian narrative becomes more realistic, changing the image of utopia to a more achievable possibility, rather than a fantasy. Robinson's *Pacific Edge* (1990) is one such utopian novel that exemplifies the necessary transformation of the genre.

Pacific Edge starts in an already settled utopia and is narrated through the eyes of two of its main characters: Kevin Claiborne and his grandfather Tom Barnard. Kevin's sections take place in the established utopia and follow a personal growth and love story. Tom's sections start the chapters of the novel from two to eleven with Tom's earlier attempts at writing a utopian novel in his youth. These sections are given as Tom's journal entries from a time of his life when he lived in Germany, in 2012 in the novel's timeline. As Tom and his wife try to deal with Tom and their daughter being deported back to America from Germany (where his wife works), Tom is trying to write a utopia and is thinking about how he can change the world for the better. Kevin in 2065, on the other hand, is introduced as an adult who is not interested in anything more complicated than his town El Modena's immediate politics, which directly affect him. He is characterized as a naive but honest man. Kevin's main struggle throughout the novel is making sure Rattlesnake Hill, which is special to him and his grandfather, is protected from any building projects and getting in a romantic relationship with his life-long crush Ramona Sanchez. Incidentally, Ramona's long term ex-boyfriend Alfredo Blair is also the leader of the town council, who decides to sell the hill Kevin wants to protect to a big corporation for a commercial center to be built on it. As the story

unfolds, Kevin's main worries and goals center around Ramona and Alfredo's relationship, and his rivalry with Alfredo. As Kevin's romantic and personal struggles take up the minds of the characters in the novel, the reader sees something else; a new world in the background. Tom's sections explain how different the world was in the past and how he struggled to change it, while Kevin's story shows what it would be like living in a utopia as a human being, still having the human condition untouched despite the revolutionary changes to the economic and administrative systems. The realistic effect of the novel is achieved through its focus on the human condition, and especially on suffering that cannot be avoided regardless of the structural changes to one's society. By not eliminating these struggles and painful experiences, Robinson presents a realistic world that is a utopia, but is still grounded enough for the reader to see the humanity in these utopian characters.

Pacific Edge focuses on the humanity's imperfections, flaws and sufferings; its characters' human condition and it emphasizes that despite the positive changes in the economic, political and even social spheres of society, pain and suffering are still inevitable factors of human life. Such an emphasis pulls this utopian narrative closer to the realm of realism, refuting the criticisms the genre has been receiving. Writing utopia as realistic societies and not perfect but impossible heavens emphasizes their transformation into more pragmatic texts that offer possible solutions to the ills the author's society is experiencing. This realistic approach and focus on human imperfections help reader to relate to the story which eventually leads to the reader to question if the positive aspects of the utopia can also be realized. When utopia is more grounded and realistic, the solutions it offers to societal problems also seem more doable and less in the realm of impossible dreams.

Kevin's story unravels as a story of loss and learning to come to terms with his vulnerability. This focus on personal and emotional growth, as well as inevitability of

grief and pain makes Kevin a relatable character for the reader as his life in the utopian society seem far from blissfully perfect. Robinson gives the message that even in utopia, the human condition will continue to be as it is, but despite all of that, it is still possible to create a better world where most of the pain left only revolves around human condition, rather than the struggles that are caused by unjust economic, political and social structures.

Kevin starts out as a hopeful yet naive young man, struggling to overcome his feelings for his high school crush Ramona and save Rattlesnake Hill, which has emotional value for him, from being opened to construction. He ends up dating Ramona for a while before they break up and she goes to back Alfredo, eventually marrying him. He loses the fight in the town council to protect the hill as well. On top these losses, he learns that his grandfather has died at sea and experiences a breakdown. “If only Ramona, if only Tom, if only the world, all in him, all at once, with the sharp stab of our unavoidable grief; and it seemed to him then that he was without a doubt the unhappiest person in the whole world. And at that thought (thinking about it) he began to laugh (326).” Despite the fact that a utopia seems to be promise happiness, Kevin, the main character of this utopia, paradoxically, sees himself as the unhappiest person on earth at that moment. Kevin’s pain comes from the problems that cannot be helped by the overhaul of the old economic and political system. He loses his grandfather, which is an unavoidable truth of life in any utopian vision. He suffers from a broken heart, which again is emphasizing his human fragility that cannot be solved by solutions to systemic social problems. Human beings suffer because of unavoidable loss and sadness life brings to them as part of life. Their interpersonal relationships end up drastically changing and their personal journeys do not always leave them happy at the end, as Kevin’s character exemplifies here. People are suffering in *Pacific Edge* because in some aspects, the human condition cannot be divorced from pain but Robinson takes

this approach to celebrate the place humanity finally arrives in his novel. Kevin's laugh at the idea of being the unhappiest person in the whole world and his growth after his painful experiences show the reader that he finds the idea of being unhappy at that moment laughable. The fact that there is nothing left to suffer over but personal and relationship problems is a victory for humanity. When Kevin counts the losses of his life over that summer, he lists his relationship with Ramona, which was revolving around her changing personal feelings and his grandfather, who was a victim of an accident that took his life. The fact that all his troubles stem from events like death and heartbreak and he considers this to be enough for him to be the unhappiest person on earth emphasizes only the pain and grief of the human condition.

Tom's story also plays into this attempt at realism about the emotional and personal struggles human beings cannot escape. Tom is an author who wants to write a utopia and his attempts at building the said utopia in his youth creates the world his grandson Kevin lives in. Tom writes about the idea of writing a utopia in his journal while also highlighting the personal struggles he went through in his youth. Tom's journal establishes his character as driven and hopeful, ready to change the world: "It didn't take all that much to convince me, really. Because I have to do something. Not just write a utopia, but fight for it in the real world – I have to" (299). And Tom succeeds in the biggest fight of his life, changing the world completely; however, the revolutionary is also a human being, with feelings and weaknesses, with people he leans on to keep fighting and find motivation in. Tom loses the person he relies on, his wife. After her loss, he isolates himself from the community he worked to better all his life. Kevin wants his help in the fight to protect Rattlesnake Hill and Tom refuses, saying, "I'm done with that stuff, Kevin. It's your job now" (55). Kevin describes this situation as such: "This just was not the Grandpa he had grown up with. In those years there had been no more social animal Tom Barnard" (55). Tom is characterized as the broken

revolutionary despite his success. Tom is not a superhero who continues to fight for utopia despite seeing the problems that arise in his community. He is exhausted, lost and lonely and he tells his grandson that he will not be fighting anymore. This realistic approach to his pain and grief makes him a three-dimensional character, rather than a heroic and perfect revolutionary. Pain of the loss of a loved one is still one part of human condition the characters are unable to run away from. Robinson understands that no matter how much better the world gets, some human struggles like pain of loss will stay with humanity and this emphasis adds to the realism of his story. In contrast to this novel, *Ecotopia* had characters that were always emotionally fully open, always comfortable with themselves and in their relationships, removing most of the painful human experiences and diminishing the realism of the Ecotopians. *Ecotopia* was most grounded and detailed in its design for building a sustainable country and using technology in an environmentally aware way. *Pacific Edge* focuses more on social, interpersonal and political aspects of a utopian society with its imperfect, struggling characters. Robinson centers the human with all its positives and negatives in his utopian narrative, taking the utopian genre one step forward from *Ecotopia*. In her 1994 article “Working the ‘In-Between’: Kim Stanley Robinson’s Utopian Fiction”, Carol Franko says: “‘Utopia’ does not have to mean a perfect/unreal world but can name a world where people are working to eliminate ‘avoidable griefs’ – Robinson’s innovation of writing a sad utopia conveys this truth novelistically” (204). *Pacific Edge* keeps more painful aspects of human experience, despite how negative it might seem in a utopian setting to preserve the humanity of the characters. Robinson calls Kevin’s experiences “unavoidable griefs” (204) because some griefs have to be experienced even in a perfect world. People would still die in a perfect world unless they would become immortals. These personal struggles add a realistic contrast with the perpetually happy citizens of *Ecotopia*, which was criticized for seeming almost like mind control, showing utopian

genre's shift into understanding and expressing the depth of human experience, making it something more than a heavenly and overly optimistic vision; a hopeful scenario more grounded in reality.

Another contribution of the novel to the transformation of utopian genre to a more realistic exploration of positive possibilities for future societies, is the dynamic nature of its characters, as they grow and change over the course of the story. The most significant example of this is Kevin. Kevin starts the story as someone who is not interested in the politics of his town as he joins the council only because the other Green Party supporters in the town encourage him. Kevin's disinterest and inexperience is shown in the first night of the council meeting: "[...] Kevin was sworn in as the new council member. Kevin had forgotten about that part, and he stumbled on his way to the circle of officials. 'What a start!' someone yelled. Hot-faced, he put his hand on a Bible and, repeated something the judge said" (25). Later in the evening, Kevin almost falls asleep several times, emphasizing his disinterest even more, until Rattlesnake Hill is mentioned: "Often he decided to vote with Doris and figure out the whys and wherefores later. [...] he was going to spend every Wednesday night for the next two years, doing just this! Listening very closely to a lot of matters that didn't interest him in the slightest!" (27). However, over the course of the story, Kevin finds himself fighting more and more to prevent Rattlesnake Hill to be opened to construction, asking the help of his grandfather (55), Tom's friends (101), digging into Alfredo's reasons for wanting to open the hill (253) and trying to gain votes against Alfredo's plans in the council (308). This defeat leads Kevin to become more responsible and take charge. The loss of his grandfather and Ramona were unavoidable, but the loss of the hill is an "avoidable grief" if he takes action any way he can. Once he comes to this realization Kevin begins to grow. After his defeat at the council meeting (309), Kevin finds another solution to this problem: he holds his grandfather's memorial service at the hill,

bringing the town together to remember Tom as a citizen of El Modena and their friend there. This action turns the tide of the events and Alfredo finds himself going against the entire town, which causes him to give up on the hill (311).

In his 1995 essay “‘Utopia is when our lives matter’: Reading Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Pacific Edge*”, Tom Moylan says, “In the process of his waking up to his own responsibilities and opportunities, Kevin’s changing perspective helps to elucidate some key components of the life of the utopian society as well as that of the utopian narrative” (15). Moylan makes the point that Kevin’s personal and political actions merge and his fight helps Kevin grow as a person at the end of the story:

It [the baseball metaphor] offers an immediate opportunity for Kevin to act out his transformation from childlike insistence on control to a more considered and wiser grasp of the limits of that personal effort [...] Described early in the book as ‘being nine years old forever’ (65) on the baseball field, Kevin is changed over the course of the summer. (16)

Kevin’s growth as a person starts out with his personal desire to protect his childhood memories and evolves into a political goal, causing him to grow wiser and more involved in his community. This growth ties Kevin and Tom’s stories as well; Tom wants to leave the struggle to make the world a better place to his grandson at the beginning of the story and at the end, with Tom’s death and Kevin’s political awakening, Kevin takes the struggle on. He works to save the hill and accepts his new role in the political decisions of the town.

Another aspect the reader watches Kevin grow in is his attitude towards women. Kevin sees Ramona as someone he wants to win, rather than a person that has a distinct identity. Most striking example of this happens when Kevin and Ramona go on a bike flight together (14). Kevin knows Ramona has broken up with Alfredo (6) and wants to

open up to her about his feelings. Before he even knows about Ramona's feelings, before he has any discussion about what Ramona might want, Kevin wants and imagines her to bear his child and takes this as a natural consequence of them dating (19). Moylan explains Kevin's behavior as follows:

Kevin constantly idealizes Ramona rather than accept her as she is: in falling in love with her again, he relies on his memories of their school day love, and at one point thinks of her as embodying what he 'loved most in women' (183), thereby asserting a generic claim over female identity that flies in the face of the emancipated attitudes and behavior of the post-masculinist culture in El Modena.

