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Mateusz Marecki
University of Wrocław

Searching for Hope: At the Intersections of Knowledge and Belief in Stephen Baxter's *Flood*

Abstract: With its over 500-page account of three decades of rising water that leads to the decline of Earth's civilization, Stephen Baxter's *Flood* belongs in the club of literature linked to the myth of Noah. Considering its generic aspect, the novel should be classified as an apocalyptic rather than post-apocalyptic story. Also, unlike most of the other works employing the theme of the deluge, it is based on scientific underpinnings, which indicates its affinity with *hard science fiction*. Naturally, *Flood* opens to multiple interpretations. For instance, it can be read both through the prism of eco-criticism or from the psychological and sociological perspectives. This paper, however, seeks to view the novel as a search for hope occurring at the intersection of knowledge and belief. Employing Michel Foucault's post-structuralist notions of *discourse*, *power/knowledge*, *subjugated knowledge* and *discipline*, it arrives at two main conclusions. Firstly, in Baxter's work the domain of hope displays multidimensionality, since it constitutes an assemblage of different modes (romanticism: that is, spirituality and personal attachment vs. pragmatism: that is, science and technological advancement) and discursive models (such as pragmatic idealism, scientific rationalism and balanced scepticism). Secondly, this paper argues that in *Flood* hope can be regarded as a complex discourse, rather than a mere category. It is imposed on others spatially (arks), through discipline and by resorting to scientific instruments.

> In the watery sunlight the colours were bright,
> red and orange and electric blue,
> artificial colours characteristic
> of a vanished world.
>
> (Baxter 2008: 450)

Imagine that forty-one years from now the Earth becomes reduced to vast areas of water covered by floating fields of non-degradable plastic, a revolting remnant of mankind. Back in 2016, ruthless floodwaters, with rigid systematicity and at an invariably increasing rate, began to send the familiar world into abysmal darkness.

As time passed, people desperately continued to ask one another if the waters would finally subside. Faced with an irreversible calamity, most of them either found themselves stranded on makeshift rafts, where they struggled not to vanish beneath the waves, or joined the pilgrims seeking asylum on higher ground. In the meantime, a number of scientists, preoccupied with painstaking research, were striving to subvert, or at least mitigate, the effects of this devastating and inscrutable power. Yet they failed to reach a consensus about the causes of the flood. As if to prevent the imminent impasse in science that seemed to be infecting humanity, a visionary stepped in, a self-appointed saviour, Nathan Lammockson, who attempted to rejuvenate hope in people by mastering the world through techno-utopian projects. In the end, however, those tenacious few who managed to retreat to the debris of Mount Everest became mesmerized by two prevalent thoughts: that both the birth of a new, aquatic generation and the successful flight of Ark One to another planet would mark a new beginning. Approached from the perspective of 2011, the vision outlined above would be considered to be far-fetched. In Stephen Baxter's *Flood*[1] (2008), however, this scenario has a flavour of disturbing realism.

The novel can hardly be consigned to any specific genre; nor can it be read solely through the prism of its portrayal of the calamity. On one level, a glance at the chronological list of science fiction works delineated in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* reveals that *Flood* is inscribed into the long tradition of literature concerned with the issue of global floods. Besides the most perspicuous adherence to the myth of Noah which reverberates in the history of deluges, Baxter's novel is arguably redolent of such works as Garrett P. Serviss's much-celebrated *The Second Deluge* (1912), H.G. Wells's *All Aboard for Ararat* (1940), J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World* (1962), Sakyo Komatsu's *Japan Sinks*[2] (1973), Joan Slonczewski's *A Door into Ocean* (1986) or Kevin Reynolds's mediocre film *Waterworld* (1995). Influenced by those pieces, Baxter incorporated some ideas from his predecessors. For instance, a striking analogy exists between the scenes depicting the process of constructing the ark in *The Second Deluge* and in *Flood*. Likewise, Nathan Lammockson and Ark One from *Flood* are reminiscent of Wells's protagonist Mr. Noah Lammock and his invented spaceship-like Ark. Finally, in its emblematic and abrupt replacement of the older, earth-bound generation by the younger, aquatic one, *Flood* echoes *A Door into Ocean*. Slonczewski's text portrays "the ecosystem of the ocean world Shora," in which one "disruptive dynamic: removal of one species, the monster seaswallowers, perturbs population of species all along the food chain" (Slonczewski and Levy 2003: 182).

