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# The Speculative Storyworld of Emmi Itäranta's Novel *The Moonday Letters* (2020): a Rhetorical Approach

Master thesis

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# ABSTRACT

This MA thesis explores how a work of speculative fiction aims at changing the reader's outlook on the actual world and its environments. An attempt to approach a speculative novel with environmental questions in mind and an interest in readerly response invites theoretical premises of the rhetorical theory of narrative, econarratology, and an inquiry into speculative fiction as a genre. The object of analysis is Finnish author Emmi Itäranta's novel *The Moonday Letters* (2020). By focusing on the mimetic, synthetic and thematic components of the narrative, the present thesis examines the epistolary form, self-reflexive present-tense narration, and lyrical descriptions alongside the content of the novel's storyworld. The analysis suggests that the reader is simultaneously prompted to inhabit Itäranta's speculative storyworld and to reflect on the ideas and themes articulated. With the loss of home as its thematic center, the novel is imbued with nostalgia which potentially directs the reader toward the Earth in its current state.

**Keywords**: rhetorical theory of narrative, econarratology, storyworld, speculative fiction, Itäranta.

# ANOTACIJA

Šiame magistro darbe keliamas klausimas, kokiais būdais spekuliatyviosios grožinės literatūros kūrinys siekia pakeisti skaitytojo požiūrį į tikrąjį pasaulį ir gamtinę aplinką. Pasitelkiant James'o Phelan'o retorinę naratologiją bei derinant ją su Erin'os James'ės ekonaratologija ir Hanna-Riikka'os Roine'ės įžvalgomis apie spekuliatyviąją grožinę literatūrą, šis klausimas svarstomas analizuojant suomių rašytojos Emmi'ės Itäranta'os romaną „Kuunpäivän kirjeet" (2020), kuris nukelia į ateitį – Žemė nuniokota, žmonės įsikūrę kituose Saulės sistemos kūnuose. Pasakojamojo pasaulio turinys bei kūrinio struktūra analizuojami nagrinėjant mimetinio, sintetinio bei teminio pasakojimo komponentų sąveiką. Darbu parodoma, kad skaitytojas yra kviečiamas ir pasinerti į kūrinio pasaulį, ir pastebėti jo dirbtinumą; taip į pirmą planą iškyla kūrinyje gvildenamos ir jo sąrangą veikiančios temos. Romano teminis centras – namų netektis. Pasakojimą persmelkusi nostalgija gali kreipti skaitytojo žvilgsnį link Žemės ir dabartinės jos būklės.

**Raktiniai žodžiai**: retorinė naratologija, ekonaratologija, pasakojamasis pasaulis, spekuliatyvioji grožinė literatūra, Itäranta.

# SUMMARY

In the face of the progressing climate catastrophe, how do works of speculative fiction aim at raising environmental awareness? This MA thesis takes Emmi Itäranta's speculative epistolary novel *Kuunpäivän kirjeet* [*The Moonday Letters]* (2020) as its object and inquires the means by which it proposes more nature-conscious behaviors.

Firstly, this MA thesis lays out theoretical premises grounding the argument that works of speculative fiction are able to affect their readers' outlook and reorient them toward real environments. James Phelan's rhetorical approach is put into dialogue with Erin James' econarratology and Finnish scholar Hanna-Riikka Roine's insights on speculative fiction and double perspective inherent to it. In the light of this theoretical framework, a work of speculative fiction can be analyzed with environmental questions in mind by attending to the dynamic between the mimetic ("as real as"), the synthetic ("a construct") and the thematic ("about this") components of the narrative. When double perspective is entailed for the readers—the narrative both creates a mimetic illusion facilitating the readers' immersion into its storyworld as well as dispels this illusion by making the readers aware of its artificiality, then the readers are prompted to reflect on the themes and ideas explored in the narrative.

The suggested model is applied, first, in analysis of narrative form of *The Moonday Letters*. This MA thesis argues that the rhetorical outlook-transforming potential of the novel stems in-part from the epistolary form of the narrative and techniques (self-reflexive present-tense narration, lyrical descriptions) that allow Itäranta to construct a speculative narrative that projects an immersive storyworld while simultaneously making the readers reflect on the fact that they are engaging with a work of speculative fiction. This way the articulated themes and ideas are foregrounded. The following analysis of the content (events, characters, environments) of Itäranta's speculative storyworld includes an investigation of narrative progression; discussing the environment-orienting ideas and themes developed throughout the narrative; examining what brings out double perspective on a smaller to put them forward.

The speculative storyworld made available for the readers' experience presents a future in which various present-day issues are amplified, the Earth is devastated and humans have colonized the solar system. Providing the readers with an experience of such a storyworld constructed by embodying environmental concerns is one of the ways how the narrative provokes a reflection on present-day environmental issues. Such a reflection is also empowered by narrative progression. The effect of suspense directs the readers

toward an ethically demanding open end that calls for a re-evaluation of personal values. What is more, environment-orienting ideas are voiced directly by the characters, put forward in fictional documents that are a part of the novel, and even enacted in the narrative. Some of the themes and ideas explored in the novel are absence, memory, and loss of home. The latter is the thematic center of the novel. It rules over both the narrative form and the content of the world Itäranta creates. An immediate consequence of thematizing loss of home is nostalgia, and this MA thesis proposes that imbuing a narrative with longing for a lost home is a powerful means of changing the readers' outlook on the actual world, especially the Earth—the only home to which globally destructive behaviors pose a threat.

The novelty of the present thesis lies not only in its object, but also in the unique combination of theoretical approaches. Such novel perspectives to literature as the environmentally-recentered rhetorical approach and especially the model suggested in this thesis for approaching the nature-orienting rhetoric of speculative fiction are essential in dealing with contemporary literary works, especially those that are directly related to the topicalities of the present, because they offer tools to effectively account for the changing cultural paradigm that engenders new literary forms aimed at understanding it.

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# INTRODUCTION

The present MA thesis aims at exploring the means by which a work of speculative fiction aims at affecting its readers, changing their outlook on the actual world and its environments. To define the question further, a particular work of speculative fiction is selected. Building on a general premise that this work puts forward questions and touches on themes related to climate change, Emmi Itäranta's speculative novel *Kuunpäivän kirjeet* [*The Moonday Letters*] (2020) is taken as the object of analysis.

In the face of the progressing climate catastrophe, questions such as whether and how literature can "say something worthwhile about environmental issues"[1] and the following examination of "the organization of time and space, characterization, focalization, description and narration" as the various ways that narratives influence how their readers "perceive and interact with ecological homes,"[2] have become increasingly persistent concerns in literary theory. This interest corresponds to the burgeoning works of fiction that in some way touch upon climate change and other issues that stem from it. Such speculative and realist works are often subsumed under a genre category of climate fiction (cli-fi), which indicates the common focus on climate change and concerns the challenges of representing the almost incomprehensibly vast climate catastrophe and its multifarious implications. Although climate change and its consequences on both the actual world and literature are essential components of this this MA thesis, it is less concerned with questions of genre and representation and is instead centered on the workings and potential effects of narratives as communicative acts that have the power to affect real readers and so tackle urgent present-day issues.

Focusing on an environmentally inflected work, interested in potentially nature-orienting themes, the difficult questions related to climate change that literature explores, and how authors aim at directing their readers' gaze toward the Earth in its current state, this thesis contributes to recent discussions of environmental humanities, namely its more form-focused branch. Emerging approaches to literature such as econarratology endeavor to bring narrative theory into conversation with the actual world and its environments. The

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[1] Markku Lehtimäki, "Narrative Communication in Environmental Fiction. Cognitive and Rhetorical Approaches," in *Routledge Handbook of Ecocriticism and Environmental Communication*, ed. Swarnalatha Rangarajan, Scott Slovic, and Vidya Sarveswaran, 1st Edition (London: Routledge, 2019), 92.

[2] Erin James and Eric Morel. "Notes Toward New Econarratologies." In *Environment and Narrative: New Directions in Econarratology*, edited by Erin James and Eric Morel, 1–26. Theory and Interpretation of Narrative. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2020, 1.

author of *The Storyworld Accord* (2015), American scholar Erin James, is considered the pioneer of econarratology. However, akin to and even preceding her interests and working towards bridging the gap between text-oriented narratology and world-oriented ecocriticism is Finnish scholar Markku Lehtimäki. His essays[3] in which he theoretically and practically joins broader ecocritical perspective and rhetorical analysis of narratives to "read the rhetoric of climate change in [realist] fiction"[4] have greatly inspired this MA thesis. However, the interest of the present thesis lies primarily in speculative fiction. This vast genre more and more frequently explores climate change and other topical issues because its imaginative quality, as argued by scholars,[5] among other things, allows authors to "transform abstract scientific information into understandable and relatable "human-sized" narratives,"[6] create both gloomy, often straightforwardly cautionary visions of the future as well as hopeful scenarios that help readers "imagine a way forward."[7]

The focus of this MA thesis is twofold. Firstly, it is concerned with theoretical questions related to the workings of speculative fiction in relation to the actual world and its environments. Because speculative fiction is highly imaginative and "non-mimetic," can it be claimed that such works can affect the readers' outlook on real nature? Lehtimäki's argument that rhetorical narratology can work as a bridge between the actual world and literature because it treats narratives as authors' "ways of communicating ideas to the [readers] through specific textual designs"[8] works as the starting point of the present thesis. James Phelan's rhetorical theory of narrative is put in dialogue with Erin James'

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[3] See Markku Lehtimäki, "Natural Environments in Narrative Contexts: Cross-Pollinating Ecocriticism and Narrative Theory," *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 5 (2013): 119–41; Lehtimäki, "Narrative Communication in Environmental Fiction. Cognitive and Rhetorical Approaches," in *Routledge Handbook of Ecocriticism and Environmental Communication*, ed. Swarnalatha Rangarajan, Scott Slovic, and Vidya Sarveswaran, 1st Edition (London: Routledge, 2019), 84–97; 3) Lehtimäki, "A Comedy of Survival: Narrative Progression and the Rhetoric of Climate Change in Ian McEwan's Solar," in *Environment and Narrative: New Directions in Econarratology*, ed. Erin James and Eric Morel (The Ohio State University Press, 2020), 87–105.

[4] Lehtimäki, "The Rhetoric of Climate Change," 89.

[5] Juha Raipola, "What Is Speculative Climate Fiction?," *Fafnir - Nordic Journal of Scienfe Fiction and Fantasy Research* 6, no. 2 (2019): 7–10; Gebauer, Carolin. "Dreading the Future. The Ethical Implications of Contemporary Speculative Fiction." Diegesis 9, no. 1 (2020): 20–39; Marek Oziewicz, "Fantasy for the Anthropocene: On the Ecocidal Unconscious, Planetarism, and Imagination of Biocentric Futures," in *Fantasy and Myth in the Anthropocene: Imagining Futures and Dreaming Hope in Literature and Media*, ed. Brian Attebery, Tereza Dědinová, and Marek Oziewicz (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 107–125.

[6] Raipola, "What Is Speculative Climate Fiction?," 8.

[7] Oziewicz, "Fantasy for the Anthropocene," 108.

[8] Lehtimäki, "Narrative Communication in Environmental Fiction," 92–93.

econarratology and Finnish scholar Hanna-Riikka Roine's insights on speculative fiction to argue that such works are a powerful means for authors to explore themes and set forth ideas that can affect readers and thus encourage more nature-conscious real-life behaviors. However, it is essential to note that works of fiction are not handled as mere instruments for didactic environmentalism. From the rhetorical perspective (as furthered by Phelan), a narrative's aesthetic qualities are a crucial factor that determines its power to both inform and affect—to have aesthetical, emotional and ethical influence. This influence exerted by language, structure, form, imagery, focalization, character, voice, intertextuality, genre conventions and etc.[9] Inviting to investigate the ways in which "literary forms can encode environmental meaning" alongside with "the effect that meaning can have on readers,"[10] James' econarratology goes hand in hand with the rhetorical theory of narrative. Both approaches negotiate between the text and the reader, highlighting the importance of the reading process and acknowledging the capacity of works of fiction to inform and affect. These approaches examine both narrative form and content as well as the context, allowing a comprehensive literary analysis with increasingly relevant environmental questions in mind. Central to this thesis is the concept of storyworld (the world evoked by a narrative), which Erin James' econarratology advances toward the field of nature-oriented literary studies to maintain that coming into contact with alternative environments encourages more conscious treatment of one's own surroundings. Accordingly, developed throughout the theoretical discussion is a notion that even seemingly far-from-real speculative storyworlds that envision the future or open up experiences of wholly different worlds, are effective means of raising real-life environmental awareness.