(17)

Kevin objectifies Ramona and fails to think of her as complex of a human being as himself until he loses her, his grandfather and Rattlesnake Hill on the town council. After his losses, Kevin's immaturity regarding women also changes, as he accepts losing Ramona as a girlfriend and changes his attitude regarding her: "after some moments of indulgence, yet ultimately drawing on the strength of his more utopian construction and consciousness, Kevin abandons his private power play and embraces the 'responsibility of otherness' (Franko 204) that is so central to the values of his society" (Moylan 18). By "responsibility of otherness", Franko means "a need to be attentive to ... that which is other to me or us" (Franko 204).

In *Ecotopia* the utopian structures of the society were the focus, but in *Pacific Edge* the focus is on personal transformation towards a more utopian mindset. As Harcourt points out in his tracing of the steps of the utopian thought's evolution, the thought goes from revolution to an inner transformation as its focus, as the mindset around revolutionary social change transforms. Kevin's change revolves around his realization that his struggles are not entirely personal, but other people are also as

complex as him and are having their own struggles with life. His attitude towards women and especially Ramona and his acceptance of her choice shows his growth and acceptance of the complexity of other people. Robinson emphasizes the personal transformation utopia requires, alongside with social, political and economic transformations. By paying attention to what Ramona wants (which turns out to be Alfredo) and respecting her choice, Kevin faces her as a human being with choices and desires of her own, finally growing out of his sexist attitude. Despite being a citizen of a utopian society, Kevin has flaws and he changes through his experiences, overcoming some of them, emphasizing his realistic characterization. Compared to Ecotopian citizens that embody the values of their country without any significant flaws and personal growth, Kevin's characterization brings more believability and relatability to the utopian citizen.

In addition to Kevin's growth and change, Alfredo is also painted as a dynamic, changing character, albeit in the opposite way to Kevin. Alfredo is described as a young man who wanted to help people by developing medical technology but his ambition slowly grows into a more personal desire to acquire social capital, turning him into the antagonist of the story:

He [Alfredo] just wanted build medical devices, that's all. You remember how he used to talk about it when they were beginning. And they got their start fine. But like a lot of small companies beginning, it got rough. It wasn't clear at first that their valve was an improvement over the other models on the market, and they were struggling. It got to the point where it looked like they would go under – and that's where AAMT stepped in again. They offered Alfredo and Ed another loan. This one would be illegal under the new laws, but they said they believed in Heartech's product, they wanted to help. (252)

Despite being the antagonist both in Kevin's love life and in his personal, as well as political, goals, Alfredo is established as someone with pure interests at first. As he grows into his antagonistic role, Kevin finds out his real reason for his insistence on selling Rattlesnake Hill, which turns out to be blackmail from the corporation that gave him the opportunity to keep his own company running (253). Corruption still exists in *Pacific Edge*'s world, as well as intoxication with power, the hunger for social capital and greed. Alfredo is an example of these aspects of human condition which makes both him and the novel more realistic as well. After this revelation, Kevin and Alfredo bump into each other at a bar and end up talking about their reasons for opposing each other. During their conversation his more selfish desires come to the surface: "I want El Modena on the map. I want on the map myself" (268). But Kevin sees his arguments as influences of the blackmail. He believes Alfredo is repeating what he was told to be convinced to sell the hill: "And behind the dispassion, the somehow scientific interest of watching Alfredo justify himself, Kevin felt a surge of strangely mixed emotion: hatred, disgust, a weird kind of sympathy or pity" (268). Thus, through Kevin's viewpoint Alfredo is portrayed as a character to be pitied. His relationship with Kevin, while antagonistic, does not cast him as a one-dimensional, purely evil character.

Alfredo is as complex as Kevin, as both have their flaws in different aspects of their lives: Kevin is immature and Alfredo grows to be a greedy man from a well-intentioned young man, but neither is the picture of pure good or evil. This characterization draws a contrast between the antagonistic force in *Ecotopia*, the Opposition and Alfredo, the antagonist of *Pacific Edge*. As the Opposition was characterized as human representation of greed in the older members of the group and anger in the younger ones, they remained one-dimensional, almost caricature-like, just like the other Ecotopian characters which were characterized as human incarnation of the utopian ideals Ecotopia was built on. Robinson's characters are not one-

dimensional, on the contrary, there is a complexity to their personalities, goals and actions. Such complexity adds to the realism in the characterization of utopian citizens, making them more recognizable and identifiable to the reader.

Another area *Pacific Edge* differs significantly from *Ecotopia* is the diversity in the opinions of characters. Characters in *Pacific Edge* come from different backgrounds and hold differing opinions about the society they live in, clashing and contrasting with one another without either of them being characterized as wrong by the narrative. This approach adds an economic and political wealth to the utopia, both fleshing out the world better than a simple good/bad dichotomy could and adding a realistic three-dimensional quality to the characters. Kevin, as the protagonist, does not hold any political opinions, for example. He is described as uninterested in his town's politics (27) and later is only involved because of personal reasons. Tom, as an activist, has been involved in bringing the change that turned his world into a utopia but his opinions are not accepted as righteous by everyone either. Pravi, a student of Tom's friend Nadezha, challenges Tom's defence of the economic revolution they brought that had created the utopia they are living in. Tom describes his contributions as such:

The economic system was a pyramid, and money run up to the top. We chopped the pyramid off and left only the constituent parts down at the base, and gave the functions that higher parts of the pyramid served over to government, without siphoning off money, except for public works. This was either altruism on the largest scale ever seen in modern times, or else very enlightened self-interest, in that with wealth distributed in this way, the wars and catastrophes that would have destroyed the pyramid were averted. (285)

Pravi, a young Indian woman, makes the point that Americans have decided how these changes would occur and her country has to be swept along with them, robbing

her people of their agency: ““You superpowers in your arrogance, ordering the world around again – what was it but another form of imperialism. Make the world do what you decide is right! A new kind of colonialism”” (282). Pravi’s opinions provide another perspective to see the economic revolution from. Since the story is set in America and explores the American lives in the new and worldwide utopian order, Pravi’s point of view adds to the diversity of perspectives in this utopian narrative. Here, Robinson is challenging the utopian cliché of one nation ruling the whole world. He emphasizes the necessity of plurality and multiplicity of voices in any utopian society which is very much in line with the concept of critical utopia. Moylan, in his article on the novel, defines Pravi’s contribution as “a generational challenge” (21) to Tom’s claims and defends it as, “a challenge that must be made, and listened to and worked with, if a global struggle is to be embraced by new cohorts of young activists” (21-22). Pravi is both a voice from another country, adding a global complexity to the story and a representation of the younger generation of revolutionaries like Tom, but her disagreements with Tom puts his ideas about their revolution in a position where they are not the ultimate truth, the right way to live or perfect in any way; they are open to criticism and improvement.

There are several characters that have nostalgic views about the past despite its imperfection, for completely personal reasons. Nostalgia for the past, which was only narrated negatively in Tom’s journal, is examined through Oscar’s hobby of watching motorcycle races. Oscar, Kevin’s new friend and El Modena’s lawyer, wants to take Doris to see old motorcycle gangs (221). The gangs are still using their gas fueled motorcycles, riding them only during these events to keep their old hobby alive. Doris agrees to go with Oscar and she is surprised to see that despite the regulations on using gas for vehicles (222) and motorcycle engine sizes (226), these gangs are still actively participating in drag car races. This situation highlights the fact that despite the

revolutionary legal changes to the system and illegality of these old hobbies, some people still try to keep their “nostalgia sports” (225) alive. The fact that these characters are not presented as villains, but rather old people that are stuck in their ways is a significant contrast with how old people who wanted the old order back for their personal reasons have been characterized in *Ecotopia* as a small number of inevitably evil and greedy people.

In *Ecotopia* and utopian novels similar to that, there is a black and white understanding of good and bad people or actions which cause those utopian societies to seem closer to a totalitarian mindset. *Ecotopia* was presenting this strict separation of good, utopian people and bad, anti-utopian people as a positive aspect of utopia but here, the characters have both negative and positive aspects to them that makes them more realistic and the fact that the narrative does not judge them for their harmful hobbies shows the *Pacific Edge*’s careful dodging of the totalitarian mindset both in its world and its narrative structure. Adding characters with opposing views because of their personal reasons without painting them as the villains is a realistic depiction of complexity of humankind and this complexity applies to all characters in *Pacific Edge*’s world which is an example of this utopia embracing multiplicity and plurality, as well as an acceptance of differences. While laws exist to protect nature in *Pacific Edge*, such hobbies are allowed to exist and thrive which shows the reader that despite the harm people’s desires might cause, as long as the wider society is protected, these activities are allowed in a reasonable way. These hobbies and desires are not stamped under authoritarian structure but accepted in more sensible ways.

Pacific Edge’s world separates itself from the top down, almost totalitarian rule that is exemplified in *Ecotopia* by achieving the new social order through more collective action and societal forces rather than a government rule to keep people in place; thereby presenting an alternative that answers to the criticism the utopian genre

receives concerning its proposed systems' easy slide into a blueprint for totalitarian regimes. Town councils in the story ensure that all parties are represented in any small community, democracy is direct and the people who make the political decisions will be exposed to the effects of their decisions directly. This situation brings the possibility of solving problems on a community level as well, rather than putting distance between political decisions and people's day to day lives. Kevin's loss of the fight against Alfredo in the town council but achievement in protecting Rattlesnake Hill with the desire of El Modena citizens, who show up to support holding Tom's wake on the hill, exemplifies this aspect of their society very well. Kevin does not hold enough power in the legislative council to go against Alfredo; however, he decides that people of El Modena would not want to desecrate the memory of his newly passed grandfather. Kevin believes in this and holds the memorial service for his grandfather on Rattlesnake Hill, wanting him to "look over a place he loved" (313). His feelings resonate with the town folk and they join him in holding the memorial service (311). Doris makes a plate to hang on a tree on the hill, Hank acts as the minister of the ceremony and the whole town, including Ramona, attend it (312), showing both their love for Tom and their support for the protection of the hill, siding with Kevin. This is a subtle way of adding the human factor in the political system. Instead of portraying the utopian political structures like machines, Robinson brings in the human emotions and communal power into it as well. Alfredo is angry about this ceremony but he realizes that he cannot go along with his own plans for the hill without angering the community he lives in and gives up (314). Moylan explains this approach in his article as "a communal dispersion of political control" (14). By allowing the whole community to make a decision in the political sphere and bringing daily life into these decisions, Robinson ensures that there will be no top-down, authoritative governments to slide into totalitarianism. Individuals who are affected not only physically but also emotionally from the decisions that are

made are included in the process, thus it is no longer merely a business to be taken care of leaving out the human factor.