[1] Because Baxter's book, though frequently reviewed in Internet magazines, has not received the critical attention it merits from the scholarly world, it constitutes an interesting, uncharted territory of study.

[2] Clearly, more than for its visionary illustration of the catastrophe, the book is praised for its thorough insight into the cultural and political background of Cold War Japan.

Notwithstanding their close thematic link, Baxter's work differs from the two post-apocalypse novels, *The Drowned World* and *Waterworld*, in one key respect. Rather than recounting what it would be like to live in a submerged world, *Flood* guides the reader through the apocalypse, which allows us to classify it as an apocalyptic novel or, in Peter Stockwell's phraseology, an "apocalyptic architext" (Stockwell 2001: 215). Unlike the two post-apocalypse novels,[3] *Flood* begins in the near future of 2016, as if to give immediacy to the lurking doom. As an architext, it abounds in perceptual shifts employed for the sake of deepening the reader's cognition and understanding of the cataclysm. In the novel, the account of the process of establishing an "ark-like community"[4] and the search "by a group of scientists for an explanation" (Stockwell, 215) (another two characteristics of apocalyptic architexts), is focalised through the omniscient narrator and four human characters.[5]

Significantly, Baxter's vision deploys a wide array of perspectives. It is also further irradiated with real scientific theories. Similarly to *The Drowned World*, where the author precedes his extrapolations with scientifically grounded concepts, *Flood* is built on the premises expounded in the afterword. By conducting research to validate certain assumptions instead of merely sketching a secondary world, Baxter intimates that his novel could be labelled as *hard science fiction.*[6] This suggestion gains even more credibility when viewed in the context of Bainbridge's and Dalziel's definition of the genre, according to which hard science fiction works "refer to stories around certain facts or speculations concerning the 'exact' or 'hard' sciences" (Bainbridge and Dalziel 1978: 167) and utilise "extrapolation, a process uniting science, realism, and fantasy in highly specific ways" (Samuelson 1993: 195) as their predominant mode. Apparently, as Samuelson astutely notes, "the whole universe is the author's laboratory to experiment in with verbal models of matter and energy" (Samuelson, 201). Overall, this interplay between the techno-

[3] *The Drowned World* is supposedly set in 2145 London, whereas *Waterworld* anticipates 2500.

[4] Since the motif of building an ark pervades apocalyptic texts, Stockwell, half-humorously, half-seriously, propounds that the designation "architexts" be replaced by "arkitexts" (Stockwell, 217).

[5] In their characterisation of hard science fiction, Slonczewski and Levy state that hard science fiction writers tend to employ "a tough, pragmatic, (usually) masculine narrative voice" (Slonczewski and Levy, 189) to articulate their ideas. As evidenced in *Flood*, where Lily's perspective predominates, Baxter attempts to escape this trend. He even goes so far as to introduce Thandie, another female character in the book, as the most influential scientist.

[6] In his chapter included in *The Ascent of Wonder*, David Hartwell enumerates five main features that denote hard science fiction: (1) "the beauty of truth"; (2) "feels authentic to the experienced reader"; (3) "relies, at some point of the story, on expository prose rather than literary prose"; (4) "relies on scientific knowledge external to the story"; (5) "achieves its characteristic effect essentially through informing, by being, in fact, didactic" (Hartwell 1994: 30–34).

logical discourse and *the novum*[7] results in "cognitive engagement,"[8] "the esthetic effect" (Pierce 1993: 181) *hard science fiction* elicits in the reader.

Yet, the reader of *Flood* is not solely drawn to assimilating whatever s/he finds cognitively challenging; simultaneously, s/he contributes to the exploration of new semantic dimensions in the text. It is deep under the littered surface of the flood that the work in question yields an infinite number of interpretative possibilities. Fundamentally, one could focus on the symbolism in *Flood* by analysing it against the original myth of Noah. Also, it would not be inapposite to scrutinize the novel through the lens of eco-criticism or to inspect its sociological and psychological levels. This paper, however, seeks to view Baxter's work as a space of negotiation between knowledge and belief. As has been shown in the analysis, the two categories, albeit initially juxtaposed as contradictory, supplement each other to finally be united in a consolatory space of hope. Hope, which lives in people and lingers in objects and places.