Secondly, the present MA thesis deals with a particular work of speculative fiction—Emmi Itäranta's third novel *The Moonday Letters* (henceforth *KK*), and its storyworld. Itäranta (b. 1976) is a Finnish author who writes simultaneously in English and Finnish and declares this to be her distinct writing and editing strategy.[11] Several notable

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[9] Phelan, "Rhetoric, Ethics, And Narrative Communication," 70; James Phelan, "Introduction. Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Experience of Narrative," 4–13. Matthew Clark and James Phelan, *Debating Rhetorical Narratology: On the Synthetic, Mimetic, and Thematic Aspects of Narrative*, Theory and Interpretation of Narrative (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2020), 19–22.

[10] Erin James, *The Storyworld Accord: Econarratology and Postcolonial Narratives*, Frontiers of Narrative (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 29.

[11] "Throughout my writing process, I think in Finnish and English both, and the awareness of this interaction between the two languages shapes the end result. It influences my word choices, phrasings, the rhythm and flow of the sentences. My books would be different if I wrote them in one language instead of two." Pasi Karppanen, "Conquering the World as a Finnish Author. Marko Hautala and Emmi Itäranta Interviewed," *Spin*, 2017, 7.

traits characterize all three of Itäranta's novels: narrative-technique-wise—autodiegetic narration and lyricality; concerning the content—female character duos[12] and protagonists' particularized attention-grabbing occupations (respectively, tea master and water guardian, weaver, healer). The novels are all standalone pieces in which the author explores a variety of themes, but notable is the recurrent focus on agency, memory, environment, and environmental issues. Her breakthrough novel *Teemestarin kirja* (2012) (published in English in 2014 as *Memory of Water*) is set in a dystopian future where the world is running out of freshwater resources and so this novel is often studied as a salient example of cli-fi.[13] In 2015 it was followed by *Kudottujen kujien kaupunki* (UK edition *The City of Woven Streets* (2016), US edition—*The Weaver* (2016)) which follows the protagonist's struggle to break free from an all-controlling totalitarian government. Contrary to the first two dystopian novels set in limited spaces (rural village, island) controlled by totalitarian governments, Itäranta's third novel traces the experiences of a travelling protagonist—in search for her missing spouse Sol Uriarte, Earth-born healer Lumi Salo both travels the solar system and "walk[s] on the paths of the past, moving memories around."[14] Featuring elements of both fantasy and sci-fi or, more particularly, space opera, and promoted as an environmental thriller, *KK* presents the reader with a future in which the Earth is devastated and humans have colonized the solar system.

This MA thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter introduces the underlying terms and concepts employed in the analysis. It then lays out basic theoretical assumptions grounding the claim that works of speculative fiction have the power to affect real readers and their outlook on the actual world. Furthermore, it suggests how this can be accounted for—by discussing the interplay between the synthetic, mimetic and thematic

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[12] Although *KK* involves a character duo, Lumi's spouse is not a female, but identifies as non-binary person who goes by the gender-neutral pronoun *they*. Finnish language has only one gender and gender pronoun *hän*, but this is relevant not only for the English version—gender neutrality and the issue of pronouns are drawn attention to by the text itself: Lumi introduces Sol as a person who "käyttää sukupuolineutraaleja nimikkeitä ja pronominia *they*" [uses gender neutral labels and the pronoun *they*]. Questions related to the implications of the non-heterosexual relationship dynamic represented in this novel are not explored in the present thesis.

[13] See, for example, Fatma Aykanat, "Mnemonic Agency of Water in the Anthropocene: Material and Discursive Entanglements in Emmi Itäranta's Dystopian Cli-Fi Novel Memory of Water," *MCBÜ* 16, no. 1/2 (May 2018): 1–26; Tuuli Janhunen, "'Eivät Hekään Ajatelleet Meitä.' Emmi Itärannan Teemestarin Kirja Ekodystopiana" (MA, Tampere University, 2019); Raipola, "What Is Speculative Climate Fiction?," 7–10.

[14] Emmi Itäranta, *Kuunpäivän Kirjeet* (Teos, 2020), 118. Here and onwards, the quotes are provided from the to-be-published English version of the novel (Titan Books, July 2022), but the page numbers refer to the Finnish version published in 2020. The translation is made by the author Emmi Itäranta herself who kindly agreed to share the unpublished English manuscript with the author of this MA thesis and gave a permission to quote it here.

components of narratives—a model proposed by Phelan[15] which in the present thesis is developed by incorporating Roine's insights on the workings and rhetoric of speculative fiction. The model is used to discuss the form of Itäranta's speculative narrative, its storyworld, and themes and ideas. The two other chapters are dedicated to an in-depth analysis of Itäranta's novel that is meant to single out how nature-conscious real-life behaviors are proposed. The rhetorical outlook-transforming potential of *KK* is analyzed from two angles. The second chapter investigates the form and techniques of Itäranta's narrative (epistolary form, autodiegetic self-reflexive present-tense narration and lyrical descriptions) and argues that the rhetorical potential of this purposive textual design has to do with what Roine calls double perspective: immersing into a mimetic illusion of a world while simultaneously reflecting on the narrative's artificiality. The third chapter continues this discussion by investigating the content (events, characters, and environments) of the speculative storyworld—the future world that the reader inhabits during the process of reading. The chapter also deals with ideas and themes the novel explores, linking them to the environmental concerns Itäranta puts forward through her narrative. The following research questions have been framed for analyzing the novel:

1) How is the storyworld of *KK* constructed in terms of narrative form? What techniques facilitate the reader's immersion into the storyworld and what raises awareness of the artificiality of the narrative?

Then, maintaining that simultaneous reflection on the artificiality of narrative and immersion into its storyworld can enact a change in the reader's outlook toward the actual world and its natural environments:

2) In terms of content, what kind of a storyworld is inhabited by the reader during the process of reading?

3) What themes and ideas related to the environment are explored in the novel?

The novelty of this MA thesis lies, firstly and on a smaller scale, in its consideration of *KK*, because it is the first in-depth analysis of the novel. Currently, the only inquiry is Kaisa Kortekallio's brief review. She touches upon the content of the narrative and its environmental concerns and mentions the lyrical quality of narrative

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[15] Such a trifold model was first introduced in *Reading People, Reading Plots* (1989), where it was proposed to examine the roles of characters as literary elements. This rhetorical theory of character was further developed to discuss narratives in general. The model was recently brushed up in joint efforts of Phelan and Matthew Clark in *Debating Rhetorical Narratology: On the Synthetic, Mimetic, and Thematic Aspects of Narrative* (2020).

characteristic in all of Itäranta's works.[16] Furthermore, in its broader concern with the environment and the communicative designs of speculative fiction, the present thesis can be seen not only as an input into literary research regarding the works of Emmi Itäranta, but also as a contribution to the research of contemporary speculative fiction. The rhetorical perspective in dialogue with econarratology and the concept of storyworld is a promising approach to the novel in question, but this theoretical framework could also be applied when exploring other works of speculative fiction with its various manifestations and modifications, especially those that touch upon the increasingly relevant environmental questions. Lastly, generous attention to novel theoretical approaches is meant as a modest contribution to the actualization and circulation of the postclassical theory of narrative in Lithuania, whose academic field is very much dominated by the so-called classical narratology.

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[16] Kaisa Kortekallio, "Maan Maankaltaistamisesta," *Elonkehä: Syväekologinen Kulttuurilehti*, 2020, 48–49.

# 1. Theoretical Framework

## 1.1. Rhetorical Theory of Narrative

This MA thesis takes a rhetorical approach to literature, the central idea of which is that any work of fiction is a rhetorical exchange between author and reader. Narrative is seen not as a well-ordered sign system that is detached from the real world in which its reader operates, but as a "purposive communicative act"[17] by which an author conveys ideas, values, and knowledge to her reader.[18]

Having emerged in the second half of the 20th century as a reaction to New Criticism that tends to center on the work and undermine the role of the reader, rhetorical approach looks into the insides of a work while simultaneously calling attention to its author and reader.[19] Further working on the theoretical foundation laid by distinguished American scholar Wanes C. Booth (*The Rhetoric of Fiction,* 1961), third generation representative of the neo-Aristotelian Chicago School, exponent of rhetorical narratology James Phelan thus summarizes the core principle of this approach: "narrative is not just story but also action, *the telling of a story by someone to someone on some occasion for some purpose* [emphasis in original]."[20] In his wide-ranging works, Phelan puts forward a view that narrative is *rhetoric*, which comes to stand for the complex interrelations between three components: "authorial agency, textual phenomena, and reader response."[21] By this he means to emphasize that not only do authors use tropes or devices when designing their narratives in an effort to persuade, but that narratives are themselves means of effectual, affective communication geared toward fulfilling some purpose. *Purpose* for whose accomplishment the author makes use of "various means at [her] disposal,"[22] refers to reasons determining why a particular narrative is designed in a particular way, those

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[17] James Phelan, "Rhetoric/Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 203.

[18] Here and onwards, both the "the reader" and "the author" will be referred to using the pronoun "she" because "he/she" or "they" common in academic contexts are rather cumbersome.

[19] Wilfred L. Guerin, ed., "The Rhetorical Approach," in *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, 3rd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 281–82.

[20] Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric*, 8, 19.

[21] Ibid. 19.

[22] Phelan, "Rhetoric, Ethics, And Narrative Communication," 56.

reasons being as numerous and varied as works of literature. Regardless, underlying Phelan's works is the idea that all of them communicate values, ideas, a certain knowledge about human experience and possible ways of being in the world.[23]

Rhetorical theory of narrative is a branch of postclassical narratology[24] which both draws on and moves away from classical narratology informed by structural linguistics. To compare with Gerard Genette's narratology, which is also called narrative rhetoric because it explores the various ways in which information can be organized when being transmitted by a narrator (the teller of the within the text) to a narratee (audience within the text that this act of (re)telling of a story directly or indirectly addresses),[25]—*author* is also brought into play. This adds another layer to the abovementioned transaction, where then "the narrator's telling is part of the author's construction of the whole narrative."[26] Phelan's approach does not concern the real author in her entirety, but some version of her as a creative instance writing in a historical moment that is reconstructible from the sum of her creative choices.[27] In essence, *author* is an extratextual category who's communication is mediated by in-text means: narrators, characters, the overall shaping of the narrative; this author is addressing and wishing to affect the real reader in her historical moment.[28] Similar but not wholly corresponding to Booth's *implied author*, Phelan's *author,* as he uses the term throughout his works, has little to do with predetermining the responses of readers; since his view leans on the triangular model of rhetorical dynamic, instead of appealing to *authorial intention*, i.e., exactly what the author wanted to convey, he acknowledges readers' varying reactions, interpretations and judgments that are influenced by their "cognition, emotions, desires, hopes, values, and beliefs,"[29] but notes that reader

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[23] Phelan, "Rhetoric, Ethics, And Narrative Communication," 56.

[24] Postclassical narratology is a term first introduced in 1990 by David Herman. It marks the developments underwent by so-called classical (structuralist) theory of narrative and encompasses all contemporary branches of narratology that open the text to the extratextual world and take the reader into account: feminist, cognitive, postcolonial and econarratology etc. See James Phelan, "Principles of Rhetorical Poetics," in *Somebody Telling Somebody Else: A Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative,* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2017), 3.

[25] See Nijolė Keršytė, "Naratyvinė retorika G. Genette'o naratologijoje," in Pasakojimo pramanai (Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2016), 151–62, 365–66. Term translated according to Nijolė Keršytė, "Naratyvinė retorika," Avantekstas: Lietuviškų literatūros mokslo terminų žodynas, Vilniaus universitetas, http://www.avantekstas.flf.vu.lt/lt/retorika+–+naratyvinė

[26] Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric,* 8.

[27] Phelan, "Rhetoric, Ethics, And Narrative Communication," 68–69.

[28] For his model of the dynamics of narrative communication that takes in three interrelated channels of mediated communication and asserts that the implied author is addressing the real reader, see Phelan, "Rhetoric, Ethics, And Narrative Communication," 64–71.