The decision and its effects are dispersed into the whole community and every citizen is free to challenge or fight for any decision, as Kevin and Alfredo do for opposing sides. Giving power to the social opinion above the council decisions makes the consent of community the number one priority for any legal decision makers in that community. Moylan emphasizes the power of social opinion in the novel saying, “What was lost in the ‘strong public’ of the council was nevertheless won on the cultural front by the way of ‘weak public’ expression of the service, an instance in which social opinion became powerful enough to displace the legislative vote” (15). Moylan means that while the members of the council supposedly hold the power over legal decisions, community can choose to deny going forward with their decision if they do not find it appropriate, giving the community the last word if necessary. Such communal structures do not allow a ruling group to make all the decisions for the utopian society and this prevents them from becoming too authoritative. Thus, Robinson eliminates the possibility of his utopia turning into a totalitarian regime, by giving power to the individuals in every small town.

Pacific Edge focuses on the imperfections of utopia by focusing on a fight between a group of businesspeople acting on greed and a group of citizens from a small town going against them for a small plot of land. Adding this conflict where a multinational and powerful company that blackmails and manipulates the antagonist and limiting the success of the town in this fight to the saving of a hill, rather than taking down the people who were responsible for the illegal acts bring the focus of the story to fighting greed on a small, individual level, rather than an overhaul of the existing economic system. This focus both helps the utopian genre to look more realistic in its handling of human flaws, it also makes the fight to protect the utopian aspects of

the society more possible to the reader since it makes the necessary fight an individual struggle. It also emphasizes that the fight to keep greed under control will have to continue even in a utopia, as Robinson does not eliminate the painful or dangerous of human nature in his novel, but approaches to them realistically in a utopian setting.

Alfredo starts out his company and at the edge of failure he is helped financially by a multinational company, only to end up under their control entirely (253). His attempts at opening Rattlesnake Hill for construction is demanded by this company; however, Alfredo's actions are still tied to his own desire for power as well, as Alfredo mentions to Kevin that he wants El Modena on the map himself (268). Alfredo's actions stemming from his greed are only stopped through Kevin and his friends' attempts to save the hill and eventually by the decision of the citizens of El Modena. The whole novel revolves around this conflict and through this choice, Robinson draws attention to the fact that human flaws such as greed do not simply disappear with the rise of the utopian societies and norms.

Tom Moylan explains this saying "In the council battle over Rattlesnake Hill, Robinson provides the most public example of the persistence of greed and strife in utopia, and reflects on the need for utopia's citizens to remain democratically engaged in the real work of their society" (13). Here, what Robinson emphasizes is not that greed is inevitable, but rather that the utopian society should be built with human condition in mind. Instead of pushing down and silencing the voices that are against the existing utopia in a totalitarian manner, finding a way to cope with humans' harmful and dangerous actions while protecting the general, utopian society.

The strife caused by a powerful and wealthy company's desire to own land in a small town is only thwarted by the continuous efforts and communal power of the citizens of that small town. Fighting on a personal level ends up being enough for Kevin

and his friends to achieve their goal against a much powerful opponent. In this aspect, *Ecotopia* has mostly focused on a united and short-lived struggle to break Ecotopian land from America and establish their country as independent. Ecotopian fight for utopia calls for a big, organized movement to take drastic measures. In the later parts of the novel, Ecotopian citizens' struggles against the greed of some other citizens or their companies are not mentioned. Only the Opposition is painted as people with greed and the solution *Ecotopia* presents for their actions is only fuel for criticisms of the totalitarian nature of utopian societies. The narrative choice of bringing the personal struggle against greed on the forefront of this novel and solving this problem with a democratic solution in *Pacific Edge* makes the fight for a more utopian society seem more achievable and realistic to the reader. Robinson points out to the fact that any utopian society would be a system that should be maintained via a constant democratic struggle to keep the evil and greedy desires of humanity under check in a way that would not undermine the utopian quality of the system, rather than an unrealistically immaculate one that disregards the facts of the human condition.

Pacific Edge stays as close to real human experiences as possible with the portrayal of differing opinions among its diverse cast, human flaws such as greed and immaturity taking the center, and the suffering and grief that are inevitable as part of the human condition in all economic, political and social orders. Compared to *Ecotopia*, it focuses heavily on characterization and has a diverse group of characters with different backgrounds, opinions, reactions and attitudes to their utopian world. Alongside this diversity, by focusing on conflict solving methods, such as local councils and bringing social consequences of their actions directly to the decision makers in those councils, as shown with Alfredo's loss of the hill, *Pacific Edge* helps defend the genre against the criticism that totalitarianism would be inevitable and human autonomy would be limited in a utopian society. While it stays as technologically viable as *Ecotopia* was, *Pacific*

Edge also answers to the main criticisms about the human nature in the utopian genre that *Ecotopia* has missed, pushing the utopian genre one step forward. For a genre that is constantly criticized for being unrealistic, *Pacific Edge* stays realistic with its characters and their realistic struggles.

While there is more focus on more human characterization and the personal struggles of the utopian citizen, *Pacific Edge* stays in that lane and does not explore the revolution that has taken in the past of its society. While Tom explains how the legal and bloodless revolution was achieved in short passages that they “set limits on the more extreme forms of greed” (284), the novel only focuses on the start of the revolutionary Tom’s desire to change the world with Tom’s sections and exploring the daily life in the existing utopia with Kevin’s experiences. Robert Markley, in his book about Robinson, explains this saying:

Utopia is sensed more than articulated, and as Robinson’s first major utopian experiment, *Pacific Edge* is more concerned with imagining the day to day experience of living – softball games and all – rather than with charting the progress of El Modena’s transformation from a fossil-fueled, consumerist wasteland into a latter-day Emersonian society. Like many of Robinson’s 1980s short stories, then, this novel remakes history, although without trying to provide a detailed roadmap from the present to the future. (*Kim Stanley Robinson* 72)

With the phrase “Emersonian society” Markley emphasizes the individualist aspect of *Pacific Edge*, as the novel focuses on Kevin’s personal development and struggle, and Tom’s personal desire to be a part of the revolution. While this focus brings the characters closer to the reader and makes their actions seem more reachable, the novel ends up missing out on the opportunity to explore the growth of utopia in between its birth with Tom’s awakening and its fully-fledged, settled version in Kevin’s daily life.

Robinson himself admits this as a shortcoming of his first utopian novel and tries to focus on the slow and painful revolution to reach utopia in his next utopian project, *Mars Trilogy*. To explain his thought process behind the trilogy, he writes, “The *Mars* novels therefore describe three revolutions because I felt that in *Pacific Edge* I had dodged the necessity of revolution, however broadly conceived” (“Remarks on Utopia in the Age of Climate Change” 4). *Pacific Edge* rather remains an exploration of how the utopian aspects of society can be protected and it shows that accepting human nature with its negative and painful parts is the most important aspects of a utopian community.

Pacific Edge explores the utopian society in a more human and realistic sense, focusing on the personal lives in its society. It refutes the criticisms the genre receives for being one step away from turning into a plan for a totalitarian rule, as well as its unrealism regarding human nature, flaws and struggles. It focuses on the flaws of its characters and explores the communal ways of achieving control over behaviors that would threaten the utopian life the citizens share, and addresses the inevitable griefs life will cause to humans. *Pacific Edge*, as Markley says, “offers readers the possibility of recognizing the narrative and political shape that a progressive or redemptive future might hold” (76). The future society is narrated in a detailed fashion in its daily experiences; the effects of the new political and economic structure and social norms are explored using the personal and small changes that they cause in the characters’ lives. However, *Pacific Edge* omits the revolution that brought about its utopia and misses out on a narrative that would also be a roadmap, instead of a settled structure of a society in a better future. While, compared to *Ecotopia*, it moves the utopian genre forward with its nuanced and more realistic characters, and its solutions for the common criticisms the utopian genre faces, it falls short in exploring the emergence of the utopian society, its transformation from the present reality into the utopian future world,

which Doctorow chose to explore in *Walkaway* thereby taking the genre to the next level.



CHAPTER IV

Cory Doctorow's *Walkaway*: A Roadmap from Dystopia to Utopia

During the 2000s and 2010s, world politics and economy experienced more shifts, following the trend of moving away from the 1970s political atmosphere. The decades started with the Iraq and Afghanistan wars on the American front. The 2008 economic crisis grew to global levels. The 2010s witnessed the Arab Spring and rise in populist leaders; 2016 saw Donald Trump becoming President of the USA and the UK voting to leave EU. The rise of the internet and social media allowed people to be connected all around the globe as well as opening up opportunities for targeted advertisements as data mining became a common feature of online existence. The effects of global warming have started to be felt towards the end of the 2010s, with stronger weather events and loss of significant amounts of glaciers in the North Pole, as well as strong forest fires in countries like Australia and America. These environmental and economic crises were followed by the rise of right-wing leaders all over the world; in Brazil, Russia, America, India, Japan and several other countries. People with access to the internet become aware of the problems and experiences of people in other parts of the world.

Through these developments the sentiment that the world was becoming more dystopic has been on the rise among the younger generations. As a reflection of this, dystopian genre has seen a rise in its popularity as well. Several novels dissecting different dystopian aspects of the world have reached wide audiences, such as, *The Hunger Games* novels (2008-2010), *Divergent* (2011), *The Maze Runner* series (2009-2020), all of which were adapted into successful movie series as well. In her article analyzing the popularity of young adult dystopian literature in the last decade, Melissa Ames makes the point that “Despite their dark content, ‘dystopian novels [...] have apparently now surpassed the vampire and fantasy genres in the young adult fiction

market' (Hall & Slade, 2011, para. 1)" (6). She gives the example of Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* series surpassing J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series in popularity and adds that "The success of her books, and the YA dystopias following them, indicate that this is more than just a mere marketing achievement" (6). She ties this trend to the "post-9/11 climate that has instilled and perpetuated a climate of fear" in the young audiences and readers (8). However, as dystopias keep gaining popularity, the utopian genre also provides new perspectives on the current political climate and, as it is a common feature of the genre, offers alternatives to how we live today.

Cory Doctorow's *Walkaway*, in line with the period it is produced in, starts out in a dystopian world and explores the personal involvements of its characters into a movement that grows bigger than all of them combined. The struggling journey from a popular fictional dystopian society to an alternative one that starts to encompass the entire world makes up the core of the story and *Walkaway* becomes a hopeful representation of the political atmosphere of the 2010s.

Critical utopias such as Cory Doctorow's *Walkaway* discuss the imperfections of utopia, explore alternatives in the utopian space to these issues, and become the latest step in the transformation of the critical utopian thought; the small insurrections that snowball into bigger movements. In that sense, *Walkaway*'s plot follows the real-life transformation of revolutionary politics in the contemporary era as prescribed by Harcourt ("The Transformation of Critical Utopia", 239). Its focus on both a growing revolutionary movement that takes place over time and the personal transformations of its characters allow it to combine the newer and more dynamic aspects of utopian literature in one story.

Walkaway opens with a future not too far ahead from the world of the late 2010s; people are walking away from society to live in small societies they build,

refusing to participate in the capitalist economy. There are certain technological developments as well, with 3D printers becoming common enough that printing clothing is cheaper than buying. Such technologies are also used for building projects and exo-skeleton technology, developed enough to be used in military action. These already-developing technological advancements add a slight futuristic feel to *Walkaway*'s world while still staying realistic in technological advancement and its consequences. The story starts with a party attended by a disillusioned youth: the protagonist Hubert etc. Hubert explains how his parents gave him over twenty names so he could use any of those names and no government system can claim identity crimes for this, so "etc." is a part of his name. Espinoza and his friend Seth meet Natalie Redwater, daughter of a millionaire. As people in the party discuss the politics and economics of late capitalism, the party is raided down by the police maiming, killing and arresting several attendees. Natalie, Seth and Hubert manage to escape and take temporary shelter in Natalie's house where they continue discussing the flaws of the system they live under and come to the conclusion that the only way out is to become walkaways. After this introductory chapter detailing the problems of the current system, the main trio walk away from society and join with Limpopo (which is a nickname), a woman in her late twenties, running a bar/house for walkaways. With the trio becoming walkaways, the rest of the story focuses mainly on the walkaway life style and the alternative economic, social, and administrative systems that are practiced by different walkaway groups. Belt and Braces, or B&B for short, that Limpopo usually runs becomes the living quarters of the main characters until they are driven out by another walkaway group with different political opinions. The latter half of the novel focuses on the new mind-uploading technology developed by the walkaway scientists and the government's hunt for walkaways.