While dwelling on the interplay between knowledge and belief or, as post-structuralists would put it, the privileged and the unprivileged,[9] it would be impossible to overlook some of the concepts that Foucault formulated in his *Power/Knowledge* (1980) and *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1969). Despite its reductive bias,[10] Foucault's insistence on seeing our world as ruled by discourses, where language and language practices stand for a currency used "for purposes to do with power relationships between people" (Wolfreys 2004: 65), remains valid. In *Flood*, it is scientific discourse, represented by "a set of codified relations between a precisely constructed knower and a precisely constructed object, with strict rules which govern the formation of concepts" (http://www.michel-foucault.com/concepts/index.html), that prevails. From the example of Nathan Lammockson and his Ark Three alone one may infer that power may also be exercised through regulations and discipline.[11] As Foucault posits, in order to institute control, one has to take advantage of four basic techniques of discipline: (1) "the spatial distribution of individuals," (2) "the control of activities for the purpose of those … that are useful to society and discouraging [the] counterproductive [ones]," (3) "the organization of training into discrete segments" and (4) "the coordination of all parts" (Latham 2004: 136–137).

[7] Darko Suvin's concept introduced first in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979).

[8] As opposed to Darko Suvin's *cognitive estrangement*.

[9] Another preferable designation would be *subjugated knowledges*.

[10] Or it is, as Elden and Crampton in the Introduction to *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography* choose to call it, "irredeemably defeatist in that power is seen as everywhere" (Crampton and Elden 2007: 9). What is also discredited is the absence of absolute morality in Foucault's philosophy.

[11] Eventually, both practices lead to the subjectification of an individual.

1. Between knowledge and belief

One may ask how in *Flood* the dialogue between knowledge and belief intensifies commensurately with the speed with which the floodwaters erase the continents from the map. From the very outset (2016), the existence of individuals becomes dependent on water that "lay everywhere" (Baxter, 16). Not only does this wet ubiquity entail daily news reports but it also leads to a rapid rise in the popularity of climate science and causes "words like 'browser' and 'sewage' and 'triage' [to be] far more important than 'e-mail' and 'plane' and 'Angel'" (Baxter, 108). No sooner do people adjust their everyday discourse to the new circumstances than they are forced to relocate and take refuge in shoddy camps or tent cities. Deprived of their property and dignity, they gradually sink in spirit, which incites Lily to reflect that "everybody on the planet was tired … And there was no end in sight" (Baxter, 162). Just as "the water is [turning] filth[ier], mud[dier]" and then "darker and hotter" (Baxter, 95, 234), so are the souls of the exasperated and exhausted victims of the flood being filled with increasing frustration. As the global flooding progresses, "wars [are] triggered over fresh water and dry land" (Baxter, 136), and some countries, like India and Tibet, revert to slavery ("here the farming of people is systematic" [Baxter, 447]). Apparently "mankind was back in the days of the Old Testament" (Baxter, 373). So volatile and corrupt a landscape may possibly provide fertile ground for an emotive debate over the roots of the calamity.

Regardless of whose hypotheses radiate most veracity, all the characters in *Flood* are driven by one prevalent need: to understand and rationalise the situation they face. If at first most people trivialise the first signs of the flood, for instance, by subscribing jokingly to the belief that "it's all down to the Chinese" (Baxter, 20), later they choose to stick trustfully to the governmental predictions which, as Thandie says, follow "the old climate … change forecast models" (Baxter, 39). Needless to say, in the course of the story both above-mentioned stances are rendered harmful. The knowledge of the conservative IPCC, anchored in "a 1960s design based on 1960s assumptions about future flood event possibilities" (Baxter, 60), proves terribly outdated. Even worse, enslaved by old paradigms, the old climatologists contemptuously reject any alternative voices which undermine their own hypotheses. An example of such marginalised knowledge is that of Thandie's. Outlandish as her assumptions may appear at first, Thandie is in possession of hard data that the abrupt surge of water stems neither from global warming nor from glaciers melting; rather, it is a consequence of "water bubbling up from the interior of the Earth … a subterreanean sea" (Baxter, 156). Inevitably, this significant split among the scientists and the relative inability of science to ameliorate the living conditions of humanity provoke eruptions of contentious beliefs. Stirring old animosities from the past, Lone Elk confides to Thandie that "many of [his] family believe that this too, the flood, is the fault of the whites — if they had stayed at home, none of it would