[29] Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric,* 8.

response takes root in textual phenomena. In the present thesis, *author* (just as the surname of the author in question) stands for the extratextual consciousness responsible for purposeful creation of a specific narrative—for deploying certain in-text resources (various agents of communication and their listeners, language structure, intertexts, etc.) with the purpose of designing a narrative which might affect the real reader.[30]

For Phelan, narratives are complex and multidimensional. In their negotiation between three kinds of components (mimetic—as real as, thematic—about this, synthetic—a construct),[31] and because of mutual author-reader effort, narratives come to have aesthetic and ethical dimensions; that is to say that narrative form as "the particular fashioning of the elements, techniques, and structure of a narrative"[32] is experienced by the reader who is then affected aesthetically, ethically, emotionally. To discuss effects that stem from textual phenomena, Phelan talks about readers' different interests in aforementioned components, as well the interpretative, ethical, and aesthetical judgments readers make throughout the reading process.[33] Process is a key word—Phelan conceives of narratives as dynamic "developing wholes," and to refer to this development, he introduces *progression*, which takes in both "textual dynamics"—telling, or how the events unfold, as well as the dynamics of reader response; discussing *narrative progression* is how Phelan accounts for structuring of plots as causal (their beginnings, middles, and ends), a discussion which is closely related to a consideration of characters, and then with the reader's developing judgment of them as literary elements, as well as judgments of a narrative as a whole.[34] However, *reader* is a term just as complicated as *author*. In this MA thesis, the fact of narrative's "power to evoke a strong response,"[35] to produce feelings and thoughts that depend on its particular fashioning is acknowledged, but the main focus is on textual phenomena—on the in-text causes of effects, though without undermining the importance of the reader, the process of reading, neither of the processual unfolding of a narrative.

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[30] Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric,* 217; Phelan, "Rhetoric, Ethics, And Narrative Communication," 56, 68–71.

[31] To be elaborated under section "Speculative fiction."

[32] James Phelan, "Introduction. Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Experience of Narrative," in *Experiencing Fiction: Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative*, Theory and Interpretation of Narrative (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2007).

[33] Phelan, "Introduction," 3–4, 10–14.

[34] See Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric,* 90–46, 219, Phelan, *Reading People, Reading Plots*, ix, 15, 107–110.

[35] Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric*, 18.

Phelan's approach takes into account all of the following causes: the elements of a story—character, event, setting etc., (analyzed as the content of the storyworld); the "techniques, forms, structures, genres and conventions"—or how the narrative is fashioned to be communicative and create meaning[36] (analyzed as the means for constructing a storyworld). To avoid complicating the question of narrative effects by bringing in all individual readers, this thesis strictly confines its interest to possible or potential effects— how a specific narrative technique, form or a component of the story might affect the reader; this means that the *(external) reader* refers to what Phelan, drawing on Peter J. Rabinowitz's model, calls *ideal reader*— the one "for whom the author constructs the text,"[37] and for whom the narrative effects manifest because she "understands the invitation for engagement that the narrative offers."[38]

Although used rather selectively, the rhetorical approach as formulated by James Phelan is chosen as the theoretical grounding of analysis because it provides insights on the workings of literary works of fiction in terms of their content and form without neglecting the reader. This is the main advantage of the rhetorical approach if compared to classical narratology—it offers insights on how literary works of fiction might produce effects on their readers, or how readers and their outlook can be affected by the narratives they engage with.

## 1.2. Ecocriticism and Econarratology

Phelan marks that conceiving of narrative as a rhetorical transaction opens his approach to the insights of many other approaches and allows to link "questions of techniques and structure to questions of politics and culture."[39] One of the approaches that can be enriched by the tools and interpretative possibilities opened by the rhetorical theory of narrative is ecocriticism, an "earth-centered approach to literary study"[40] concerned with the variety of questions related to nature, culture and the global environmental crisis.

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[36] Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric*, 19.

[37] See Phelan's glossary of terms in *Narrative as Rhetoric*, 215.

[38] Phelan, "Rhetoric/Ethics," 210.

[39] Ibid., 209.

[40] Cheryll Glotfelty, "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis," in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), xviii.

Outlining the field of environmental literary studies is customarily started with a definition of ecocriticism proposed by American scholar Cheryl Glotfelty: "Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment."[41] Tracing its development, Glotfelty notes that in America, ecologically informed criticism began to spring up in the 1970s, some prominent tendencies being the study of literary representations of nature (or subjects like animals, cities, garbage, the body), reconsidering the realist and often scientifically informed genre of nature writing, promoting "environmentally enlightened works [that] manifest ecological awareness," altogether with some theorizing why this can and should be done.[42] This first-wave of ecocriticism, which, as Erin James abridges, favored realist content and endorsed accurate representations of environments that allegedly meant to "draw readers closer to the "real" world and thus encourage them to appreciate better the environment around them."[43] James herself, an American scholar pioneering in connecting ecocriticism with narratology, epitomizes ecocriticism's turn to more formally oriented criticism arguing for the fruitfulness of coupling context-conscious analysis of narrative form (how a particular work is fashioned) with explorations of narrative content (what is represented and what meanings are given to it), and for dealing not only with nonfiction or realist fiction, but also with "unfamiliar, creative […] representations of the physical world and people's experience of it."[44] She advances econarratology as the study which grounds "suggestive and open"[45] ecocriticism in the analysis of "literary structures and devices by which narratives are composed."[46]

The present thesis employs the concept of storyworld which is central to Erin James' econarratology. In brief, storyworld is a world created in and by any work of literary fiction.[47] Storyworlds are projected or created by stories, meaning that they are

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[41] Glotfelty, "Introduction," xviii.

[42] Ibid., xvi–xviii, xxii–xxiv.

[43] James, *The Storyworld Accord*, 4, 12.

[44] Ibid., 26–27.

[45] Glotfelty, "Introduction," xxii.

[46] James, *The Storyworld Accord*, 242.

[47] Not only in literary fiction, but in all kinds of texts. Although the focus of this MA thesis is on a literary text, it is important to note that the concept of storyworld is not limited to literature and literary research; conversely, is used to discuss all media. The formative essay collection is a case in point—Marie-Laure Ryan and Jan-Noël Thon, eds., *Storyworlds across Media: Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*, Frontiers of Narrative (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

dynamic and evolve though narrative progression.[48] More complex than just *story*, this term underscores the fact that temporal sequences of events that make up the plots of narratives inevitably take place somewhere, in particular renderings of space and time. Making use of such foregrounding of the spatial dimension of narratives, in *Storyworld Accord* James works on cognitive narratologists'[49] ideas that through the process of reading, relying on *cues* provided in a text to reconstruct a storyworld, the reader *transports/immerses* herself to a particular configuration of space and time. She claims that this process has the potential to negotiate ecological values and raise environmental awareness, because the reader can experience a world that is in some way different to the one she inhabits.[50] By "different worlds" James seems to refer to many things: to representations of temporally distant sociocultural environments, to historically or culturally-shaped points of view on familiar or unfamiliar, actual or imagined environments that are either reflected in literature (authors' views) or created within it (narrators and/or characters'). This all boils down to an argument that taking up any different viewpoint on the actual world—as it is, was, could, or never could be (an experience which all literature affords), might influence the reader's attitude towards her own immediate surroundings.

*Storyworld* is closely linked with the processes of human mind. One of the most distinct storyworld researchers David Herman defines it as "the world *evoked* by a narrative text," liking storyworld with reading and processual understanding of a narrative, thus putting emphasis on the reader's engagement in forming a "a *mental representation* of who did what to and with whom, when, where, why and in what fashion in the world" [emphases added].[51] This is possible because the reader has experience of actual sociocultural and natural worlds, and she can understand the invented storyworlds, even "non-mimetic" ones by drawing on her own experience and knowledge of the actual

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[48] Marie-Laure Ryan, "Story/Worlds/Media. Tuning the Instruments of a Media-Conscious Narratology," in *Storyworlds Across Media: Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*, ed. Marie-Laure Ryan and Jan-Noël Thon, Frontiers of Narrative (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 32–34.

[49] Cognitive narratology is another branch of postclassical narrative studies. It "studies the human intellectual and emotional processing of narratives to query how narratives and readers interact." See James, *The Storyworld Accord*, 16–22.

[50] James, *The Storyworld Accord*, 19–20, 241–242, 253.

[51] See Glossary in David Herman, ed., The Cambridge Companion to Narrative, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 282.

world.[52] Including *evocation* as a cognitive process means that storyworlds depend on the individual reader, her engagement and interpretation, that in the same way depend on her real life experiences, knowledge, and values.[53] However, the process of evocation has to do with in-text cues that the reader works through in order to (re)construct the storyworld, which means that, although storyworlds depend on the individual process of reading, they can also be approached from the angle of textual phenomena. Emphasizing that storyworlds are partly in-text constructs allows one to put the concept in dialogue with the rhetorical approach. As the author design her texts in some specific ways so that they would be conveying something, meaningful and able to affect,[54] their storyworlds are at least in-part governed by what the author generally aims at communicating, how the narrative is designed, its thematical emphases and the ideas explored through the design in accordance with this purpose.

What is more, storyworlds in themselves are a product of rhetoric, of particular communication. This is recognized by James in her claim that "storyworlds are always mediated by someone (a narrator or focalizing character)."[55] All characters and some narrators are positioned within the storyworld, both in terms of space and time, and they experience, interact with, someway perceive their world, and give accounts of it. The distinctness and implications of mediation varies, of course, depending on narrator's position and its relation to the evens reported. However, no matter if the narrator is also a character within the storyworld, or a nonembodied consciousness who recounts events, the accounts from which storyworlds are reconstructed are more or less subjective; worlds as in-text constructs always come with imbedded meanings. Although clearly an oversimplification, storyworlds, even as evoked mental representations, depend on the point of view of the one to whom the author assigns to give the account, as well as on the

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[52] For example, Marie-Laure Ryan discusses this in proposing *principle of minimal departure*. She argues that since storyworlds are always incomplete, limited by the textual information and thus full of spatial gaps, the reader by default takes the actual world as a prototype and fills the gaps by drawing from her own experience, which means imagining a fictional world and its elements as in all ways corresponding to the actual world unless the text explicitly indicates otherwise. This is the case of understanding all storyworlds— evoked by nonfiction, fiction, speculative fiction etc. (Ryan, "Story/Worlds/Media," 34; James, *The Storyworld Accord*, 20–22, 251–252).

[53] James, *The Storyworld Accord*, 19–22.

[54] This is a paraphrase of Phelan's fundamental statement that "texts are designed by authors in order to affect readers in particular ways." Phelan, "Rhetoric/Ethics," 209.

[55] James, *The Storyworld Accord*, xii.

purposes of the accounts given, which adds to the reader's understanding of the text as a whole.

To put it concisely, literary storyworlds are communicated—experienced by narrators and/or characters and brought forth by their subjective accounts given on some storyworld-internal purpose; and storyworlds are themselves a product of purposive narrative designs made by authors to convey meanings, knowledge, values. They are brought to the reader's mind when she is dealing with literary works, and the reader can comprehend those storyworlds by making use of her own real-life experience. As the interest of this MA thesis lies in textual phenomena, without overlooking but not accounting for the reader, an inquiry is made into the fashioning of the narrative and the techniques the author uses to design it in such a way that its reader could immerse into its storyworld. *Immerse in, transport to* or *inhabit* are taken for metaphorical expressions similar to involvement or "(emotive, ethical, and aesthetic) engagement"[56] that have to do with textual dynamics—a coherent narrative which in its progression allows the reader to imagine a world, a process that has to do with "a change in beliefs, values, and behaviors among readers."[57] Although not entirely unproblematic,[58] word combination "construct storyworld" is used to account for the construction of a narrative which creates an immersive mimetic illusion for the reader.

### 1.3. Speculative Fiction

Speculative fiction (henceforth sf) in the present MA thesis primarily brings together the broader categories of science and fantasy fiction, but more generally and media-consciously refers to "all genres that deliberately depart from imitating "consensus reality" of everyday experience."[59] Such an inclusive definition is in use since around the

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[56] Phelan, "Introduction," 10.

[57] James, *The Storyworld Accord*, 254.

[58] Erin James uses "construct" when considering readerly dynamics—how readers construct mental simulations of a world from textual cues provided by authors (op.cit., 18–19, 23). Here it is taken to refer to the author's side: an author constructs a narrative that projects a storyworld. Therefore "constructing storyworld" comes to stand for "what an author does to create a coherent narrative that would bring a world to the reader's imagination."