Walkaway is the least optimistic utopia among the three novels explored in this study. It does not start with the depiction of an already existing utopia and it focuses mainly on how to reach a better world rather than what living there would be like. Thus, the dystopian present is at the center of the narrative shifting the focus on a “better” world, rather than “the best” possibility the imaginary future can offer. As the protagonists try to achieve a better society by their own hands, losing lives and loved ones in the process, it feels more like a journey to, rather than a discovery of, a utopia. Violence and the constant struggle to build a world that is only “better” is the central narrative in *Walkaway*, but the small utopian communities the main characters stay with and their eventual development into the common lifestyle keep the utopian aspect of this novel strong and central as well.

The most significant aspect of *Walkaway* that separates it from the earlier utopias is the fact that it presents the building of a utopia, rather than the end result. Both *Ecotopia* and *Pacific Edge* take place in already established utopian societies with settled economic, political and social systems, new values and people who have been raised in those communities to adulthood. *Walkaway* focuses entirely on the beginning of the alternative lifestyle movement, its slow and painful development, its struggles of finding a common set of values as walkaways disagree with each other as well, and finally, its first big triumphs over default and capitalism.

Walkaway is a story of progress towards the utopian society, it is a roadmap to utopia rather than a blueprint. It opens up with a mostly capitalist, “default” world. Settlements of walkaways are small and leaving the society is not even considered by most people. Throughout the novel, alongside the main trio the reader follows, many people choose to join in the walkaway lifestyle, and even take over cities to turn them into walkaway strongholds, Akron being the most significant example of this:

Akron had kicked off as she [Tam] was leaving for the WU campus. Walkaways did a coordinated mass squat on the whole downtown, 85 percent of which was boarded up and underwater, the bonds based on their mortgages in escrow with the Federal Financial Markets Service in Moscow while the Gazprom meltdown played out. They'd flown under the radar, smooth and coordinated. One day, Akron was haphazardly squatted by homeless people, the next, a walkaway army reopened every shuttered building, including fire stations, libraries, and shelters. Factories turned into fabs, loaded with feedstock, powered by eggbeater fields that sprung up overnight, electrolyzing hydrogen from sludge flowing the Little Cuyahoga River, feeding hydrogen cells that walkaways wrestled around in wheelbarrows. Default was caught off guard. [...] By the time they mobilized, their entire recruiting pool was walkaway" (135).

Walkaways claiming Akron as their city becomes an important point in the story as a turning point for walkaways' reputation among the citizens of default. Taking a city for themselves establish walkaways as more powerful than they look. The fact that they are able to run the city without any need for energy from the Russian corporations, proves to other citizens that their lives can be improved without the need for playing with the rules the capitalist system has imposed on them. Akron not only represents the power and the numbers walkaways have now, it also tells the default citizen that another way is possible without even completely walking away from their homes and cities.

Icweasel calls it "exciting" (136) and Tam answers, "More than exciting. It's a city, not a village or a camp. The first but not the last" (136). This idea of walkaway lifestyle growing, developing into bigger and bigger spaces and replacing the default flows through the whole novel; the focus is on the developing utopia and the struggle to build it.

As utopian genre revolves around hope for the future and a better tomorrow, *Walkaway* brings the better tomorrow back into the present, chooses to focus on the hardship to achieve that better tomorrow while carrying the same hope that characterizes other utopian novels. Tam's expression "The first but not the last" (136) is a direct reflection of the hope the characters hold for the future despite being in the middle of fighting for the future utopia. Hope stays in the center of the novel while focus of the utopian novel changes from the blueprint, the map of the better society to the road taken to reach there. However, this does not mean that *Walkaway* does not offer alternatives to the current political and economic systems and the problems they create as all utopian novels do. In the building and maintaining of small walkaway communities, several political and economic options are discussed and explored, as well as experimented on and as seen in the Jimmy example, some are rejected by the community and some are more embraced than the others. Doctorow uses the growing utopian enclaves to explore the utopia that can be built in the end, while also exploring the process and struggle of building those communities and having a worldwide utopian system, such as the one in *Pacific Edge*. The term "first days of a better nation" is used repeatedly in the novel to denote the fact that this novel is a roadmap to utopia, a starting point to reach a better world. The new walkaways raise their cups to the "first days of a better nation" (41), and the zeppelin they run away on against the attacks of armed forces is called *First Days of a Better Nation* (125), at which Natalie groans at and calls "a walkaway cliché" (125). Tam's comment on it also highlights how the characters see the walkaway lifestyle as the bud of the utopian future: "The point of walkaway is the first days of a better nation. Back when that was more than an eye roll, it was a serious idea. Someday, walkaway and default will swap places" (135). This idea is repeated so many times among walkaways that it becomes a cliché among them.

The idea that the characters are at the dawn of a utopia gives the novel the chance to work through the two aspects of a utopia at the same time: the road to get to utopia and its messy struggle and the imperfection of the established utopian communities without sliding into becoming a dystopia or losing hope for the future utopia. Kirsten Bussière emphasizes this aspect of *Walkaway*, writing:

Walkaway never arrives at a world that has fully achieved utopia, but rather the utopian vision is fully recognized, and presents us with a means to push back against the capitalist system to produce a world that can sustain everyone. In other words, Doctorow exposes the ways in which current social problems may bleed into the future, while still providing a framework for making a better world than we have now – transitioning into a critical-utopian future that refuses exact blueprints or easy answers. More simply, the future is up to us. (“Digital Humanity: Collaborative Capital Resistance in *Walkaway*” 1)

By rejecting the idea of a blueprint utopian novel, *Walkaway* manages to explore the future possibilities, as well as providing its character autonomy in choosing their utopia. The characters have to work for their utopia and defend it against the default world, making both the utopia more dynamic but also showing the reader the process of getting to that utopia realistically, with all its dangers and drawbacks.

The fact that struggle is at the center of the novel draws attention to the power of communal action and resistance as well. In a more settled utopia, like *Pacific Edge*, characters’ differences enrich the novel but the community aspect of it is emphasized through the conflict that takes place in the utopia. In *Walkaway*, the building of the utopia is presented as a community effort. In her article, “Sustainable Stories: Managing Climate Change with Literature” Gesa Mackenthun emphasizes this aspect of transition stories, writing, “Near future transition stories, as here understood, paint a world in

upheaval and disrepair but they focus on groups of individuals actively adapting to changing conditions, strengthened in their effort at survival by reciprocity and mutual aid” (7). *Walkaway* brings the utopian people together through their effort for the “better nation” they want to build and focuses on their collective efforts for this aim.

Ecotopia presents a world that is not only already established as a utopia, but is also focused on the community aspect of utopia only in a positive light. *Pacific Edge* highlights the imperfections in utopia and it does this through the threats of the utopian society that was coming from the inside of said community. Community’s power and mutual support play big parts, as Tom’s wake have been used to bring El Modena together against Alfredo’s aims to sell Rattlesnake Hill. However, in *Walkaway*, the main struggle is in the building of the utopia, thus the communal action is directly connected to the utopian aspect of the novel; it is not about maintaining or protecting the utopia but achieving it. It also brings a new perspective to the utopian genre by not providing the blueprint for it as *Ecotopia* does with its political and economic systems as well as social norms that are presented as alternatives to the structures of the 1970s America. It does not solely focus on the imperfections of utopia and human nature with its negative aspects such as corruption and “unavoidable griefs” (*Pacific Edge*, 204), as *Pacific Edge* does either, but the imperfections and human struggles are absolutely a part of the novel. Unlike *Ecotopia*, *Walkaway* both gives the alternatives to the current economic and political systems, and explores the imperfections of utopia and how to protect it on an individual level as is done in *Pacific Edge*.

It also adds another step to this combination; it focuses on the building of the utopia, the realistically hard fight the characters have to join in and it still stays as a utopian novel as the hopeful current keeps flowing in the center of the novel, until the utopia is achieved at the end. The epilogue is named, “Even Better Nation” (354) as first days of a better nation have passed to take the characters to that better nation and now,

they have not just achieved utopia, but also built a better society than they thought were possible in the majority of the novel.

Walkaway has several characters on both sides of the walkaway/default dichotomy with differing opinions about the problems of their society and how to build a utopian world. This diversity and complexity of the characters makes them more realistic and credible for the reader, while also serving the purpose of including in the narrative discussions of different economic and political organizations of society. As Limpopo, the main walkaway character, says, “There are as many walkaway philosophies as there are walkaways” (64). The multiplicity of philosophies and lifestyles for walkaways are taken to a step further than the multiplicity of opinions *Pacific Edge* has presented.

As *Pacific Edge* focuses on a small number of characters living in the same town, thus sharing a similar past and values, *Walkaway*’s cast is from more varied backgrounds and were raised with, exposed to and embraced different values, as well. The range of voices and opinions are wider in *Walkaway* compared to *Pacific Edge*. The most significant example of this happens between two walkaway characters who are both anti-capitalists but they express two different systems of economics for the utopian enclaves they live in. Limpopo, a central walkaway character in the book, is a proponent of gift economics, where people in her small society get all their needs met and no one is expected to perform work for anything they get. Jimmy, the walkaway that takes over B&B where Limpopo was living in, with brute force, believes in reputation economics, where the reputation of someone will allow them to earn the basic needs and later wants they might have. Reputation economy pushes people to work harder to keep their names among the hardworking people in that community, which, Jimmy believes, improves society more. The discussion between the two starts with Jimmy coming to take over B&B with his supporters and guns. Jimmy exclaims to Limpopo, “From now on, this

place is on a quid-pro-quo basis. Everyone gets out what they put in. You've put in so much, well, you could stay for years without lifting a finger. You've got reputation capital to burn" (72). This threat to her community reminds Limpopo of the first time she had to live with Jimmy and their past disagreement: "You couldn't be a walkaway without encountering the reputation economy freaks. At first, she'd hated them in the abstract. Then this guy has come along and gave her some damned good, concrete reasons to hate them. The B&B had been a third built when he came and tried to install leaderboards in everything" (73). Limpopo reverts the leaderboards which end up in a fight. After they cool down, Jimmy looks up her contribution to the B&B and comes to respect her while still disagreeing with her way of running, or participating in, the B&B. Limpopo explains herself after his praise, saying, "I don't look at stats. Which is the point. I couldn't write the whole thing on my own, and if I could, I wouldn't want to, because this place would suck if it was just a contest to see who could add the most lines of code or bricks to the structure" (74). Limpopo here not only represents a different kind of economic understanding than Jimmy, they actively fight against each other with Jimmy choosing violence to go against her.