have happened" (Baxter, 294). On the other hand, others blame the Earth itself for the disaster. On the border between knowledge and belief, some of the characters in *Flood*, Piers, Lily and Nathan in particular, frequently evoke the Gaia theory, being clearly convinced of the relevance of the biblical verses: "our generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the Earth abideth for ever" (Baxter, 531). Having compared our planet to "a dog shaking off a flea," they think that from time to time Gaia has to create "a whole new equilibrium" (Baxter, 250, 531).

Confronted with this hotchpotch of ideologies, one cannot tell which one Baxter himself espouses. What one takes for granted is the author's apolitical stance and his "contempt for bureaucrats" (Cramer 2003: 194), the latter actually manifesting itself in Baxter's explicitly negative judgement of the orthodoxy and duplicity of the IPCC[12] and its inability to accept alternate perspectives. Baxter's work emanates an air of plurality. In the Afterword to *Flood*, the reader learns that the whole story is premised on some research papers. As Baxter reveals, they all give evidence that "the mantle, the deep rock layers of Earth's structure, may indeed contain loads of water that would dwarf the existing ocean" (Baxter, 538). But then, as if not to rule out any other possibilities, Baxter abandons the controversial theory of water underlying the crust of the Earth to ultimately invoke Lovelock's *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* and some excerpts from the King James Bible.

2. Searching for hope

Whether motivated by knowledge or belief, one pervasive desire emerges that unites all, be it scientists or laymen: to survive the flood. Hence, Baxter's *Flood* portrays a search for hope in the face of the apocalypse. Thandie, having sardonically distinguished between "the dour moralistic Russian versus the cut-the-crap American" (Baxter, 227), may have unconsciously demarcated two modes of hope. In this implicit allusion to the Cold War era, she may be referring to the perennial conflict between Russian romanticism and American pragmatism.

In the beginning, before the flood advances beyond human control, American pragmatism seems to triumph over Russian romanticism. In an attempt to fight the fledgeling manifestations of the disaster, the struggle is initially confined to conventional measures, like flood-resilient sandbags. The more the flood accelerates, the more powerful are the strategies that come into play. Take, for instance, the endeavours of the US, where "massive investment was being mobilised in flood defences and relief programmes and the great translocation to the new model cities in the north" (Baxter, 170). One cannot help but be overawed by the steadfast determination with which, against all odds, the Americans resurrect and

[12] It is worth noticing that at the same time Baxter disproves Ballard's hypothesis elucidated in *The Drowned World*, according to which the world becomes flooded due to excessive solar radiation resulting in the melting of ice.

reinforce the hope of the American Dream, "by building again, by continuing" (Baxter, 164). On the level of the individual, comparable tenacity is exhibited by Thandie. As a thoroughbred climate scientist, she remains immersed in study and exploration ("All in the name of science" [Baxter, 57]), no matter how hard harsh reality dashes her dreams of academic renown. In a similar way Lily, a scientist who is less fanatical but equally desperate to survive, ultimately turns, despite her initial scepticism, decidedly towards science, the only domain which enables her to extract energy from the water and, in doing so, to rekindle hope for "the ultimate defiance of the flood" (Baxter, 423). Representing moderate pragmatism, her tenets may serve as grounds for a compromise between Nathan and Juan Villages, Lily's sister's third husband. The former, clearly a technocrat, underscores the need for constant technological advancement with the help of "people. Engineers, biologists, doctors. Visionaries to drive forward the great project of independence." The latter, with the down-to-earth assertion that "we can't eat vision. Dreams don't float," discredits Nathan's stance in favour of elemental needs, such as "fresh, land-grown vegetables" (Baxter, 432).