[59] Marek Oziewicz, "Speculative Fiction," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature* (Oxford University Press, March 29, 2017), 1.

start of the 2000s,[60] and although inherently problematic, such a broad definition is handy when dealing with works of fiction which subvert conventional tropes, mix up genre-specific elements or blend genre boundaries to such a degree that they refuse strict categorizations.[61]

Sf's delineation in terms of deviation from "consensus reality" and its customary description as the opposite to realist (mimetic) narratives[62] exposes a concern fundamental to literary studies since the very beginning of the discipline—the relationship between the real and the invented. While acknowledging the scope of the problem and cautiously adopting the adjective "non-mimetic,"[63] the present thesis takes the superficially "non-mimetic" sf—featuring green suns, dragons and time travel—to be, like all literature, inherently mimetic. *Mimesis*, if understood in Aristotelian terms, stands for a creative process of rendering reality into art, a process which empowers deeper understanding by uncovering something essential about certain aspects of the reality as those aspects are elevated by means of creative transformation.[64] As this transformative process—literary "depict[ion] of reality by *augmenting it with meanings* [emphasis added]"[65] has to do with an author who foregrounds and thus elevates certain aspects of her particular reality, it is deeply rooted in the real, and exactly because it is rooted in the real, the partial (partial because it has to be completed in the mind of a reader) result of the process—a work of literary fiction—is comprehensible to the reader who is also situated in the actual world. Sf, although taking great creative liberties in its renderings, is still grounded in, and thus in

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[60] In an outline of the development of the term, Oziewicz notes that since its introduction in the 1940s, sf has also been used to stand for a subgenre of sci-fi especially the kind which is centered on human experience when confronting transformative scientific innovations and new technologies; it was and is still sometimes used in opposition to sci-fi: if sci-fi is understood as handling impossible things, then sf is a genre prognosticating what can potentially come to pass, especially concerned with envisioning possible futures. The latter use of the term, advocated among others by a writer Margaret Atwood, underscores an essential quality of sf—its connection to guesswork and tendencies to entertain thoughts about what is to be expected in the future. See "Speculative Fiction," 1, 4–6.

[61] Oziewicz, "Speculative Fiction," 5, 7–9, 16, 19.

[62] Ibid., 1–3.

[63] From Oziewicz's defining discussion in "Speculative Fiction," where he explains the development of sf and likewise notes that, although sf emerged in resistance to Western post-Enlightenment thought that tended to suppose that literature produces truthful copies of the real world and favor the accurate ones, that is, as an straightforward opposition to dominant realist (mimetic) fiction, gradually "the mimetic and the non-mimetic have […] been redefined as twin responses to reality." Oziewicz, "Speculative Fiction," 2.

[64] Such conception of Aristotelian mimesis comes from hermeneutic tradition, especially as explained by Paul Ricœur. See Ricœur, "Threefold Mimesis" in *Time and Narrative. Vol. 1*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin, vol. 1 (Chicago, Ill.: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2009), 50–90.

[65] Ricœur, "Threefold Mimesis," 80.

a way always limited by the real, or else it would be incomprehensible. However, allowing the reader to imaginatively "depart from" reality in varying degrees—either by presenting worlds directly linked to but different from (e.g. future setting) the actual one, or entirely Secondary worlds[66]—sf creates distance which makes room for reassessment, for example, of topical issues,[67] or for general reevaluation and reappreciation the real world.

Finnish scholar Hanna-Riikka Roine defines speculation as "a process of contemplating and considering a subject or an idea," which likewise allows to reconsider the present by "adopting a different perspective to something familiar."[68] She emphasizes that sf is not merely a matter of generic and widely-recognizable tropes or genre elements (e.g. dragons, wizards and setting out on a quest in fantasy, spaceships, robots and time travelling in sci-fi) that make one classify a work as either a representative of fantasy or of sci-fi, but a matter of selecting and combining elements, of using them inventively in order to shape a particular design which, when a "user" engages with it, gradually puts forward some idea for them to consider; Roine understands sf as revolving around speculative premises (simply, a "what if," an invitation to "imagine if")[69] that are "worked through" in a processual manner, where such working through takes place on both sides of author-reader equation.[70] Although all works of fiction invite to "imagine if," the accent is on this

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[66] J.R.R. Tolkien in his formative lecture published in 1947 under "On Fairy Stories," discusses Fantasy and argues that by inventively rearranging the elements of Primary (actual) world into a world that has "inner consistency of reality" although featuring images of things that are factually not present or possible, an author creates a Secondary world. If deftly crafted—coherent and truthful (where truth is not the external probability of a story or its elements, not the likeness of it happening, but internal accordance—how the elements of the story comprise and align with "the laws of that world") such an imaginary realm offers a momentary escape from the "present time and self-made misery," and upon coming back, the reader can reconsider and reappreciate the actual. See J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," in *Tree and Leaf. Mythopoeia. The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm's Son*, Paperback ed (London: HarperCollins, 2001), 1–81.

[67] Topicality is often taken to constitute the appeal and value of the genre—Carolin Gebauer presents sf (especially dystopian fiction) as embodying the gloomy prospects of the future as imagined from the perspective of today, i.e., prospects shaped around today's urgent issues and crises (e.g. climate change). Gebauer, "Dreading the Future," 20–21.

[68] Hanna-Riikka Roine, "Imaginative, Immersive and Interactive Engagements. The Rhetoric of Worldbuilding in Contemporary Speculative Fiction" (PhD diss., Tampere University Press, Tampere University, 2016), 1.

[69] Roine bases this claim on the long tradition of scholars tackling either sci-fi or fantasy fiction, the most significant of whom is Darko Suvin and his seminal work *Metamorphoses of science fiction* (1979), in which the concept of *novum* is introduced. Central to sci-fi, *novum* stands for the elements that constitute the foundational difference between the reader's reality and literary depiction of it. Roine, "The Rhetoric of Worldbuilding," 14–16, 46–49.

[70] Roine is, however, careful not to use the term *author* to avoid any reference to authorial intention. She maintains instead that worldbuilding is a dynamic negotiation between the work and the one who engages with it. As noted, in this MA thesis *author* merely implies that if there is a work, there is also a

process of working some abstract idea through until it is made concrete, discernible.[71] Sf unfolds during the process of engagement and invites the reader to partake in this processual experience of "a model of reality that is in some sense systematically different from [her] own."[72] Here, "different" suggests a greater degree of distance than that which is offered by realist fiction.

In the present thesis, sf is understood as an inclusive genre category; works fitting under its umbrella are authorial designs (in terms of being constructed and thus rooted in the real without implying any predetermined meanings) that creatively transform the ordinary and familiar "consensus reality" to such a degree that they superficially depart from that reality, although in essence have to do with both authors' and readers' experience of the actual world. Authors of sf gradually develop some idea to affect their reader—they "work through" a premise with the aim of putting across "ideas or values," a process in which authors can make use of, but are not limited to, genre-specific elements or tropes. A premise from which an author starts can be in itself speculative, like "what if animals could speak?" or rather mundane in terms of external possibility—"what if my heart stopped?," but whether a design can be classified as speculative depends on the extent to which the premise is developed. Building on real-life experience, sf is in-part limited by the author's understanding of her actual world, but even as such, it is "cognitively empowering and affectively stimulating"[73] because it augments reality by proposing imaginative thought experiments. Such designs, when engaged with and actualized during the process of reading, can set up relevant themes and pass on certain ideas or knowledge about the real. Sf, just as all literature, is capable of influencing the reader's understanding of the actual world and its environments by allowing to imaginatively move away from it, but sf's special feature is its transformative power to augment consensus reality to (and far beyond) the point of "non-mimetic" as means for developing ideas and unlocking alternative viewpoints on, i.a., topical issues.

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"consciousness responsible for the choices that create the narrative text as "these words in this order""" (Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric*, 217), without suggesting that there are any predetermined meanings.

[71] Roine, "The Rhetoric of Worldbuilding," 14–16. For discussion on sf ability of transforming abstract ideas into particularities, see chapter "Worldbuilding and Interpretation," 83–103.

[72] Roine, drawing on Meretoja and McHale, "The Rhetoric of Worldbuilding," 47.

[73] Oziewicz, "Speculative Fiction," 20.

Speculative fiction has a lot of to do with worlds—*Secondary worlds*, *imaginary worlds*, *worldbuilding* and a profusion of similar terms[74] points to the fact that "deviating from" the actual world in any degree is customarily conceptualized as creating a world. Not to upset this great hornets' nest of terms and long-lasting discussions related to them, in this MA thesis a simple claim is advanced that if all narratives project storyworlds, then, simply, the storyworld of a speculative narrative is a speculative storyworld, meaning that it deviates from the actual world or "consensus reality" to a greater extent, because it contains "non-mimetic" elements to inventively augment the real. Adopting Roine's view and acknowledging the role of the reader in completing a work of sf and its world through engagement yet not touching upon the cognitive procedures related to understanding "deviations,[75] this thesis, again, confines its interest in speculative storyworlds as textual phenomena.

## 1.4. Intersection

In accordance with what has already been discussed, evoked by a work of sf that is in itself a result of particular choices made by an author in development and fulfilment of some underlying broader theme or in experimenting with some idea, a speculative storyworld is a world that the author constructs to be "systematically different" from the actual one in such a way that it might highlight certain things from real-life and thus allow to reconsider them, or at least be consistent with ideas and themes the author explores. Experience of a speculative storyworld might influence the reader's real-life way of thinking about and relating to their surroundings, and, if it is projected by an environmentally inflected work, especially the natural world.

Discussion on functioning and functions of sf can be further extended by Hanna-Riikka Roine's argument about double perspective which is inherent to speculative worldbuilding. Although creation of vivid immersive worlds is one of its characterizing properties, sf is a highly self-reflexive genre. Roine argues that Tolkien's essay about Secondary worlds into which the reader can "enter" if the world is coherent enough to

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[74] Respectively: Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories;" Mark J. P. Wolf, ed., The Routledge Companion to Imaginary Worlds (New York: Routledge, 2018); Jan Alber, "Impossible Storyworlds—and What to Do with Them," *StoryWorlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 1, no. 1 (2009): 79–96; and a sole representative of the remaining and most common—Roine, "The Rhetoric of Worldbuilding."

[75] For such a discussion, see Jan Alber, "Impossible Storyworlds—and What to Do with Them," *StoryWorlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 1, no. 1 (2009): 79–96.

induce belief, a process which allows then to "[review] our mundane world from the perspective of an ontologically separate realm,"[76] captures "only one side of the relationship between the real and the imagined in speculative fiction"[77] and exposes a common misconception (of which Herman and James are guilty) about fictional worlds as "enclosed in a separate sphere"[78] into which readers transport themselves and forget that they are dealing with literary works; Roine argues that for sf to be communicative, its world must not only induce belief, in Tolkien's terms, but the reader must be simultaneously encouraged to reflect on of its artificiality, a reflection essential for "working through" the ideas presented and allowing the reader to grasp them.[79] For Roine, such *interplay* of two perspectives is where the rhetorical power of sf lies in. To succinctly paraphrase, Roine argues that the rhetoric of sf consists in a twofold duality of perspective: 1) for a speculative narrative to be comprehensible, the reader works through it while simultaneously reflecting on her own real-life experience, and 2) a comprehensible can narrative induce "belief" and facilitate immersion into its storyworld, but to grasp and reflect on the ideas and themes that the author puts forth, the reader must also take in the artificiality of the work and its world. Highly self-reflexive sf often draws the reader's attention to its own artificiality and makes her "reflect on the fact that [its worlds] are real-world constructions made for a purpose."[80]

Roine's double perspective can be considered using terms proposed by Phelan and James, thus binding the theoretical discussion into a suggestion for a way to examine sf. The rhetorical approach conceives of narratives as having three kinds of components with which readers engage: the thematic, the mimetic and the synthetic. Phelan maintains that responses to the mimetic component involve the reader's interest in a narrative's world as a possible world, and characters as possible people who can provoke emotions, desires, hopes, expectations, satisfactions and disappointments; its polar opposite is the synthetic component that concerns constructedness and the reader's awareness of and interest in the narrative as an artificial design, while characters are perceived as elements that serve particular functions in putting forward ideas and values; the thematic component has to do

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[76] Roine, "The Rhetoric of Worldbuilding," 34.