Jimmy's character and his attempts at solving problems with violence harken back to Popper's criticisms about utopian belief that people will be able to agree with each other through logical discussions. Popper, as it was seen in the criticism of *Ecotopia*, has made the point that if a person with opposing views reacts with violence, there is no possible way to convince them to utopian ideas through logical arguments ("Utopia and Violence", 6). The discussion and disagreements between Limpopo and Jimmy concerning their economic ideals, and their personal styles of solving these disagreements stand as an example of Popper's argument.

Despite having the common ground of being walkaways and even agreeing on the economic style the newly emerging utopia should have, walkaways still differ from

each other and the disagreement following Jimmy's takeover of B&B between Natalie (Iceweasel) and Limpopo introduces another example of diversity of opinions to the reader. As the now-homeless walkaway group that chooses to follow Limpopo walks to the forest, Limpopo thinks of rebuilding B&B together with these people (82). However, Iceweasel does not agree with her method of simply leaving the fight and restarting: "'Don't take this the wrong way, but are you fucking kidding me?' 'Nope.' 'But this is crazy! You made that place. You just let him take it!' 'Wasn't mine. I didn't make it. I didn't let him take it'" (82). As Iceweasel comes from a rich family, Limpopo believes her old life has shaped her views: "She practically heard the very refined eye-roll with breeding, money and privilege behind it. Someone like Iceweasel never had to walk away from anything she had a claim to" (82). This shows that being a walkaway does not necessarily mean a person can walk away from everything. Natalie has not yet walked away from her old values, and she refuses to walk away from a space she worked to improve and shared with her loved ones. Natalie has a hard time letting go of her possessions as well when she first becomes a walkaway. Her opinions regarding ownership of her space, clothes and money stay with her despite the fact that she abhors her father's similar attitude that is on a larger scale than hers. Natalie represents a walkaway that believes in defending what she deems hers. She and Limpopo represent two opposing views on ownership and attachment to personal and private properties, despite the fact that they are both walkaways who were willing to leave their past properties behind.

The group camps in the forest and the duo continues to discuss their different views regarding what they can do against a threat like Jimmy as well as feelings of ownership regarding one's work. As Limpopo has built most of B&B, Iceweasel expects her to be attached to it. Limpopo admits to being attached to it while also believing that it is not hers only and it was a group effort: "Maybe I'll go back to B&B.

It doesn't matter. The important thing is to convince people to make and share useful things. Fighting with greedy douches who don't share doesn't do that. Making more, living under conditions of abundance, that does it" (83). Limpopo's point of view regarding ownership, work and even fighting is different than Iceweasel's; Limpopo does not want to exercise authority over anyone and she does not see herself as an owner of anything she built or contributed. She takes on a leader's role among the walkaways of B&B but she does not place herself above them. She lets everyone make their choices and she is open to be questioned. She answers Iceweasel's questions regarding how she left B&B when Jimmy threatened them and they disagree on how to react to a situation like that but she does not try to convince her. The fact that she tells the newcomers that they can walk back to the default also shows that she does not see herself as a leader of a group, just a walkaway other walkaways gather around. Here, she is very different from Jimmy as well; Jimmy represents a more hierarchic system since he leads a group of men who act on his command and Limpopo is the opposite of this as she does not lead, only offers people choices. Limpopo only wants to provide the means to live as they wish to walkaways, does not try to convince them that she is right or that they should follow her. In this sense, her character is the walkaway lifestyle personified. This is a realistic take on human nature that gives the reader a deep insight into the totalitarian potentials of utopian societies which makes up most of the criticism on the genre. This insight is made incredibly clear through the contrast between the two and Jimmy's later admission of his mistakes and acceptance of Limpopo's philosophy.

Another example of this diversity and realism regarding human complexity is Nadie, the character that is sent to find and kidnap Natalie by her father (152). Nadie represents the characters in default who do not believe walkaway lifestyle will gain popularity and will triumph over the default lifestyle, explaining her position as follows: "You want to save the world. Saving the world is good, but I don't think you'll manage.

I don't think anyone can. Human nature. If the world is doomed, I want to be comfortable until it goes up, boom" (238). The fact that Nadie's point of view regarding life is discussed helps the reader see a wider spectrum of opinions and personal desires that can be found in real life, as well. Nadie thinks of her own comfort first and she is an example of people of default who refuse to go walkaway or disapprove of walkaways' choices. Her existence, her discussion with Natalie and the fact that the narrative does not push her to change allows the reader to see realistic discussion on human nature and diversity. Nadie decides to help Natalie run away from her father's estate after Natalie agrees to pay her more than her father did (236). Nadie's objective is still to earn as much as she can in the capitalist system and since walkaways are the minority, her attitude represents a majority of default citizens. Nadie's point of view is never about the economic realities or possibilities of the world, unlike the disagreement between Jimmy and Limpopo. She does not share Natalie's ideas about the possible utopian future either. She is, like Kevin in *Pacific Edge*, uninterested in politics and economics.

Natalie's father, on the other hand, represents the side of the discussion that is a defender of the capitalist system and default politics. Natalie's father decides to leave all of his money to his daughters and his business to Natalie herself (211) but after Natalie leaves, he insistently chases after her to bring her back and convince her that they are rich because they worked for it and they were exceptional:

You've seen the real world. There are people plenty richer than us. We're comfortable, I'll grant you, but we're not 'zottas' – not real ones. A couple mistakes, a few changes in the world, we lose everything. Bums on the street. I'll tell you what will happen next. We rebuild. Without handouts. We'd get to work, figure things out, and before long, we'd be on top. The world is lean and mean...
(211)

Jacob Redwater thinks of himself as a hardworking man who achieved his wealth through his hard work, while his daughter Natalie, who became a walkaway completely disagrees. He expresses that he is not a “zotta”, meaning an exceptionally rich person in the novel, and believes in a meritocracy narrative about the system he lives in. Jacob Redwater stays as a “zotta” throughout the novel, and dies as one, spending his whole life defending the system he lives in to Natalie (354). Here, Jacob represents a polarity that exists in real life as well; he is attached to his position and his wealth in the capitalist society and that is his idea of an ideal world. In his words, “the lean and mean” world where he stands at the top is his utopia. His position on the ideal future clashes directly with his daughter’s views which puts the welfare of the general population above the wealth and privileges of the select few. Their opposing positions are a mirror to the several ideas of what utopia means to different people in real life and Doctorow presents that dichotomy through Jacob and Natalie here. Jacob’s defense of the capitalist system, Nadie’s uninterested attitude in the political and economic spheres of her world, Jimmy’s insistence of reputation economy and solving conflicts through violence and Limpopo’s insistence on gift economy and pacifism sets these characters not only different from each other but also different while being on the same side of the walkaway/default distinction. Their diversity of opinions, the polarity between the capitalist ideal of rising above others through wealth and the walkaway ideal of cutting the tie between work and human worth, achieving abundance and sharing it, the disassembling of any hierarchical structure based on whether wealth, productivity or family connections make the novel more realistic in its presentation of political discourse in the real world. The characters who agree on the harmful nature of capitalism do not always come up with the same solution and follow each other without any struggle between the sides.

This aspect of the novel directly contrasts with *Ecotopia*'s citizens' agreement on every aspect of their society; from political structure to the economics and social norms. While *Ecotopia* simplifies its characters to the point of characters acting like clones of each other, *Walkaway* adds more diversity of voices and personalities to its characters, both bringing discussions regarding alternative economic systems to capitalism and a realistic approach to human nature and relationships to the utopian genre. *Pacific Edge*, on the other hand, has more diversity than *Ecotopia* but it focuses on the danger utopia faces against human nature through how greed can harm that society; its diversity exists among characters that are mostly in agreement with the utopian aspects of their society, only they have certain flaws, such as greed. Since *Walkaway* focuses on the building of utopia, this allows the novel to focus more on the political and economic opinions across the entire spectrum and does not stay limited to the utopian political opinions. Through this, it also manages to focus on the struggle between a capitalist view and the anti-capitalist walkaway structures, showing the difference between the existing system and the possible alternatives to its reader. *Walkaway* sets the context of the capitalist world in "default", establishing the dystopian background. Then it brings in the differing opinions both in that default world and the walkaway spaces, and expresses the real-world discussions on existing economic structures through Natalie and her father, worldviews on activism through Natalie and Nadie, hierarchies and leading or ruling people through Jimmy and Limpopo's clashes and Natalie and Limpopo's discussions and contrasts with each other. Shown through their contrasting opinions and discussions, *Walkaway* starts from the real-world circumstances and leads to utopia.

Another point *Walkaway* adds to its diversity compared to *Ecotopia* and *Pacific Edge* is the fact that there are several characters from other countries and different backgrounds. Not only does the internet connect all walkaways all over the world, main

characters also add points of views from different cultures and walks of life. The role the internet plays in connecting both walkaways around the world reflects the real world circumstances of social media allowing users to follow news and happenings in other countries, resonating with the contemporary reader as this is a very familiar experience. This is another example of *Walkaway* taking the real-life experiences and building on them a road to utopia. However, this diversity does not stay limited to online spaces as characters the reader follows also come from various backgrounds. A significant example of this is Limpopo, Luiza Gil as her default name. Limpopo is a Brazilian character (295) who ends up living with Canadian walkaways. Her character is very central to the story and fully fleshed out without any cultural stereotyping. Her nationality only comes up when she is kidnapped by the Canadian government which happens towards the end of the novel. Since there is no cultural stereotyping of the characters in the novel, her nationality never becomes a point in the narrative until the Canadian and Brazilian governments reveal it. For her nationality to never become important enough to mention in her walkaway life. However, coming to surface through these default channels is a representation of the contrast between the default and walkaway worldviews; no one's birthplace plays a role in how they are treated in the walkaway world. Walkaways are from diverse backgrounds and they all find a place in the walkaway spaces without their nationality becoming an issue. The novel shows that the walkaway lifestyle is a global phenomenon and explores some aspects of how other walkaway spaces fight against the governments around them to protect their existence.

Other parts of the world becoming walkaways is also mentioned: "The zottas went to war against each other, fought for control over countries whose people refused to fight for any side, walked away with us, turned refugee living into the standard" (309). After the city of Akron in Ohio, America stages the biggest riot against their government, the sentiment against the walkaways across the world gets stronger which

leads to several countries directly attacking their local walkaway groups: “There had been many assaults on walkaway strongholds by default regimes – religious fundamentalists in America and Saudi Arabia; no-insignia mercs in Ukraine, Moldova and Siberia; storm troopers backed by huge, network-killing information weapons in China” (350). While other countries, such as India, and how they were affected by the revolutionary changes to the economic system was discussed in *Pacific Edge* with Pravi’s character, *Walkaway* not only considers the revolution from several different points of view, it also makes its utopian community more global by exploring the struggles of walkaway groups on other continents and their global connection to other walkaway groups. *Walkaway* does not only involve people of other nationalities but discusses their circumstances and fleshes their characters out as well.

Compared to *Pacific Edge*, where Pravi’s character helped the reader see the effects of the revolution in India, *Walkaway* presents not only more characters from different backgrounds and countries, it also explores them in more depth. While Pravi’s character and her discussion with Tom regarding her country’s struggles add diversity of opinions and real-life problems to *Pacific Edge*’s world, it does not seem satisfactorily nuanced and away from stereotyping. In fact, while Moylan appreciates that Pravi’s character lets the reader see another point of view on Tom’s ideals about how society can be improved, he thinks she stays stereotypical:

However, in another register, the character of Pravi presents a bit of a problem: as the representative ‘third world’ or ‘post-colonial’ voice, she verges on being a noisy stereotype rather than a thoughtful source of critique and alternative viewpoint [...] In fact, her narrative position, inflected as well by Tom’s somewhat patronizing comment to Nadezhda that, ‘When they shoulder the responsibility themselves, they’ll understand’ (285), risks skepticism if not rejection. (“‘Utopia is when our lives matter’: Reading Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Pacific Edge*” 22)

Pravi's character is an attempt at including a variety of opinions regarding the utopian economic and political structures and her inclusion does enrich the novel; however, her position in the narration reduces her to a stereotype and disregards her concerns about the decision power superpowers like America hold over her country.