Only when Lily observes that "nobody wants to move again," a blatant symptom of "psychological collapse" (Baxter, 254), the romantic mode of hope begins to supersede the pragmatic one. Predictably, overwhelmed by the size and irreversibility of the catastrophe, some people retreat to religion. While a few find comfort in faith (by joining groups of fundamentalists, such as the Third Templars), most of the believers follow the exhortations of the Christian Church for "ethical and material banking for the vast efforts being mobilised around the world" (Baxter, 241). If, by and large, the sense of the impending apocalypse reinforces a collective search for spiritual hope, on a more individual level it stimulates a desire for physical and mental proximity between individuals. Amanda and her daughter Kristie, for example, in their efforts to ignore the disaster, decide to establish relationships[13] in the Andes. However, their marital choices of men on opposite ideological sides make their mother-daughter relation degenerate into violent mutual aversion. In a desperate attempt to prevent the disintegration of her family, Lily strives to mediate between her sister and niece. Faced with failure, she eventually attaches herself to Piers, the man for whom she feels no other affection than friendship. In the course of the book, one notices that this need for attachment can be ascribed to all the characters without fail, be it the narcissistic Nathan and his rebellious son Hammond,[14] the dour moralistic Elena and her cut-the-crap partner Thandie, or Gary and Grace, his flood foster child.

[13] Indeed, such an attitude, pretending that nothing has changed in fact, is adopted by most survivors in *Flood*. As Gary notes when describing Walker City, a city of pilgrims, "and for most people life means having kids … We have chaplains in every denomination, and imams and rabbis. We help each other, we bury our dead, we care for our children" (Baxter, 330).

[14] At the very outset of the story, Nathan confesses, "Everything I do, I do for him (Hammond)" (Baxter, 48).

3. Finding hope in people

As hinted above, certain characters in *Flood* may be perceived as embodiments of hope, whereas in the original, biblical myth of Noah, it is Noah alone who brings hope to humanity. In its 21st century reinterpretation, this function can be assigned to at least three protagonists: Nathan Lammockson, Thandie Jones and Lily Brooke. Although they represent one longing, nevertheless, these three figures exemplify three different and divergent discourses in the mediation between knowledge and belief — that of pragmatic idealism (Nathan), scientific rationalism (Thandie) and balanced scepticism (Lily).

Throughout the novel, Nathan acts as a saviour of humanity, arguably a postmodern equivalent of Noah. He is portrayed as a "short, … hefty … third generation immigrant from Uganda [and] a wealthy Bizantine," wearing "a heavy overcoat of what looked like fake fur, finely tailored, very expensive" (Baxter, 46–47, 142). Effeminate in appearance, he by no means matches the stereotypical image of a superhero. Exuding complacency, selfishness and "calculated self-interest" (Baxter, 250) rather than altruism, he also engenders mixed feelings among other characters. The conviction that "we need big thinkers like Nathan, [endowed] with the decisiveness and resources to make things happen fast" (Baxter, 187, 313) intermingles with statements questioning Nathan's grandeur: "Old Nathan likes to splash cash where it will do some good, especially if it's visible" and despite the fact it is "just another dumb idea of Nathan Lammockson" (Baxter, 118, 230). As soon as the protagonist's techno-utopian Ark Three comes adrift, yet another conflict is sparked in Nathan — that which is located at the frontiers of knowledge and belief. On the one hand, the fact that he intends to master the world through technology and, in doing so, bring hope to humanity accounts for his pragmatic and idealistic side; on the other, both his implicit faith in "old population reductive philosophies and techniques," which inspire him to "appoint 'suicide missionaries' trained to counsel refugees to accept their fate" (Baxter, 373), and his explicit use of biblical symbolism[15] border on scientism.