[77] Ibid., 66.

[78] Ibid., 41.

[79] Ibid., 33–34, 61–70.

[80] Ibid., 33.

with ideas—various cultural, ideological, philosophical or ethical issues that the narrative brings about or characters as representatives of classes embody.[81] All narratives have these three components, and those components are "interconnected and simultaneous."[82] Phelan emphasizes the dynamics of narratives and their components. In accordance with the narrative's purpose, these dimensions can be more or less emphasized—covert or foregrounded, and various combinations result in different readerly interest and thus effects.[83] Although all narratives have these three components, as a narrative progresses, they can be either foregrounded or made covert. Readers' awareness of each component is subject to rise-and-fall dynamic, because both immersion and reflection depend on the inherently temporal textual phenomena.

Matthew Clark notes that Phelan's model "seems to conflate the mimetic with the realistic."[84] Asserting that "if there is a mimetic illusion, there is an equally powerful fantastic illusion,"[85] Clark suggests revising this model by broadening Phelan's conception of the mimetic to include "non-mimetic" narratives.[86] In this way, Phelan's general observations about narratives can be enlarged by James' storyworlds and Roine's insights on sf. The reader's interest in and engagement with the mimetic component—a mimetic illusion that a narrative creates, can be related to immersion into a storyworld when the reader takes it to be "as real as, but other than the world that is"[87] even if it deviates from "consensus reality," because belief can be induced by creating coherency and inner consistency. Clark suggests that the synthetic is the foundational component on which both the construction of worlds and communication themes depends;[88] reader's interest in it straightforwardly compares to "awareness of the engagement with an intentionally constructed artistic object."[89] The thematic component—the speculative premise, themes,

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[81] Phelan, Phelan, *Reading People, Reading Plots*, 2–5, Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric,* 29; Phelan, "Rhetoric/Ethics," 210–211; Phelan, "Rhetoric/Ethics," 210–211.

[82] Clark and Phelan, *Debating Rhetorical Narratology*, 12.

[83] Phelan, *Reading People, Reading Plots*, 5; Phelan, "Introduction," 5–6;

[84] Clark and Phelan, *Debating Rhetorical Narratology*, 5–8.

[85] Ibid., 6.

[86] Ibid., 5–13.

[87] "[Novelists] wish to create worlds as real as, but other than the world that is. Or was. This is why we cannot plan. We know a world is an organism, not a machine. We also know that a genuinely created world must be independent of its creator; a planned world (a world that fully reveals its planning) is a dead world." John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Contemporary Classics (London: Vintage, 1996), 98.

[88] Clark and Phelan, *Debating Rhetorical Narratology*, 19–20.

[89] Roine, "The Rhetoric of Worldbuilding," 46.

ideas presented for the reader to consider—is what comes to occupy reader's attention in the interplay of the two other perspectives.[90]

Combining all theoretical approaches, sf will be discussed in such terms: when a narrative makes an effort to conceal its syntheticity, the reader perceives it as if all its elements were real, possibly existing and fully immerses into its storyworld; when at the same time the synthetic component is brough forward—the reader is made aware that she is dealing with a literary design meant to emphasize ideas, then the thematic component becomes most prominent (the ideas in line with which that specific speculative storyworld is constructed are brought "available to the experience"[91]). In other words, when both the synthetic and mimetic are foregrounded, the reader is prompted to take in and reflect on the themes and ideas developed throughout the work. This study maintains this can happen on both large scale—some techniques prompt the reader's immersion while others make the narrative self-reflexive at large, and sf often does both simultaneously; or on smaller scale—a single device, a change in technique, an image or a character in a particular episode can both instigate engagement and point to the artificiality of the design, this way making prominent the specific theme or idea related to its use.

All things considered, works of sf designed in accordance with some themes and ideas are often simultaneously overtly synthetic and mimetic. The present thesis proposes that, to discuss works of sf with environmental questions in mind, they can be approached from two different angles. First, by focusing on the rhetorical act of constructing a speculative storyworld on the authors part—looking into how the narrative is designed to both create a mimetic illusion and simultaneously dispel it in order to allow its reader to reflect on certain themes and ideas. This means acknowledging that the novel is an authorial design built to explore some ideas and themes, and geared toward communicating "knowledge, feelings, values, and beliefs"[92] to its reader, and that, if taken in, these themes and ideas might alter the reader's viewpoint on the actual world. This angle includes, firstly, an inquiry into form and techniques, asking if and how they enable double perspective at large and on a smaller scale, and, secondly, a consideration of themes that the reader is prompted to reflect on, acknowledging, however, that these are closely

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[90] This goes along with Phelan's observations about various dynamics of these components: "As often happens, the foregrounding of the synthetic brings the thematic component into greater prominence […]" Phelan, *Experiencing Fiction*, 222.

[91] Roine, "The Rhetoric of Worldbuilding," 58.

[92] Phelan, Narrative as Rhetoric, 18.

interdependent. Second, by focusing on the content of the novel's speculative storyworld as a processual experience in-built into the narrative, an experience of an alternative world that might in itself prove to be "consciousness raising" because of the way it is. The environment-orienting rhetoric of Itäranta's speculative novel *KK* is investigated along these lines.

# 2. Constructing Storyworld

This chapter addresses the form of Itäranta's narrative to inquire how the speculative storyworld of *KK* is constructed. Storyworlds are passed on to the reader gradually as narratives progress,[93] and the reader's understanding of them depend highly on particular strategies employed in constructing them. This chapter maintains that *KK* takes the form of an epistolary novel and looks into, first, the specific epistolary situation and how the letter form allows to introduce the speculative storyworld, and, second, narrative techniques empowered by this form: self-reflexive autodiegetic present-tense narration and lyrical descriptions. Drawing on Roine's ideas about sf making use of double perspective in communicating ideas, it will be argued that rhetorical outlook-transforming potential of *KK* stems from these techniques that allow Itäranta to both construct a coherent and immersive speculative storyworld and simultaneously make the reader reflect on its artificiality.

## 2.1. Epistolary Form

To construct the speculative storyworld of *KK*, Itäranta deploys epistolary form, to which the title of the novel alludes. Janet G. Altman defines epistolarity as "the use of the letter's formal properties to create meaning,"[94] and so, in her informative work *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (1982), she links the properties of a letter as a means of communication to the form and properties of epistolary novels. Identifiable by their conventions and recurring themes, epistolary novels were booming in the second half of the 1700s.[95] Elaborating on various common narrative techniques, thematic emphases, character types and narrative actions that all stem from the letter form, Altman demonstrates that letters, characterized by their inherent oppositions, are paradoxical and thus flexible, effective instruments for constructing meanings.[96] She discerns six formal meaning-creating properties of letters, offering them as an interpretative tool that is meant to assist in understanding and interpreting epistolary novels "through the poles that

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[93] Ryan, "Story/Worlds/Media," 33.

[94] Janet G. Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 5.

[95] Ibid., 202.

[96] Ibid. 5–9, 188–190, 200.

generate"[97] them. Altman's insights serve as the foundation for the inquiry into the construction the storyworld. In addition to a brief look at the arrangement of the novel, this section will reason why the novel can be read as epistolary, lay out the particular epistolary situation and then explore how Itäranta makes use of the affordances and navigates around the challenges of this form.

Besides a prologue and a resolutionary epilogue, *KK* is divided into three parts, while larger parts are divided into chapters, 21 in total. The novel refers to itself as a "document collection," and the chapters are put together from an assortment of three types of documents: letter-like notebook entries made by Lumi Salo with exact date and place indicated; dated short messages from various senders to various recipients; various other documents, ranging from scientific-like excerpts from a range of fictional works to advert brochures. Lumi Salo's letter-like notebook entries are the most substantial section of the "document collection." In those notebook entries, Lumi gives first-person accounts of her experiences—through them she tells her own story.

Even though written in a notebook, Lumi's notes can be classified as letters because they are all addressed to her missing spouse Sol Uriarte. Altman defines "the epistolary experience [as a] reciprocal one,"[98] and argues that the existence of one or several addressees is what separates the epistolary form from other first-person forms, for example diary novels.[99] Fundamental to letters is "the desire for exchange," and so their language is always marked by an *I* directly addressing a *you*; this connection structures the meaning in letter novels—the one who writes tends to shape their writing in such a way that they would affect a specific reader and prompt their response.[100] In *KK*, the addressee figures prominently—the focus is on Lumi's experiences and sentiments, but Sol is what motivates her to write. Lumi directly addresses her spouse multiple times in every entry, either by their name, pronoun *you* or direct questions, like "[d]o you remember?" that are meant to instigate her reader's[101] active involvement. However, Sol is a passive addressee,

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[97] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 190.

[98] Ibid., 88.

[99] Ibid., 88–89.

[100] Ibid., 87–90, 118.

[101] In her work Altman distinguishes between the internal reader—the character to whom the letters are addressed and "whose reading of the letters can influence the writing of the letters," (corresponds to Genette's narratee, a term which Phelan also adopts) and the external reader (in the present thesis corresponds to the ideal reader whom the real/implied author addresses). The indicated terms, simple and convenient, will be employed in this thesis as used by Altman. See more Altman, *Epistolarity*, 112n1.

a mere "sounding board to the hero's sentiments."[102] Lumi is the only one who writes letters, and they are not intended to be sent. The epistolary situation is modified—it is not immediately reciprocal, but the letters are nonetheless meant for the other to read, as Lumi repeatedly imagines how she "press[es] the notebook filled with writing into [Sol's] hand."[103] This means that when writing, she is aware of the internal future reader, but she does not need to manipulate her language in order to please her addressee or prompt an immediate response. Such a modified, non-reciprocal epistolary situation signals that the protagonist can write openly and shape her letters as she pleases.

The epistolary form allows Itäranta to convey the storyworld through the viewpoint of a character within that storyworld. In Genette's terms, Lumi Salo is an autodiegetic narrator, i.e., the protagonist whose story the reader follows, but also a letter writer, which makes her the reporter and interpreter of all action. Since the narrator is a character, she, altogether with the notebook-letters she produces, can be easily located within the storyworld.[104] Lumi reports the events that took place, narrates what she has seen and felt, depicts other characters, and retells dialogues that occurred in both near and distant past. Her notes are rich with detail. They feature accounts of consecutive actions, like "I closed the wardrobe. The rose patterns cut along the grain of the dark wood were beautiful and blind under my fingers. I went looking for your mother"[105] which, as revealed by this quote, also include both vivid descriptions of her surroundings and internal action—her thoughts and emotional reactions to those present and past events narrated, such as "[f]ear gripped me like the dark, icy void of space,"[106] not excluding the often-lyrical interpretations of facial expressions and gestures of other characters—"the corners of Ilsa's mouth twitched. A nighttime Moon surface lay behind her eyes, dark and deserted."[107] Lumi works as a mediator through the eyes of which the reader experiences the storyworld, but the reader's vision is limited to the protagonist's perspective and experiences.

Since all is filtered through Lumi's consciousness, the information about the storyworld passed on from the author to the reader through her letters comes imbued with her sentiments (attitudes, feelings, views, thoughts). It is important therefore to probe into

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[102] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 50–51.

[103] Itäranta, *KK*, 20.

[104] Ryan, "Story/Worlds/Media," 37–38.

[105] Itäranta, *KK*, 24.

[106] Ibid., 110.

[107] Ibid., 250.

the epistolary situation in which the protagonist is entangled, asking to what purposes and to whom does Lumi write, as this influences the letters that shape the reader's understanding of the storyworld. Lumi's purpose for writing changes as the narrative progresses, but fundamentally she wishes to unreservedly communicate with her absent spouse and share her experiences. Letter writing is presented as a customary practice of the often-separated couple. At first, Lumi's letters are intended as a travelogue, as she describes to her spouse new exotic planet-specific environments with the intention to make Sol "see" them as well. Lumi recounts how this idea came to her mind: "I'll take [the notebook] with me and write in it about the journey. When I come back, you can read about what it was like. […] You will see it as if you were there with me."[108] Thus, the external reader is also introduced to her writing motivation— when Lumi is travelling the solar system alone, she documents her travel experiences, describes the faraway places she has seen, people and their lives "far, far away from the sun,"[109] so Sol would be able to see foreign planets through Lumi's eyes and experience the unfamiliar. However, as Sol goes missing, Lumi mostly travels to places that are well-known to Sol. The function of her accounts slightly changes—she wishes to simply communicate with her absent spouse, to tell about how she searches for them: "I can speak to you even when you don't hear, without having to fear the words will vanish into space, where no one will pick them up."[110] Even if few of the things or environments described by Lumi throughout the novel are not familiar to Sol, she tells of new experiences in the familiar places, as well as how she perceives them overall, thus rendering them particular and imbuing them with meanings which she overtly intends to pass on to her internal addressee. Lumi's letters, then, are intended and work as a way for her reader to tap into her experience through the words she writes—the travelling, the searching, and the process of trying to understand, adopting her outlook and all kinds of sentiments.