Walkaway, on the other hand, includes the characters of different backgrounds without making them stereotypes. They are either fully fleshed out, such as Limpopo's character, or diversity is added to the background in the form of other countries and their walkaways, without defining them through stereotypes, but just as other walkaways. Thus, walking away from the capitalist society becomes a unifying factor among a group as diverse as walkaways. Through their diversity, *Walkaway* carries the utopian genre one step forward with its more humanized characters regardless of their background.

The narrative choices made in the novel also reflect its focus on individuality; each chapter has another main character as the narrator and while some chapters share one narrator, such as Natalie's chapters, most of them bring different points of view among walkaways and introduce different experiences. As the novel focuses on the discovery of the walkaway lifestyle, the new walkaways, Natalie and Hubert become narrators. Then Natalie (Iceweasel, at this point) visits a walkaway university and this new aspect of their utopian society is introduced through her again, but this time, her experiences as a walkaway are the background information and helps the reader understand the walkaway lifestyle better as well, rather than presenting it as something new. After Natalie is kidnapped, the narrator changes between her, Hubert (Etcetera, at this point) and Seth (who continues to use his old name). Then other characters, such as Limpopo also become narrators; as she has been one of the oldest walkaways in B&B, her past also sheds light on the earlier circumstances walkaways had to experience while building their communities. So, despite being in the same utopian community, the

reader sees their individuality and differences not just in their voiced disagreements but also in their personal opinions about their world.

In her 2018 article named “Digital Humanity: Collaborative Capital Resistance in *Walkaway*”, Kirsten Bussière emphasizes this individuality in the utopia’s collectivist small societies: “In conclusion, walkaway culture aims to move beyond the overly simplistic opposition between individualism and collectivism, through a form of anarcho-syndicalist politics that, ideally, provide a means to remain an individual within a collective” (1). The characters in *Walkaway*, regardless of which side they are on, are painted as individuals with unique aspects and opinions while also participating in a collective. Especially among walkaway characters, it is essential to present a variety of people with differing opinions. As Limpopo says, “There are as many walkaway philosophies as there are walkaways” (64). The only opinion that tie walkaways together is the fact that they are anti-capitalists. However, writing them with the same mindset as a whole collective would have been not only unrealistic but also would miss the opportunity to explore different anti-capitalist possibilities in political, economic and social structures. As Bussière points out, the walkaway communities mostly work through anarcho-syndicalist politics where hierarchies are rejected and individualism is protected alongside with the community’s wellbeing (“Digital Humanity” 1).

Ecotopia was a novel that presented a limited amount of diversity both in its characters and its alternative systems to the author’s society. *Pacific Edge* was presenting another alternative to the author’s society but it has also acknowledged that the alternative the characters lived in was not perfect and could be challenged with characters like Pravi. *Walkaway* takes the utopian genre one huge step forward by not only including diverse opinions on the structure of the society, but it also discusses these alternatives through clashes between walkaway characters and explores them fully, thereby enriching the contemporary utopian discussion.

The other point *Walkaway* pushes the utopian narrative forward is through its dynamic and changing characters. Human nature, with its negatives and positives, is taken as a central aspect of the novel; characters grow and change, they carry the effects of their pasts with themselves and they reflect their backgrounds. This exploration of human behavior as an ever-changing and shifting mechanism makes the novel more realistic in its characterization, which helps the utopian societies in the novel seem more organic. The main trio's surprise, acclimation to the walkaway lifestyle both helps the reader understand the general walkaway values and adds to the dynamic nature and humanity of its characters. Their slowly changing nature and adoption of new philosophies are the base of the change the society is going through in the novel.

The new walkaways' experiences are representative of the changing views regarding the economic, political and social structures of their default society. As these characters change and grow, more and more people become walkaways as well and walkaway lifestyle is being normalized, slowly achieving the utopia globally. Their personal transformations are a small-scale example of the global change that is at the heart of the novel.

Natalie, Hubert etc. and his friend Seth live in the capitalist world of future Canada and at the beginning of their venture into the walkaway world, they have a hard time shaking off the ideals and norms they have been taught in the default world. When they arrive at the B&B and decide to stay, Limpopo invites them to their public, open baths (or *onsen* as they borrow from Japanese). They immediately ask what they can do with bags and clothes since they can't take their bags inside or lock them in a room. Limpopo finds this distasteful: "'Where do we leave our stuff?' That was Etcetera, and her [Limpopo's] mental assessment of him dropped a notch. Shleppers and *stuff*. 'Anywhere.' 'Will it be safe?' 'Dunno' (52)". As they decide to not question Limpopo and be seen as rude, the trio leave their bags behind and go into the baths. While they

are inside, their bags are stolen as B&B is always open to anyone who wants to come in and people living there refuse to have cameras set up. Natalie starts yelling at Limpopo (63) and Seth sarcastically questions how they keep living there. Limpopo defends herself to Natalie, saying, “Or you could walkback if you want. Some people do. Walkaway isn’t for everyone. Sometimes they go walkaway again. No one will judge you for it (65).” Natalie, at first, represents people who have a hard time leaving their norms and beliefs behind, as it was stated above regarding her different opinions from Limpopo. Eventually she is convinced she will not need money or her ID there but it takes her and the whole group a while to get used to the idea of not being attached to their possessions or money. They have a hard time adapting to social norms around work walkaways usually adopt. Natalie has a hard time internalizing the economic structure of B&B: “Out here, you want people to magically not take too much but also not earn the right to take more by working harder and also to work because it’s a gift but not because they expect anything in return (68)?” Limpopo explains that “It’s a project, not an accomplishment (68).”

While Limpopo’s opinions are not the only walkaway philosophy, it is common enough among the people she lives with. There are walkaways with different opinions regarding how their small communities should be working and sharing their resources, such as Jimmy, but the main trio chooses to adopt Limpopo’s philosophy, which is based on meeting the needs of every member of their community regardless of their productivity. For Limpopo, there is no need to hoard or even keep any resources; her priority is the community, rather than her individual position among the community.

Natalie’s aversion to believing her at first, and accepting her pacifism later highlights the main separation point between the two. Natalie is more ambitious, as well as open to the idea of owning the bearing of one’s work. However, what makes Natalie’s character so dynamic starts with this highlighting of her difference from

Limpopo. As she learns the walkaway values and adjusts to them, she is put against her father and later Nadie who are both from default. In the second half of the novel, Natalie has found her new values and is confident in them enough to defend herself against these two opponents. She goes against her father's opinions of hard work and being deserving of special treatment because of his position in the society: "He'd call this *humane*, a 'low impact' way of 'bringing me around' to sanity, which, in his world, is the ability to bullshit yourself into believing you deserve to have more of everything that everyone else has less of, because of your special snowflakeness" (167). To this, Dis, a dead walkaway and now a mind uploaded to the web able to communicate with Natalie secretly, answers saying, "You're preaching to the converted, girl. Remember, I was walkaway before you" (167). Dis's answer shows the difference between the Natalie who has lost her cool and yelled at Limpopo for her stolen clothes and money and the Natalie that has internalized Limpopo's walkaway philosophy despite being kept in her father's bunker and isolated from all walkaways until Dis finds her. As Doctorow emphasizes their attachments to both their personal property and their old values, he also points out the starting point for these characters. The trio slowly, though in different paces, shed their old views regarding property ownership and adapt new values that are closer to Limpopo's philosophy. After their values change and they become complete walkaways, the story starts revolving around the global resistance walkaways show to the default governments that want to destroy them; the first half of the novel focuses on the personal transformation and the second half pulls that focus to the global change and shows it play out in a larger scale. The roadmap to utopia in the novel starts with the personal change of these characters and grows to a community, and then global levels.

Another character whose change throughout the novel is significant is Jimmy, who goes from a supporter of reputation economy and a proponent of violence among

walkaways to coming to accept Limpopo's ideas regarding the economic structure of new utopian communities. Jimmy is under the effects of his upbringing in the capitalist society and he carries his ideas of meritocracy, as he later describes himself as "completely bought into meritocracy" (248), from his old society to the emerging utopian spaces. Jimmy insists on running the communities on a "quid-pro-quo basis" where "everyone gets out what they put in" (72) at first. After taking over B&B from Limpopo, Jimmy finds himself in the middle of Canadian and American governments' attacks on walkaways since walkaways achieve mind-uploading technology. Jimmy meets Limpopo again and after losing fifteen walkaways on the road to the walkaway safe house Limpopo is in, he seems defeated. He explains how his opinions have changed since he raided B&B:

I told myself I was making the world better. I thought there were 'useful' and 'useless' people and if you didn't keep the useful people happy, the useless would starve. *Of course* I put myself in the useful group. I knew this important secret thing about useless and useful people, and if that's not useful, what is? I told myself I was making more of everything for everyone. We just needed the people who were worth the most do whatever they wanted. It was fucked up. I fucked up. That's what I'm trying to say sorry for. (194)

Jimmy's entire worldview about people's worth has changed throughout the book due to his experiences. While he explains in the above quote that he meant well with his meritocratic framework and his attempts were to help everyone in the walkaway community, he comes to realize that his methods were not correct. After experiencing persecution and losing his men, Jimmy ends up having to reevaluate his ideas about work. The more he stays a walkaway and sees other walkaways' philosophies, the more he is affected by them, especially Limpopo's.

Jimmy's change of heart happens slowly and over the course of the whole novel. His introduction shows him as a complete opposite of Limpopo but his last scenes are of him admitting to Limpopo that her philosophy of leaving others free to make their own choices was the choice that led him to see his own mistakes and learn from them. The fact that his change of values was achieved not through any pressure from an authority, as it was happening in *Ecotopia* or by the threat of going against the community one lives in, as it happened in *Pacific Edge*, *Walkaway* takes another route to change. The characters are left to make their own choices and are realistically shaped by their experiences but others' experiences and philosophies also affect them; their transformations happen entirely out of their own will and realizations. Doctorow takes on one of the most persisting criticisms of the utopia genre, the risk of authoritarianism and offers a solution to it which is fighting it by ensuring personal freedoms do not get restricted under any circumstances.

Later, this becomes the framework for a global revolution as well. Achieving a radical change in economic and political structure through entirely grassroots movements brings global change. Limpopo does not give up on her fight for her freedom and she does not force anyone to change for her either, representing a new way of bringing change. Jimmy and Limpopo get closer during this period in the safe house and eventually Jimmy is ready to open up about his thought process and what led him there; he explains that what made him leave the default was "debt at first" (250). He tries to be a successful student but finds out that without money, it will not be possible for him to have a lucrative career (251). He meets some different, older walkaways who explain to him that they are "not proud of where we ended up" (254). Jimmy's reaction to them is to try to convince them to fight back against default, "to get him to see if they don't push back when pushed, default will just know they can be pushed harder next time" (255). Jimmy's position here is well-meaning as he wants to protect the existing

walkaways by convincing them to take a stand for their lifestyle. It is also the exact opposite of Limpopo's approach to other people's convictions and decisions. Jimmy wants to organize a big movement and convince people to change and join, whereas Limpopo lets them make their own choices without any pressure. The fact that Jimmy ends up seeing Limpopo's point and agreeing with her in the end means that *Walkaway* revolves around individual freedom and transformation rather than pushing people into certain directions to achieve utopia. This point separates *Walkaway* from earlier, a lot more communal utopias that are built on collective action where the author assumes the majority will decide on a utopia and build it together, such as *Ecotopia*.