Undoubtedly, it is owing to Nathan's dualistic nature that he and the noted oceanographer Thandie's paths diverge, despite their prior collaboration. But even Thandie, deeply infatuated with scientific knowledge, at times succumbs to religious rhetoric. In her presentation given to the IPCC, or, as Piers has it, the bunch of "boffins … incapable of accepting authority" (Baxter, 177), she first dispels the myth of melting ice caps to later christen the landlocked oceans and seas she has

[15] In one of the scenes, after the boarding of Ark Three, Nathan allows his prodigal son, who earlier acted against his father, to return 'home' under one condition. Making use of biblical rhetoric, Nathan says to his kneeling son, "before my closest friends here, you must purge yourself, son. I have to hear you apologise, in public, in full" (Baxter, 414).

discovered with "names, like Ziosudra and Utnapishtin and Deucalion, … variants of Noah" (Baxter, 190). Those religious references grate on the ears of her conservative audience. To the bafflement of critics, it is her underrated and contemptuously denounced discourse that in the end most illuminates scientific rationalism. Her persistent and unparalleled belief in empirical evidence ("the first reports of anything new in the world are always shouted down" [Baxter, 61]), combined with her treatment of Ark One as a potent instrument with which to carry out research rather than stir hope (Nathan's Ark Three), may symbolise the unfailing power of scientific enquiry.

Within the ideological frame shaped by the two personages, Nathan and Thandie, Lily's transgressive discourse of balanced scepticism typecasts her in the role of an open-minded observer. For her part, she has no intention of supporting Thandie's outlandish and devastating discovery. As if for fear of causing it actually to happen, Lily apologetically tells the oceanographer, "But I think I hope they're (the IPCC) right, and you're wrong. No offence!" (Baxter, 158). On the other hand, she finds the self-aggrandizement of Nathan, her boss,[16] repellent and disturbingly "obsessive" (Baxter, 313). Critical of both predominant discourses, that of pragmatic idealism and that of scientific rationalism, Lily ultimately falls into the safely indefinite rhetoric of the hypothetical *if*. Although strangely comforting, the frequently recurring "if the waters go down" or "if the sea keeps rising" (Baxter, 114, 333), at the same time sound chilling to the protagonist. Piers' cynicism ("But nowhere will be immune, ultimately," "The worst is yet to come") and Amanda's realism ("People have lost so much they're frightened of losing even more"), which Lily absorbs as an observer, only fuel her perplexity. In this context, only Gary's hope-rejuvenating optimism ("Lily, this is a whole new start for us. We're going to be building a new life" [Baxter, 114, 137, 211, 255]) comes as a relief to her.

4. Finding hope in objects and places

Nathan, Thandie and Lily function as the embodiments of hope. In *Flood*, this unifying feeling is also evoked through an emblematic utility of objects and spaces.

It has already been pointed out that the formation of a concept in scientific discourse requires "a precisely constructed knower and a precisely constructed object" (http://www.michel-foucault.com/concepts/index.html). Granted that the knower, for example Thandie, has already been detected, it is still essential to identify the object. Within the realm of hard science fiction, and Baxter's *Flood* makes no exception here, it comes as no surprise that the credibility of concepts and ideol-

[16] In *Flood*, Lily belongs to the crew of Ark Three. She is in charge of a project designed to extract energy resources from the water.

ogies in scientific discourse is reinforced by means of scientific equipment, that is, by means of symbols "of knowledge that become the insignia" (Goodwin 1994: 606) of scientists. Since the novel abounds with technical devices, the reader becomes acquainted, for example, with "an instrument pod with temperature, pressure and windspeed Ganges [or] a neat little unit with radar and infrared monitors" (Baxter, 58). Additionally, one's understanding of the scope of the disaster is honed by "graphic representations" (Goodwin, 606), such as updated maps which both precede each of the five parts of the story and display, through the gradual erasure of lands, how the flood is advancing. From a different angle, hope may be also accommodated in 'objects of belief.' Consider, for instance, Kirstie's scrapbook and her pink plastic backpack, the items she always keeps close to her, since they represent "a last link to her own deepest past" (Baxter, 416).