The epistolary form and such an explicit intention of the letter writer make the reader perceive the narrator and her accounts as reliable. Altman observes that dependent on who is the receiver (a confidant/friend or a lover) and on letter writer's purpose for addressing him/her (i.e., pleasing, seduction, rapprochement), in epistolary relationships letters can function both as masks, as tools for manipulation, and as catalysts for

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[108] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 15.

[109] Itäranta, *KK*, 271.

[110] Ibid.

candidness or even confession, becoming the portrait of the writer's soul.[111] A notable characteristic of the protagonist's letters is their openness and transparency—they "permit an intimate, interiorized communion"[112] even when the spouses are separated. Lumi shares her sentiments and tells of her experiences in a way that is direct and open, as she believes the letters, even if not immediately reciprocated, allow her to privately communicate heart-to-heart with a person she trusts. In one of her notes, she even expresses her preference for the letter to the message, as it is more reliable, more personal: "I would not say it in an electronic message, but I will say it on this page made of paper, only mine to read, and yours, once we meet again: I know there are things you have not told me."[113] The text signals to the external reader that for Lumi, letters are a way of privately telling of what happened, expressing her thoughts and emotions without the need to shape her letters according to her reader's expectations and tastes—she wishes to make this specific other see through her eyes and experience what she has. An explicit intent to share experiences by writing about them allows Itäranta to, on one hand, internally motivate various detailed descriptions convenient for constructing the storyworld; on the other, explicating the narrator's habit of sharing her confidences in writing affects how the reader perceives and judges what she reads—the text signals that even highly subjective, the well-meant travelogue- and diary-like letters are a reliable source of information.

Even though the story is mainly presented through Lumi's notebook entries, her exhaustive but subjective accounts are not the only means of constructing the speculative storyworld. The "document collection" features documents which are instrumental in shedding light on a range of speculative elements. These documents (e.g., a summary of technological developments until 2168 which explains the technology that enabled space travel; excerpts making clear what a space colony/ biograffiti/ drug called "fog"/ holiday island / principle of inviolability is; news articles introducing relevant past events etc.) have various dates both in the past and future in relation to the events depicted through correspondence. Documents are presented mostly at the beginnings of chapters and in some way prove significant to that which follows.

Documents are a way of meeting the challenges posed by deploying epistolary form to create a speculative storyworld. Primarily, the requirement for authenticity which

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[111] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 69–72, 186.

[112] Ibid., 15.

[113] Itäranta, *KK*, 62.

applies to all epistolary novels. Letter novels imitate nonfictional communication,[114] so authenticity can be understood as making the external reader feel as if the letters comprising a novel are legitimate documents presenting communication of real persons. This is of course more problematic when dealing with "non-mimetic" novels as from the external reader's viewpoint their letters are transparently not real. In this case, authenticity can be understood as "inner consistency," a sense of genuineness that upholds that the communication presented is "as real as"—it adheres to the internal rules of the storyworld; in Phelan' terms, this means promoting the mimetic component of the narrative while hiding the synthetic. In *Epistolarity*, Altman notes that "[t]he creator of fictional letter narrative must produce an impression of authenticity without hopelessly losing his outside reader."[115] Since letters are mostly a private matter, their language is coded, i.e., governed by the particular relationship of the *I-you*, which can make the language of the personal exchange incomprehensible to the outside reader, both external and internal; due to the aforementioned inherent requirement for authenticity, the author employing it potentially faces a problem of making the coded language and information conveyed through it accessible to the external reader.[116] Altman observes that such a problem can be solved, for example, by using editorial footnotes or incorporating into letters allusions to past events, common experiences, memories etc., that allow the external reader to follow the progression of the novel.[117] Creating a sense of authentic epistolary language is even more challenging with a speculative storyworld, because the "non-mimetic" elements that must be conveyed to the external reader are common knowledge to the characters partaking in letter exchange within that world. Introducing documents is how Itäranta overcomes this problem.[118] She makes use of encyclopedia entries, manuals, brochures, and news articles etc. to familiarize the external reader with some aspects of the speculative storyworld. This technique allows her to construct a detailed storyworld while at the same keeping in line with the dynamic of the particular epistolary relationship established.

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[114] Ryan, "Story/Worlds/Media," 37.

[115] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 120.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Introducing documents that help to establish a speculative storyworld is also internally motivated— Lumi's letters are published within the storyworld. This further adds to concealing narrative's synthetic component and facilitating the reader's immersion. This will be discussed in more detail under "Events."

Short electronic messages can likewise be interpreted as means for meeting the challenges posed by the epistolary form. Most of the electronic messages are from Sol to Lumi, but message exchange between the protagonist and other characters is presented as well. They allow the reader to glimpse at the viewpoints and voices[119] of other characters that are unmediated by the narrator; however, the epistolary potential for polylogue is left unrealized. Most of the messages are rather brief and not introduce, for example, conflicting versions of the same events, vivid descriptions, or opinions. Their function is to empower narrative progression. Altman observes that "the illusion that something is going on between the letters or preceding the letters must be created without having the characters tell each other things they already know,"[120] to which the short messages offer a solution. Since the larger part of the novel is built on autodiegetic narration, messages are a means of establishing plot relevant issues (e.g., Sol's message that she cannot meet Lumi) and introducing complications (e.g., Sol's message forces Lumi to suddenly leave Earth) outside of Lumi's letters. Functioning independently from Lumi's will, messages always anticipate action—both internal (think, reflect, speculate) and actual (travel, do, write). Messages are followed by Lumi's letters in which she either mentions them or responds to the messages both in terms of conveying sentiments, like "You remain silent, Sol. I know you wouldn't do that without a good reason. I trust you. What I don't understand is simply something I don't know yet. When we meet face to face, all will be clear again,"[121] and reporting actions she took in reaction, such as "After your second message arrived, I went into your old home office on the ground floor."[122] Messages thus function as a catalyst for action meant to efficiently propel the narrative forward in such a way that adds up to the autodiegetic authenticity.

To summarize, Itäranta communicates through Lumi—the constantly travelling protagonist who observes her surroundings and gives accounts of them in her letters that are in part of travelogue composition. Autodiegetic narration permits exhaustive but personal and sentiment-imbued accounts of events, other characters, as well as environments. The reader experiences the storyworld through the eyes and words of a character within it, a character who explicitly states her intent to write in such a way that

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[119] Voice, according to Phelan is "the fusion of style, tone and values" that allows the reader to interpret the personality and ideological values of characters and/or narrators. Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric,* 45–46.

[120] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 120.

[121] Itäranta, *KK*, 100.

[122] Ibid., 34.

the reader of her letters could see through her eyes, thus internally motivating the exhaustivity of accounts. Letter form's imperative for authenticity requires Itäranta to navigate between the knowledge of the character and the external reader—background details and knowledge that is common within the storyworld or shared between the correspondents must be made available to the reader without challenging the genuineness of the epistolary situation. The author solves this problem by introducing various documents familiarizing the reader with storyworld elements that are common to the characters in epistolary situation but constitute the dissimilarity between real and "non-mimetic" to the reader. Third medium—short electronic messages—function as a way of swiftly advancing action. Itäranta provides information about the speculative storyworld in such a way that adds to the authenticity, believability and thus immersivity, which means that the synthetic component of the narrative is covert, while the mimetic is foregrounded. The reader can "see" the speculative storyworld through the eyes of the character and relate to it as if it was real, which translates into fully experiencing the altered natural environments of the future depicted in the novel as well as taping into the protagonist's longing.

## 2.2. Present Tense and Self-reflexivity

Epistolary form exerts thematic pressure and predetermines certain narrative techniques. According to Altman, epistolary form is a self-reflexive one. As it "explicitly articulates the problematics involved in the creation, transmission, and reception of literary texts," questions fundamental to all literature are put forward.[123] Mimicking real letter communication, epistolary novels tend to thematize the act of writing. It corresponds to the act of narration and therefore inevitably postdates or comes before the events that are told about in letters and form the focus of the story.[124] This section starts with a discussion of one of the themes of the novel and how it gives rise to the key narrative technique—present tense narration. It will be further explored as a paradoxical means of constructing a storyworld.

Altman draws attention to the letter's property to both connect and increase or even create distance, and argues that letter novels tend to thematize either absence and

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[123] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 210–212.

[124] Ibid., 123–128, 186.

estrangement, or rapprochement and coming together; in each of these epistolary situations the letter can work either as a bridge—instrument for communication and catalyst for reunion, or as barrier, a futile tool that interferes and thus separates people (even) more.[125] *KK*'s epistolarity builds on absence caused by unvoluntary separation. Even at the beginning of the novel when Lumi is still hoping to meet Sol, she is painfully aware of Sol's absence—"The room had empty space in your shape where your presence should have filled it, Sol."[126] As the narrative progresses, the situation of unvoluntary separation is heightened by repeated images of Sol moving or turning away, such as "You walk into shadows, look at me over your shoulder. You turn your face away and continue to walk until all I see is a stretch of black […]."[127] Similar reoccurring images point up the growing spatial and mental distance that Lumi is then trying to cross with her words. With its emphasis on separation and absence, *KK* is linked to the epistolary tradition, as such themes are especially common when presenting lovers' correspondence.[128] Commonly too, the sense of absence makes the letter writer preoccupied with presence, which manifests in an attempt to make the missing other present by writing.[129] These lines of Lumi's first letter suggest that her letters are such an attempt to bring Sol to her through writing:

> Let me prepare everything for you, Sol: set the stage and open the curtain, so in your thoughts you may settle next to me and be with me in this moment. You said once that writing is journeying beyond infinite distances; with these words I transport you to me across time and space. […] Imagine the narrow bed of the cabin into which I invite you with me. Just like that: sit down next to me, place your head against my shoulder and follow the movements of my pen. […] Are you here, Sol? Yes: I can feel the warmth emanating from your skin."[130]

Letters are Lumi's way of making Sol present both in terms of space ("settle next to me") and time ("in this moment"). In this paragraph, Lumi describes her immediate surroundings in great detai and "invites" Sol to her side, projecting how her letter, read by Sol in the future, will facilitate their imaginative transportation to the *here and now* of her writing, and this exercise allows her to feel Sol's company. Lumi's explicit wish to bridge the spatial and temporal gap between her and her spouse is realized through imperatives,

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125 Altman, *Epistolarity*, 13–15, 43, 186.

126 Itäranta, *KK*, 29.

127 Ibid., 174.

128 Altman, *Epistolarity*, 72.

129 Ibid., 187.

130 Itäranta, *KK*, 15–16.

which Lumi uses to establish Sol's position. Such act of setting up of Sol's physical position allows Lumi to feel the nearness of her all-the-more distant spouse, but at the same time her letters are shaped around the prospect of allowing the future Sol to go back in time, to *transport* to Lumi's spatiotemporal moment, travel together with her, and share her experiences.

The thematic emphasis on absence to which the medium of the letter works as a solution has significant consequences to letters' language—the language of the body of the novel. Altman argues that addressor's impossible task of making the absent addressee present charges letter novels with spatiotemporal present-consciousness[131] and makes their language "preoccupied with immediacy, with presence, because it is a product of absence."[132] Such present-consciousness is visible in Lumi's letters, which, to start with, feature recurrent present-tense passages. Altman notes that present tense works as a reference point to everything else that is narrated: "[it] figures prominently as a pivot for past and future. Like the diary writer, the letter writer is anchored in a present time from which he looks toward both past and future events. The relationship of both temporal aspects to the present is important in the unfolding of letter narrative."[133] Lumi's letters are no exception—she switches heavily between various tenses. Her letters often start in present tense as she is describing her location and the situation in which she writes, like: "I'm writing this in the crammed sleeper cabin of a train,"[134] or "Sol, I sit in one of the two hotels of Elysium with Ziggy, and I write […]."[135] Such self-reflexive moments are usually followed by past-tense accounts, in which Lumi narrates recent events that took place after her last letter: "This morning upon my arrival at Elysium I headed for […]."[136] She rarely closes her letters, often stopping at the end of the event or dialogue narrated, but when she does, it means coming back to the present moment and even briefly glimpsing into the immediate future: "And now I have arrived at the moment when I began writing: sitting on the bed, my screen next to me, all dark, not flashing or pinging with words from you. I am tired, Sol. I may lie down."[137] Altman observes that such stuckness between "I have just"

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[131] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 122, 129, 135–136, 187.