Jimmy is unable to convince them so he ends up leaving for another walkaway group. This part draws a parallel between Natalie and Jimmy's characters, as they both lean towards defensive actions to have control over their new lives. However, unlike Natalie who met Limpopo and internalized her philosophy first, Jimmy meets a new group of walkaways in New Hampshire (256) and finds out that their gamification system makes everyone in the walkaway compound work harder to have privileges. The fact that Doctorow involves several small walkaway communities with different economic systems is a way to explore these economic systems a utopian society can be built around as well.

Through Jimmy's experiences, the reader is given several alternatives to the capitalist economy, each of them is explored thoroughly and is shown what sort of problems they might create. Eventually, through Limpopo's effect on other characters, Doctorow puts the gift economy system above others but he does not ignore the counterarguments that are different economic systems; he carefully considers and then refutes them with reasons. Gamification of work and reputation economy not only seem more productive for the sake of every walkaway involved, but is also perfectly modeled mathematically, which feels more natural to Jimmy as he explains:

I'd arrived with my gang, you saw them, boys who thought the sun shone out of my ass, completely bought into meritocracy, not just as a way of figuring out who got what, but as a way of solving *all* our problems [...] My guys looked at the world like Plato, you know, *The Republic*. Every person has something he is good at. You find those things and help those people get there and that makes everyone happy and productive and we'll all be better. You don't need to order people to do jobs they hate. Just use ranking to make sure that if you're doing a job you're no good at, everyone knows it, including you. You get a smaller share of the collective loot than you would if you were doing something you were better at. Once you get hold of this idea, you can turn it into math, model its game-theory, find its Nash equilibrium. It's such a beautiful idea. It models *perfectly*. (247-8)

Jimmy believes that his ideas rely on a desire to provide for all walkaways and his background helps the reader understand where he is coming from. As a student trying to prove himself, Jimmy loses his chance at a profitable future only because he does not have money. He learns to be against capitalism that limits him despite his talents but he is still holding work above all and ranking people by their productivity. Jimmy's backstory establishes where his old ideas about human worth and work comes from; his discussions with Limpopo that take place at the beginning of the novel explain what his values became after those formative experiences in his life. By bringing him back in the second half and reestablishing how he was affected by his fight with Limpopo, Doctorow completes his development and manages to explore an alternative economy to capitalism without presenting it as the solution to problems that come with capitalism.

Jimmy is characterized as an example of how people change through their experiences and come to new ideas, as well as how people change with new experiences. Jimmy is a very dynamic character who both adds to the diverse opinions

of the characters, as well as humanizing the characters with opposing views to the main characters. When contrasted with the Opposition of *Ecotopia*, Jimmy's character is not vilified or belittled, his character and ideas are taken seriously and given depth and reasons. The Opposition in *Ecotopia* were described as, "A couple of them are over 50, people who in the U.S. would be members of Rotary or country club [...] A couple are young hot-eyed, resentful, dangerous [...] they would probably be against the regime whatever it was or did" (*Ecotopia* 49).

Jimmy's character is never reduced to a rebel without a cause or a greedy businessperson. When he first appears, he is dangerous and completely at odds with Limpopo but he is not vilified as Doctorow immediately goes into a flashback in Limpopo's mind, letting the reader see that their disagreement was only ever on different ideals of economics. Doctorow's choice in slowly bringing Jimmy's ideals closer to Limpopo's humanizes him. And by adding his background at the very end, Doctorow makes him steadily more relatable; from his parents' poverty to his hard work in helping them out, from his struggle to protect the walkaways he joins to his explanation that his aim was to make sure all walkaways lived comfortably, rather than establishing himself as superior. He is humbled as well, as he changes; he understands that he was not to be followed blindly as his men did. Right after the reader learns his past and sees his remorse regarding his actions against Limpopo and other residents of B&B, Jimmy is murdered by armed forces (258). With his death right after his change of heart and admission of fault, Doctorow makes him more sympathetic to the reader despite his earlier introduction as a dangerous man.

Doctorow explores the possibility of having normalized and internalized the values of a system people grow up in with Jimmy. In his article, "Playing at Control: Writing Surveillance in/for Gamified Society", Garfield Benjamin explains the gamification of work as a system to replace money while having the exact same effect

and role money has on society: “As Doctorow (2017: 370) writes in *Walkaway*, the real motivator is ‘power. Money’s just keeping score.’ [...] Gamified power is linked to an arbitrary score. All that matters is the visibility of this score and its link to social status supported by participation” (708). He explains that Doctorow manages to cut the tie between power and productivity through Limpopo’s philosophy of work and that Jimmy’s philosophy leads back to the capitalist mindset, as well as ideas of masculinity: “Gamification here is pure competition, a combination of militarism and toxic masculinity” (708). Jimmy disagrees with capitalism itself as he says to Limpopo, “I have more in common with you than with the assholes who came at us on the road. There is only one thing they want: a world where they’re on top and everyone else *isn’t*” (192). However, this does not mean just being a walkaway will erase the effects and internalized ideas about human nature, work, masculinity and productivity out of his mind, letting him start as a blank slate.

Another narrative choice Doctorow makes to point this out is that it is not just Jimmy that is still affected by the economic, political and social systems he grew up in (apart from Natalie’s character growing and moving away from where Jimmy was). He is highlighting the fact that Limpopo also has similar attitudes despite thinking of these as her flawed thinking. Limpopo is a proponent of gift economy and refuses to ask any walkaway to respect her for her work or see her as a leader figure; however, she is not free from falling into these ways of thinking on her own, in her own mind despite seeing this as wrong:

Limpopo’s dirty secret was that she had been scraping the B&B’s production logs and dumping them into a homebrewed analytics system she Frankensteined from the world of gamified motivational bullshit. Every now and again, she’d run the logs and look at how far ahead of everyone else she was. She especially liked to look at the stats charts when she lost an argument about how something could be

done. [...] Being a walkaway meant honoring everyone's contributions and avoiding the special snowflake delusion. So losing to someone over whom, in default, she'd have rank to pull made her a saint. No one was a special snowflake, but she was better at not being a special snowflake than everyone. (78)

While Limpopo does not support gamified work to improve productivity and believes that her contribution does not make her superior, she still has to struggle with her more basic desires of holding rank and influence over people, especially when she feels powerless, such as the times she loses arguments. When her ego is hurt, she is looking for a way to soothe herself through a capitalist understanding of superiority. The fact that she thinks she would not lose *in default* means that even she is carrying some of her past values with her, despite the fact that she feels they are wrong, "selfish and immature" (78) and that's why she calls this her "dirty secret" (78). Through showing Limpopo's desire of feeling superior and her shame around having such a desire, Doctorow is humanizing her, as well; taking her out of her role of exemplary walkaway both for other characters and the reader. She is flawed, she is human and she herself judges her tendency to fall back into the values of her old society. She is not a perfect utopian character. She is a parallel with Jimmy about the fact that they both carry certain values that are supposed to be discarded when one becomes a walkaway. While Jimmy finds strength and superiority in it, Limpopo believes this attitude is wrong and fights against herself.

Jimmy's character journey can be examined as a parallel to Natalie's character journey as well, as they both carry a sentiment of protecting what they think of as theirs even through violence. However, as Natalie evolves in the guidance of Limpopo to abandon the ideas that are rooted in capitalism, as in ownership of places and violent defense of one's territory, Jimmy evolves towards another philosophy through the walkaway compound he stays in that reinforces his ideas about productivity defining

people's values and gamification motivating people to work harder to be more valuable and respectable. Neither of them is presented as a villain; Limpopo is a flawed but principled person, Natalie finds her own values and is determined in them and Jimmy is characterized in a sympathetic light in the second half of the story, changing and apologizing for his past violent actions before dying. *Walkaway* is insistent on presenting all of its characters as human as possible with their flaws, growth and change. This aspect of the novel adds to the realism of the utopia being built, as well as giving the reader the chance to see the kind of disagreements and altercations that can occur among a group who are on the same side.

Ecotopia was criticized by Werner Christie Mathisen for lacking in alternatives to offer to the political system of America and not providing systems that give people more autonomy. *Walkaway*, on the other hand, explores political options through its characters who have differing political opinions and presents their solutions as alternatives, resolving this problem of utopian literature that was discussed in regards to *Ecotopia*. Utopian society is not built by communal effort where everyone agrees on the principles it should be built on, as it happened in *Ecotopia* either; *Walkaway* emphasizes that collective action about bringing change to the system does not mean all anti-default people will agree on the same solution. *Pacific Edge* also involves diverse characters and draws them as flawed and human; their disagreements never reach violent levels as in *Walkaway* but they still carry the older values their society had, such as Kevin's sexism. However, *Pacific Edge* does not explore the several other possible systems people might defend as in depth as *Walkaway* does, because it is an established utopia, not a newly emerging one so the discussion is revolving around how to protect the established utopia from corruption, whether of powerful corporations or of individuals with human flaws and struggles. Characters in *Walkaway* are not only diverse in their opinions, solutions and actions, they are also ready to take a stand for their opinions

even against each other, which helps the reader realistically explore the probable routes a utopia can take in its economy, politics, social relationships and so on. As nobody is villainized and belittled for the opinions they hold, the reader is opened to the idea of not dismissing the other possibilities a new society can present but embracing the plurality and multiplicity. The fact that the characters are presented dynamically, changing over time and growing in different ways and towards different goals, unable to completely shed their old identities and values also highlight their humanity, making them more realistic.

Walkaway differs from *Ecotopia* and *Pacific Edge* with its diversity in characters, political and economic ideas, its dynamic characters who explore different aspects of their societies as they grow and change, as well as through its focus on the building of the utopia, rather than presenting the utopia as a completed alternative to be appreciated or protected from corruption. *Walkaway* has characters from several backgrounds that enrich the perspectives the novel takes on several aspects of the emerging utopia and does not stereotype any of its characters; instead helps the reader see their world from the characters' perspective by employing a narrative technique that gives every main character at least a chapter from their perspective. While not stereotyping, it does not erase the differences between characters either. Rather, it closely focuses on these differences as seen in the example of Jimmy, Limpopo and Iceweasel. Characters believe in certain philosophies in accordance with their backgrounds and experiences. As these experiences change, their perspectives and philosophies also change. Their growth and the conclusions they arrive at seem organic to the reader and none of them is vilified for their ideas; their opinions are explored alongside with opposing opinions and are given the same weight. Doctorow presents these differing opinions and worldviews with the same attitude Limpopo approaches them; as her walkaway philosophy revolves around allowing people to explore various

positions and learn from them, Doctorow allows the reader to explore them as well. The way the novel lets the reader see the positive and negative aspects of these systems and how they compare is in line with Limpopo's philosophy of letting others find their own values in life without attacking them for their opinions or forcing them. Doctorow embodies Limpopo's philosophy in the narrative choices of his novel. As the characters change, their growth highlights the dynamism of their characters, making them more realistic to the reader.