If 'objects of belief' ultimately prove resistant to the flood, places symbolizing belief prove otherwise. As humanity witnesses how the Thames Barrier in London ("a monument to man's attempt to control nature"), the Hagia Sophia, the Holy See ("the Holy Father ascending into the air") or the hitherto indestructible higher ground vanish beneath the waves, a need arises to retreat to spaces governed by advanced technological knowledge. Initially, "Mr. Lammockson's floating city" or *The Trieste*, a vessel "capable of reaching [great] depths," and *The Endurance*, "a modern European vessel, with sensors, radar dishes" (Baxter, 44, 143, 146) are either derided as eccentricities or exploited exclusively by scientists. In the next phase, *Flood* portrays the formation of Walker City, "a city on the move, … [inhabited by] okies [who] work in return for lodging and food" (Baxter, 319, 330), and Nathan's Project City in the Andes. With both its spatial segmentation into residential (Silver Zone), wild (Orange Zone) and agricultural (Green Zone) sectors and its self-sufficient internal economy, Project City not only reflects the Foucauldian subjectification of an individual through regulations and discipline but it also heralds the emergence of three heterotopias: Ark One, Ark Three and *the New Jersey*. Clearly, the three 'arks' fulfil at least the first two of Foucault's four rules (the spatial distribution of individuals and the control of their activities) of exercising power through discipline: Ark One — by saving "a small number [of people], selected for their genetic diversity and their skill sets"; Nathan's Ark Three — by creating "a static, high-tech utopia, … [with] gen-eged crops, … a closed world [with] rules to be obeyed, if we are to survive"; and *the New Jersey* — by building a floating platform "for scientists like Thandie, oceanographers and climatologists and biologists studying the fast-changing world [and] even historians and anthropologists recording what was becoming of the remnants of mankind" (Baxter, 410, 468, 500). More importantly, each of them brings hope: for the revival of humanity on another planet (Ark One); for the ultimate defeat of the flood (Ark Three); and for the preservation of humanity's legacy (*the New Jersey*).

5. The birth of a new generation

At this point, when only hope for a brighter, drier future remains, the apocalyptic *Flood* turns into a post-apocalypse. In the course of this generic transformation, it leaves the reader with a number of unresolved questions and opens itself to a wide spectrum of speculation. The Earth, now passing into the Hydrocene era, is to be ruled by fisher folk, a community "born a decade or more after the flood had begun," "the youngest of whom had never set foot on dry land" (Baxter, 427, 457). In the meantime, the pre-flood generation, almost entirely extinct and concerned lest their descendants fall into collective amnesia, strive to inculcate in their aquatic children the importance of preserving the long legacy of humanity. Together with a new beginning, the question arises as to whether there will still be humanity on Earth or whether a new ecosystem will enter *A Door into Ocean*.

6. Conclusion

Baxter's *Flood* uncovers a sequence of spaces of negotiation. Through explicit biblical imagery (utopia, ark, saviour), it mediates between the original myth of Noah and its numerous contemporary re-interpretations. As a work of *hard science fiction*, in the first place, it seeks to demarcate a clear-cut distinction between fact and fiction; it simultaneously attempts to transgress and deconstruct the paradigm of dominant masculinity firmly embedded in the tradition of the genre by foregrounding a feminine narrative voice (Lily) and employing a female character (Thandie) as the leading scientist in the novel. The latter observation, it seems, may indicate that Baxter crosses the restrictive boundaries of Foucault's power/knowledge interplay in order to stress the importance of bringing formerly subjugated knowledge to the centre of attention. Admittedly, this coincides with yet another premise that underlies *Flood* — its espousal of alternative voices at the expense of mainstream ones. Even in the context of today's world, however pluralistic, Baxter's scientifically founded extrapolation would be automatically discarded as erroneous. Finally and most importantly, *Flood* encompasses a space of negotiation between knowledge and belief. In view of the above considerations, it appears that neither of the two prevails. Rather, both categories complement one another to, ultimately, be integrated into a domain of hope. With regard to hope, the paper hints at two issues. Firstly, in *Flood* this category is multidimensional, since it is suspended between different modes (romanticism vs. pragmatism) and discursive models (pragmatic idealism, scientific rationalism and balanced scepticism). Secondly, this paper defines hope as a complex discourse, rather than a mere category. It can be imposed on others spatially, through discipline, and by means of scientific instruments.

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