[132] Ibid., 118.

[133] Ibid., 117–118.

[134] Itäranta, *KK*, 62.

[135] Ibid., 105.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid., 57.

and "I will soon" is an important characteristic of the epistolary present tense—it either postdates or anticipates the events narrated (when the event is not part of the act of writing).[138]

Present tense pieces together the protagonist's imagination, past and future together, to which the spatiotemporal present works as a juncture. In Lumi's letters, present tense is used not only to informatively describe her surroundings but also to *re*present ("*re*presented—made present again"[139]) Sol. For example, she switches to present tense when presenting certain memories, mostly when the act of remembering is itself brought to light: "In my mind I step into our past living room on Fuxi. I look at us, you and me, and neither of us know there is a specter in the room with us, nor that we are specters ourselves. You are almost a decade younger than now, and so am I, but I see you more clearly. […] You go to close the balcony door and open the door of the carrier. A small, tar-colored kitten totters out."[140] A present-tense recollection facilitates the letter writer's transportation back to the moment—Lumi is able to "enter" the memory and observe the situation from aside. What is more, Lumi repeatedly imagines alternative presents in which Sol is with her. After writing down an imagined dialogue taking place in such an alternative present where they have met, Lumi glosses: "In my thoughts it is true. In my thoughts you can be anywhere, even in the most impossible places. Here."[141] Lumi also uses present tense and imagination to speculate on Sol's circumstances. Reflecting on her spouse's unknown location and working on the information she has received, Lumi conceives of several possible scenarios, starting with "I cannot see you, so I must imagine you. You sit in a rover that is moving under a bare sky along a smooth, wide road across the desert."[142] All of these examples of present-tense passages reveal the work of the protagonist's mind and imagination. They are always brought forward by longing—Lumi thinks of Sol because they are not present, and her imagination has the power to make it so. In order to make Sol present by calling her image to mind, Lumi uses present tense—both for picturing alternative presents, pleasant recollections as well as guesswork.

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[138] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 127–129.

[139] Ibid., 138.

[140] Itäranta, *KK*, 207.

[141] Ibid., 175.

[142] Ibid., 117.

Drawing on Gebauer's discussion on self-reflexivity and present tense in combination with second-person pronoun as direct reader address,[143] it can be argued that imperatives, persistent use of the pronoun *you* alongside with direct questions and clearly establishing the *here and now* of the storyworld can be interpreted as not only Lumi's way of imagining her addressee and making them present, but also as a way of foregrounding the mimetic. The reader is thus encouraged to *transport* themselves to the clearly indicated *here and now* of the storyworld. Through Lumi's detailed notes the external reader, reading over the shoulder of her constantly directly addressed internal counterpart,[144] effortlessly transports herself into the storyworld. Just as Sol, the reader can "see" it as if she was "there," together with the protagonist and through her eyes. In other words, it is an immersive device with which Itäranta prompts the reader to imagine Lumi's surroundings and follow the story more closely.

However, as much as it allows the author to facilitate reader's immersion, present tense also makes the narrative overtly synthetic. *KK* contains a multitude of self-reflexive episodes—passages where the act of writing is laid bare. The act of writing *here and now* is often exposed through a profusion of deixis (personal—I, you; temporal—now, today; spatial, like "here, in the dark of the surface of a strange planet, where I cannot take your hand,"[145] etc.), making the present moment of most significance. Lumi not only notes the fact that she is writing, but also reflects on her purposes and the power of her words to bridge the spatiotemporal gap, to create an immersive imaginative experience for her reader—"[I have] built the landscape in which I walked from words, so it would be within your reach too."[146] Mimetic illusion is thus constantly dispelled by exposing the act of writing, stating the protagonist's intention for writing or making her remark on the power of language. At such moments reader's attention is drawn to the fact that the narrative she reads is an artificial construct.

On one hand, present-tense narration establishing the *here and now* of the storyworld creates an immersive illusion. On the other, self-consciousness of the letter writer in her act of telling a story promotes the synthetic component of the narrative. Simultaneously foregrounding the synthetic and the mimetic is arguably the most

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[143] Gebauer, "Dreading the Future," 23–24.

[144] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 112.

[145] Itäranta, *KK*, 82.

[146] Ibid., 271.

significant effect of epistolary form. This instigates reflection on the themes that the author deals with by employing it.

## 2.3. Lyrical Descriptions

Among other things discussed, the epistolary form of *KK* gives power to lyricality. Remarking on letter's storytelling impulse as secondary to its conversational nature, Altman observes that some characters who write letters are not as much engrossed in the telling of a story, but instead in "emoting, justifying, describing the world around them, confessing, persuading—and above all, writing,"[147] and due to this she calls for a re-evaluation of what amounts to a narrative event.[148] Phelan approaches this problem differently—he discerns that seemingly uneventful but introspective passages in narratives can be read as lyrical. Phelan distinguishes between lyric and narrative by stressing the former's focus on states of mind as significant in themselves,[149] and offers a definition of two kinds of lyric:

> (1) somebody telling somebody else (or even himself or herself) on some occasion for some purpose that something is—a situation, an emotion, a perception, an attitude, a belief;
> (2) somebody telling somebody else (or even himself or herself) on some occasion about his or her meditations on something; to put it another way, in this mode, the poem records the speaker's thoughts.[150]

Primarily, in lyric elements which, according to Phelan, constitute narrativity (characters, events, and change) are subordinated to that which in the present thesis has been called sentiments—thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, emotions etc.[151] Phelan points out that present tense is customary in lyric,[152] and present tense is at the core of *KK*. In her letters, Lumi

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[147] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 206.

[148] Ibid., 206–207.

[149] James Phelan, "Interlacings of Narrative and Lyric. Ernest Hemingway's 'A Clean Well-Lighted Place' and Sandra Cisneros's 'Woman Hollering Creek,'" in *Experiencing Fiction: Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative*, Theory and Interpretation of Narrative (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2007), 152.

[150] James Phelan, "Introduction. Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Experience of Narrative," in *Experiencing Fiction: Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative*, Theory and Interpretation of Narrative (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2007), 22.

[151] Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric,* 31, 218.

[152] Phelan, "Introduction," 23.

constantly moves between informative narration of events and laying out her impressions, thoughts, emotions, imaginings and distant memories. Such shifts back and forth between narrative passages and sentiment-conveying passages that are held together by present tense allows to assert that *KK* is a novel built on synthesis of narrativity and lyricality.

The lyrical dimension of the novel is evident already from the proleptical present-tense prologue—in it, no actions take place. Lumi, after indicating the *here and now* of her writing act,[153] is exhaustively describing her situation of merely sitting and looking through the window. She tells, in Phelan's words, that such a situation is. Factually nothing happens in the prologue, but she narrates what she perceives, thinks, and imagines. The only outward movement reported throughout the whole prologue is the movement of Lumi's gaze and the closing of her eyes in order to plunge into memory and imagine her lost home on Earth, in Winterland, as well as to conjure up a picture of absent Sol in front of her. The language is poetic, focused on descriptions of visual perception, loaded with similes: "as a sea turned to stone,"[154] "as a black brushstroke," and metaphors—the Earth is a "rounded drop of water," and "trees reach their narrow fingers against the sky." In this section, drawing on Phelan's discussion[155] of lyric narratives—hybrid forms of narrative and lyric in which the elements of both overlap—the lyrical dimension of the novel will be analyzed as a means of constructing the speculative storyworld that requires the reader to take on the perspective of the character narrator; of particular interest will be the poetic devices of lyrical descriptions that help the author to create the speculative storyworld by requiring the reader to draw on and go through her experience of the real world.

The lyricality of *KK* stems, first and foremost, from detailed descriptions, and descriptive passages with their power to assert "that something is" are an important means

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[153] Keeping in line with and even introducing the epistolary situation, the prologue is presented as a torn-out final page of the notebook, anticipating and hinting at some catastrophe that took place: "Sol, This may be the final page, the one I write after everything has already happened. The one I will tear out at the end of the notebook and place between the cover and the blank title page. The first word on it is your name: that way you will know at once the sentences on the upcoming pages are for you as much as they are for myself (*KK*, 7)." The misplaced page from the *here and now* of Lumi's writing situation works as a prolepsis in relation to the events that will be presented further—it brings the reader to the moment of the novel's conclusion, just before the reunion of spouses. The prologue does not feature a retrospective overview of events, but instead in a lyrical manner introduces the main themes of the novel—distance and absence, memory and nostalgia, all centered around the planet Earth—the ultimate home which is lost.

[154] All lines quoted here are from the prologue: Itäranta, *KK*, 7–9.

[155] Namely, Phelan's exploration of lyricality in 1) James Phelan, "Character and Judgement in Narrative and in Lyric: Toward and Understanding of Audience Engagement in The Waves," in *Narrative as Rhetoric: Technique, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology*, The Theory and Interpretation of Narrative Series (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1996), 1–42; 2) Phelan, "Interlacings of Narrative and Lyric," 151–177.

of creating a speculative storyworld. Descriptions are essential in establishing places, objects, persons and their properties, that is, the content of a storyworld.[156] The novel contains multiple descriptions of places—of colonized solar system's planets and their cities, cylinder cities orbiting those planets, damaged natural, artificial and even imagined landscapes, as well as home and other interiors—all observed and written about by Lumi. Interrupting the act of narration, descriptions not only provide the setting for the events of the story; often, especially in recounts of distant memories and in travelogue-like passages, the description itself is the center, and there are multiple passages in which no action is introduced but the act of writing in the *here and now* of the storyworld goes on. Such narrative pauses[157] principally occur when Lumi is travelling: "there are long, idle hours ahead of me. I must fill them with something. I can stare into darkness, and think, and let memories roam."[158] In between events and locations, she is not able to do much else but to reflect on her surroundings or to throw herself into memory, writing, emoting and "describing the world around [her]."[159]

Lyrical descriptions are essential in constructing the speculative storyworld of *KK*. The external reader is exposed to everything that is addressed to Sol and so, is likewise *transported* to the storyworld, but since Lumi's descriptions follow the dynamic of her-Sol's relationship, at times only silhouettes of storyworld-internal things are made available because things familiar to the protagonist's addressee are not depicted too elaborately, and their environments[160] are alluded to. For example, Lumi sets her writing situation by describing what she sees through the window of a train crossing Mars:

> [...] it is night, and the train has been running in a glass tube overground for hours by now. Long, dark moments are broken by pale globes of light that occasionally rise on the plain like dim, white pearls scattered across the obscure landscape. [...]

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[156] Torsten Pflugmacher, "Description," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman (London: Routledge, 2010), 101.

[157] Pause—a term used to indicate the disparity between the textual space taken up by narrator's telling and story time; narrator continues its telling while narrative action proper has come to a halt. See *Pause* in Herman's glossary of terms—Herman, *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, 280.

[158] Itäranta, *KK*, 62.

[159] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 206.

[160] In this thesis, subsumed under "environments" are all locations in which the events take place, both natural and artificial, exterior and interior; physical laws that govern the events taking place in those locations, as well as the sociocultural aspect—social rules that might influence actions of characters and other events, along with how characters perceive each other's actions or other events (already considered under Characters). This word is chosen because it places the focus on nature and characters' environmental conditions. To be discussed in the following chapter.

I don't know what is grown inside the globes. Vegetarian protein, insects for food, molds for medicinal purposes?[161]

The information that is potentially familiar to Sol (cylinder cities; globes covering both industrial and residential areas on Mars; dietary and medical practices) is left contextual, and Lumi focuses on conveying the visual sensation. However, the contextual information is essential for the external reader working through the text and trying to reconstruct the storyworld. The undetailed portrayals can be likewise effective because they encourage to put the scattered fragments together into a full picture through imaginative engagement. Lyrical descriptions given rise to by narrative pauses are a means to establish speculative elements and "set the stage" for action.