Pacific Edge has focused on the plurality and multiplicity of the characters and human experience, but *Walkaway* takes this a step forward and focuses on the diversity of opinions and philosophies in the utopian thought as well. The other aspect of *Walkaway* is its focus on the emerging utopia; the road to utopia, the struggle to get there is the most significant difference between *Walkaway* and established utopias, such as *Ecotopia* and *Pacific Edge*. Established utopias have been more common in the utopian narrative until contemporary utopian literature, as utopia's aim is to present better alternatives (according to what the author of a utopia believes to be a better alternative) to the political, economic and social systems of the author's time period. Utopia is the better alternative to the current world and exploration of such alternative ideas. *Ecotopia* is an example of such exploration as it focuses on a stranger's views on these alternatives and their comparison to American society in the 1970s. *Pacific Edge*, as well, starts in a settled utopia; despite the narrative of Tom's journal focusing on the starting point of the fight for utopia, the actual building of the utopia is not mentioned. *Pacific Edge* focuses more on the maintaining of the utopia and while it presents the alternative lifestyle its new economic and political systems can offer to people, its focus is the imperfections and limits of utopia. *Walkaway* brings a new perspective to the utopian literature by exploring the rise of the new utopian society; first in small groups and later in bigger communities, until whole cities are taken over by walkaways. It does

not rush the process and jump to the utopian conclusion; it focuses almost entirely on the struggle for utopia. Furthermore, it still explores utopia's imperfections and becomes a critical utopia as *Pacific Edge* also was. It takes the multiplicity of utopian novels such as *Pacific Edge* and adds to them through a deeper exploration of differing philosophies in and outside of the utopian thought and presents a global worldview both through its characters and the connection among walkaways through the internet. Because of these new depths it adds to the genre, *Walkaway* is the new perspective on utopian novel; a critical utopia that both fulfills the utopian expectation of presenting a better, alternative future and exploring the utopia's limitations, and adds to the utopian novel by making the road to utopia its main focus.

CONCLUSION

Utopian genre has been an expression of humanity's hope for a better world. In the last couple of decades, utopian literature has seen the utopian genre change from detailed descriptions of better alternatives to the systems society lives under to a more critical genre towards exploring the limitations of utopia while also still emphasizing its necessity. With the contemporary utopian literature, a turn towards a more pessimistic and yet more realistic, diverse and flexible approach towards utopia has developed.

Utopian genre's evolution parallels the transformation of the idea of revolution and social change. The revolutionary zeitgeist enters into its next phase and the utopian imagination follows by closely, adapting to the new ideas of social change and how it can be achieved. *Ecotopia* revolves around the sudden, revolutionary change and secession from the old world, as the first step of this evolution. Characters are a part of the larger system rather than participants who have their personal politics. They are drawn without sufficient depth to be dynamic or relatable. This novel, therefore, fails to dispel the fear that utopian imagination can lead into a totalitarian regime controlling every aspect of its citizens' lives and the belief that utopias are unrealistic.

Pacific Edge, as an exemplar for the second step of this evolution, is focused more on the inner transformations the characters experience. Their personal revolutions become a catalyst that changes the society around them. As Tom politically awakens and brings in a new world order with other people like himself, Kevin represents the need for constant struggle to keep the utopia alive even after it is achieved. Utopia is considered a world that continues to evolve and the direction its revolution will take is in the hands of its dynamic and realistic characters.

Walkaway, as the representative utopian novel of 2010s in this study, becomes part of the trend of the era by starting in a dystopia and never fully leaving it until the

end of the novel. *Walkaway* embodies the idea that small and personal revolutionary actions can snowball into bigger movements that bring in a new era but in a slower pace and through several hardships. Instead of dreaming of a better world as the other two utopian works in this study have done, Doctorow chooses to focus on the process of reaching utopia. He does not accept the idea of a perfect order and instead, presents his readers several economic and political options to shape the newly burgeoning small, revolutionary communities in the novel.

As critical utopias, instead of presenting a blueprint where people are just a part of the picture as *Ecotopia* does, *Pacific Edge* and *Walkaway* are informed by changing revolutionary politics and literary landscape. They focus on the humanity of their characters and the potential issues that can be born after the imperfection of the ideal future is accepted. Both novels are examples of this approach as personal politics and transformation plays central roles in them. This approach explains the growing dynamism and diversity of the characters the authors involve in their novels, as well as their careful consideration of administrative and economic systems they explore. Robinson explores both the positives of a more involved administrative system (town councils) and a decentralized economy, and their weaknesses through the corruptions of these systems in *Pacific Edge*. Doctorow, on the other hand, explores several economic and administrative systems through several characters that embrace these systems and points out their strengths and weaknesses through their experiences in *Walkaway*.

However, *Walkaway* becomes a utopian vision that reaches one step further than *Pacific Edge* through its focus on the process of change both on a personal and social level. Walkaways represent the small movements growing bigger organically and that fits in with Harcourt's claim that this is the form of activism in the current political climate. As more people become walkaways, they become a threatening force to the default system and several governments try to disperse them through violence. This

struggle to survive and maintain the walkaway lifestyle becomes the central plot of the novel. This narrative of the process of reaching utopia instead of a narrative of how life in utopia would be is what sets *Walkaway* apart from the other two novels in this study. In her book *The Concept of Utopia*, Ruth Levitas makes the point that utopian provocation must include the process of transition from present society to the utopian one (191). Moylan supports her opinion on this adding, “The social and aesthetic value of such a text therefore lies in the emphasis it places on the process of reaching toward Utopia and on the values and policies required for that process to move in a progressive direction” (Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, 272). By answering both the need for critiquing the utopian genre itself and including the process of creating utopia, *Walkaway* pushes the genre forward one more step.

Utopian genre in the beginning of the 20th century has mostly been focused on presenting blueprints for a better society in line with its author’s ideology. Just like 19th and early 20th century utopias, 1975’s *Ecotopia* also takes this approach to utopia; it provides a narrative that focuses on how technologically available utopia is in the 1970s. It does not resolve any problem that is pointed in criticisms of utopia and it embodies the idealistic world 1970s political atmosphere could inspire. Its revolutionary ideal is an event with two opposing sides and its characters are less complex and dynamic than the other utopian novels. *Pacific Edge* becomes the second step of utopian genre’s development resolving the problems *Ecotopia* did not address regarding its realism and potential totalitarianism. *Pacific Edge* focuses more on the characters and tries to flesh them out as realistically as possible so it can be critical about the concept of a perfect utopia. Through its complex and flawed characters, *Pacific Edge* explores the limitations of utopia while also defending it. Inner transformations of the characters and their effects on the society take the central part in this novel. *Walkaway*, as the latest step in utopian genre’s development, is a roadmap to utopia, rather than a north star like

Ecotopia and *Pacific Edge* were. It does not present a complete, settled utopia but rather focuses on its birth and development. It is centered on both personal transformation of the characters and their actions in bringing a new, utopian society starting from small groups to a worldwide movement. *Walkaway* brings *Ecotopia*'s utopian hope of and *Pacific Edge*'s critical and realistic aspects of together, and adds to them its Doctorow's own perspective on utopia: a process, a roadmap to reach the utopian future.

From this point onward, the utopian genre needs to combine all these aspects; the self-reflexivity, the focus on the process, and holding onto the hopeful core of utopian literature to move beyond what *Walkaway* has set as the latest point of its evolution. The genre may evolve even further by taking a cue from the internet-based organizing methods of today's activism scene to continue following the revolutionary attitudes of its time. It might also evolve into newly arising utopian micro-genres such as Solarpunk, which focuses on blending the technological developments with utopian aesthetics. On the other hand, rather than focusing on which technological developments can help us achieve utopia, some utopian works choose to delve into the process of progressing slowly toward utopia, as Kim Stanley Robinson does in his *Mars* Trilogy. Utopian genre still has more to explore and expand on both on the topic of social transformation and on the question of how to reach utopia.

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ÖZET

Bu çalışma, ütopya türünün 1970'lerden 2017'ye kadar geçen süreçteki gelişimi ve değişimi üzerinde durmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı ütopya türünün idealist gelecek toplumların resmini çizen bir türden ütopya giden yolda yaşanan gerçekçi mücadeleye odaklanan bir tür olduğunu açıklamaktır. Ernest Callenbach'ın 1975'te yayımlanan *Ecotopia* adlı ütopyası, ütopya türünün o dönemdeki sosyal adalet hareketlerinden etkilenmesi sonucu doğmuştur. Kusursuza yakın bir gelecek ütopyanın resmini çizen *Ecotopia* merkezine böyle bir toplumun nasıl işleyebileceğini almıştır. Kim Stanley Robinson'un 1990 yılında yayımladığı *Pacific Edge* bu çalışmada ütopyanın gelişiminin ikinci basamağı olarak alınmıştır. *Pacific Edge* ütopyik bir gelecek toplum çizerken ütopyanın sınırlarına odaklanmış, kusursuza yakın ütopya kavramını eleştirel açıdan ele almıştır ve Tom Moylan'ın eleştirel ütopya olarak tanımladığı alt türe dahil olmuştur. Toplumun işleyişini arka plana alan bu roman ütopyik bir toplumda insan ilişkilerini ve kusurlarını incelemektedir. Bu çalışmada ütopyanın geldiği son nokta olarak ele alınan, Cory Doctorow'un 2017 yılında yayımladığı *Walkaway* ise oturmuş bir ütopyaadaki hayatı ele almaktan ziyade ütopyanın doğumunu ve gelişimini anlatmaktadır. *Walkaway* hem ütopya türüne Karl Popper ve Paul Tillich tarafından yöneltilen eleştirilere cevap vermekte ve kusursuz ütopya kavramına *Pacific Edge* gibi eleştirel yaklaşmaktadır, hem de kendinden önceki ütopyalardan farklı olarak ütopya'yı anlatmak yerine ütopya giden yolu anlatmaktadır. Bu tezin amacı bu romanların karşılaştırmalı analizi üzerinden ütopya türünün 1970'lerden 2010'lara kadar geçen süreçteki değişimini incelemektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Ütopya, Eleştirel Ütopya, Ernest Callenbach, Kim Stanley Robinson, Cory Doctorow

ABSTRACT

This study explores the development and evolution of the utopian genre from the late 20th Century into the 21st Century. It aims to explain that utopian genre has evolved from blueprints of idealistic future societies to explorations of realistic struggles to reach utopia. Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975), which paints a future society close to perfection and explores how such a society can function, is written under the influence social justice movements of the 1970s. Kim Stanley Robinson's *Pacific Edge* (1990), which is examined as the second step of utopian genre evolution in this study, focuses on utopia's limitations, criticizes the idea of an almost perfect utopian society and is an example of the subgenre Tom Moylan names critical utopia. This novel places the structure of the utopian society in the background to focus on the interpersonal relationships and personal flaws of the characters in the story. Cory Doctorow's *Walkaway* (2017) is examined as the latest example of utopian genre's evolution which, instead of describing an established utopian society, focuses on the birth and development of a utopia. As another critical utopia like *Pacific Edge*, *Walkaway* can be read as a response to the criticism directed at the utopian genre by Karl Popper and Paul Tillich, and unlike the two novels before it, it chooses to depict the road to utopia, rather than the utopian society. Through the comparative analysis of these novels the aim of this thesis is to explore the evolution the utopian genre went through from the 1970s to 2010s.

Key words: Utopia, Critical Utopia, Ernest Callenbach, Kim Stanley Robinson, Cory Doctorow