Present-tense descriptions can be read as lyrical not only because they pause the sequence of events presented through correspondence, but because of their language—they are thick with poetic devices. For Aristotle, devices such as similes and metaphors are inherently poetic, but they complement the *lexis* (means of expressing thoughts through words, or simply—style, as opposed to content) of prose by estrangement—they elevate the everyday language by adding an "unfamiliar quality" to it, a sense of newness that helps to capture audience's attention and thus communicate the point more effectively.[162] The poetic language of *KK* can, too, be interpreted not as merely decorative, but as serving a communicative function. Among other things, poetic devices help the reader to conceive of the strange and unfamiliar speculative storyworld through comparison with what's familiar, while at the same time setting the reader against what is familiar by opening a new way of seeing it.

Similes, a particularly frequent poetic device employed in the novel, are an effective means of accommodating the reader within the speculative storyworld. Similes are based on explicit predicative comparison (*something* is like/unlike *something else*),[163] such as "the sky-shell was blue as a smooth egg in a robin's nest."[164] They work as

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[161] Itäranta, *KK*, 80–81.

[162] Aristotle, "Book 3. Delivery, Style and Arrangement," in *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George Alexander Kennedy, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 198–200.

[163] A predicative statement is a statement that names and also describes a subject; similes are predicative comparisons that almost always use explicit comparison markers ("as," "is like", "is unlike" and many other expressions). The meaning is arranged by pointing simultaneously to likeness and difference of objects, but, unlike metaphors that are also predicative statements, similes do not relate this assertion or denial of likeness to the subject. In other words, metaphors assimilate the objects between which the connection is established, and similes do not. See Hugh Bredin, "Comparisons and Similes," *Lingua* 105, no. 1–2 (June 1998): 67–78.

[164] Itäranta, *KK*, 196.

evocative characterization that allow the reader to *see* something *as*—i.e., to vividly conceive of the storyworld. In the novel, similes are deployed to make "non-mimetic" storyworld elements comprehensible to the reader through asserting a likeness with familiar things. For example, when Lumi observes cylinder cities through a microscope, she notes that "[a]gainst the black sky they looked like glimmering mechanical insects stretching their wings in the night;"[165] describing a destroyed cylinder city, Lumi calls in the same image of an insect: "Fuxi had closed its wings. It drifted in space as an empty, unmoving husk of an insect […]."[166] Similes are used not only for conveying visual perception, but for all physical sensations—for example, the experience of walking in a space suit: "Moving in the suit was never comfortable, but I was still enchanted with being able to take leaps in the lifeless landscape as lightly as in water."[167] The external reader, with the help of a "like a" or an "as a," can relate to that, which is new (cylinder cities, moving on the surface of the Moon) through reflecting on her real-life experience and the things that are familiar (insects, moving in water). Similes allow the reader to better grasp the unfamiliar speculative storyworld through reflection on and comparison with things of from her own reality.

Metaphors, a "bizzare form of predication,"[168] are not as common in the novel, but they are an even more effective means of engaging imagination and putting up ideas. They not only present what is, but also to assert how, or in what manner it is (metaphorical predication—*something* is *something/somehow*) by conceptually assimilating incompatible things.[169] Ricoeur states that the tension brough about by a combination of incompatibilities is how metaphors engender meaning; predication which seems absurd if taken literally implies that metaphors can be comprehended only through active readerly engagement, and Ricoeur maintains that the process of working through the tension between literal and metaphoric interpretation unlocks a new way of seeing.[170] In *KK*, metaphoric expressions are used not only to establish speculative elements ("It was easy to step into it and bury the thought that the city was only a shard of metal floating in space, its

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[165] Itäranta, *KK*, 192.

[166] Ibid., 244.

[167] Ibid., 122.

[168] Paul Ricœur, "Metaphor and Symbol," in *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, 8. print (Fort Worth: Texas Christian Univ. Pr, 1976), 69.

[169] Bredin, "Similes," 78.

[170] Ricœur, "Metaphor and Symbol," 50–53.

machine heart an apparatus assembled by humans, without which everything would stop."[171]), but also to open a potentially new perspective to represented real-life things. For example: "[...] you can see Earth from there, far behind you now, but still much closer to you than to me: a bright-blue raindrop on the tongue of space."[172] Here, space is referred to as a bodily being that has a tongue, while Earth is depicted as a speck inside its menacing mouth, ready to be consumed by darkness. In this metaphoric description, tension is established by linking the boundless, incomprehensible, inanimate space to the limited body of a living thing. It is further contrasted to the minute Earth. This gives a sense that earth is being threatened by a formidable animate being, and allows to perceive both Earth and space anew—the Earth is threatened to, harmed. This relates to the environmental inflection of the novel.

An important property of lyric is to convey the viewpoint of a character, and its most significant effect is that encourages to fully adopt this viewpoint. Phelan argues that in lyric, the reader is "asked to see the world through the speaker's eyes without making a judgement on that vision."[173] In intersections of lyric and narratives, this does not mean regarding the narrators/character's perspective as the only one possible, but lyrical passages necessitate involvement with the perspective that is presented—the reader is invited to "enter it" and share the speaker's attitudes and sentiments without critically evaluating them.[174] As the reader experiences the storyworld and its environments through the eyes of sensitive, nature-enjoying protagonist, she is prompted to adopt the protagonist's viewpoint without judgement, which facilitates involvement with the emotionally affective mimetic component of the character.

Lyrical descriptions, saturated with poetic devices figure predominantly in the novel, and they exert significant meaning-creating power. Pausing the sequence of events to attend to environments and other storyworld elements, lyric is an integral part of the novel. It facilitates the development of an aesthetically compelling and emotionally engaging speculative storyworld by calling the reader to reflect upon the actual world. Drawing on comparison with what is familiar, similes help to make speculative elements fathomable, substantial, while metaphors prompt imaginative engagement and saturate

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[171] Itäranta, *KK*, 196.

[172] Ibid., 20.

[173] Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric,* 36.

[174] Phelan, "Interlacings of Narrative and Lyric," 152.

familiar things with new meanings. Built into the narrative, lyric is a powerful means of estrangement from both the everyday language and the "consensus reality." It creates a new vantage point that allows to reflect on familiar and unfamiliar things from an aesthetic distance—in *KK*, it means seeing everything through Lumi's eyes and fully adopting her point of view.

### 2.4. Conclusions to Chapter

This chapter aimed to analyze how the speculative storyworld of *The Moonday Letters,* a part of authors communicative design, is constructed. Itäranta employs epistolary form and constructs *KK*'s storyworld through unanswered letters written by a travelling protagonist who expresses an intention to make her addressee see it as if they were there. Various short electronic message are also put to use, and they function as a catalyst for narrative progression, while an assortment of fictional documents allow the author to construct a coherent narrative and a vivid storyworld while adhering to the requirement for a sense of authenticity that is inherent to epistolary form; they allows Itäranta to set forth and elucidate speculative elements such as space travel technology that are common knowledge to the characters entangled in the epistolary situation, but constitute the difference between external readers reality and the storyworld. The epistolary situation builds on distance and separation—the protagonist writes because she wishes to openly share her experiences with her absent spouse, thus making the spouse imaginatively present in the spatiotemporal *here and now*. This explicated intention of the protagonist around which her letters are shaped make the reader perceive her letters as a reliable source of information.

Letter form predetermines present-tense narration. With this narrative technique, the spatiotemporal position of the letter writer is clearly established, which allows her to plunge into memory, speculate, and imagine alternative scenarios of the storyworld's present moment. The letter writer not only recounts events but writes about her manifold experience, and her letters are largely lyrical—centered on thoughts, opinions, sentiments and containing detailed descriptions of surroundings. Lyrical descriptions prove to be a powerful means of giving the reader a picture of the speculative storyworld; their language is poetic, saturated with metaphors and similes which engage the reader's mind to understand the fictional, "non-mimetic" elements through drawing parallels with what is real, familiar, as well as challenge to move away from the ordinary perception of the real to

acquire a new one. All of this—autodiegetic narration through letters, a travelling protagonist who's explicit writing intention necessitates exhaustive accounts of both recent and temporally distant events, lyrical descriptions that help to establish the content of the storyworld, and, above all, charging the narrative with a sense of authenticity and reliability—are means of creating a vivid mimetic illusion of a complex world which, although clearly "non-mimetic," seems believable in its "inner consistency," and thus facilitates the reader's immersion.

At the same time, the narrative itself constantly dispels the mimetic illusion it creates. The letter form predetermines a certain degree of self-reflexivity and promotes the narrative's syntheticity. The narrative is self-reflexive and overtly synthetic at large because the act of writing and narrator's intention for writing are exposed.

To conclude, together these techniques simultaneously promote both the mimetic and the synthetic, making *KK* a narrative which brings out double perspective for the reader, and from this stems the rhetorical potential of the narrative. The reader is navigated between involvement with the narrative and awareness of its artificiality, which allows her to adopt the narrator's viewpoint and immerse into the storyworld, while simultaneously weighing up the themes and ideas explored and put forward by the narrative. As it will be argued in next chapter, both have to do with prompting reflection on the real world.

# 3. The Speculative Storyworld

What kind of a storyworld is made available for the reader's experience? What ideas are put forth in terms of environmental "consciousness raising" and climate change? These questions require an examination of the world of the novel. In a media-oriented discussion of storyworlds, Marie-Laure Ryan distinguishes six components that comprise their content, and this study they are grouped into three larger categories: 1) characters (and their personal values on the basis of which they act and rationalize their actions); 2) environments; understood broadly, in this thesis environment comprises what Ryan distinguished as setting—the space where characters and objects are located, physical laws—the principles that rule over the events of the story, and the optional sociocultural dimension—social rules and values that rule over the actions of characters; 3) events—changes of states of the world that unfold in time and form the focus of the story, including the backstory and afterstory, and even mental events—characters' reactions to events (in the present thesis contained under the word sentiments).[175] This distinction will be employed to examine the content of the speculative storyworld of *KK* in order to account for what kind of a world is experienced by the reader, as well as further build on the discussion of the key themes and ideas and how they are introduced; this chapter also deals with narrative progression to note when the thematic component is brough forward on smaller scale. It is argued that the characters and narrative progression of the novel challenge the reader's values by provoking ethical judgments, while through the thematic emphases on distance and home the reader is subjected to nostalgia which is a powerful tool of articulating environmental concerns.

## 3.1. Events

Storyworlds are temporal. They are not static, but dynamic designs, because they are presented and shaped by stories, the events of which unfold progressively in a certain time span.[176] Events that a storyworld encompasses give rise to changes in the plot, or, to turn it around, as a given narrative progresses from its beginning to an end, all the textual cues informing about the storyworld are gradually conveyed to the reader. The aim of this

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[175] Ryan, "Story/Worlds/Media," 34–37.

[176] Ibid., 32–33.

subsection is to account for the temporal dimension of the storyworld of *KK*, both in terms of making clear the temporal placement of character and events as well as in laying out the most important events in order to inquire how the narrative progresses, noting several instances when mimetic illusion is dispelled on smaller scale by foregrounding artificiality of the narrative. This will be done by referring to certain properties of the epistolary form.

In *KK,* a single plot is developed, and events take place in a specified date in the future—in 2168. Although weaved together from a multitude of "documents," the plot is not episodic but continuous and causal—it follows one protagonist's journey in search for her missing spouse. Notebook entries and messages are arranged chronologically. Through correspondence, the narrative progresses from the twenty fifth of February to the nineteenth of June, same year. The story begins with Lumi starting a new notebook on a spaceship travelling from Europa to a city on Mars called Harmonia. Lumi's first letter introduces the epistolary situation, and present-tense paragraphs are intermingled with a past-tense travelogue-like account of her recent trip to Europa. This first letter gives the reader an outline of the speculative storyworld and its timeline. Lumi's travelogue-and-diary-like letters are indexed with time and space coordinates, which make clear that the actual world works as a prototype for Itäranta's speculative storyworld, just that the events take place in the future in relation to the author's and reader's temporal coordinates and sociocultural context (of the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century). The novel places its reader into a future where humans have advanced technologically to be able to colonize the solar system, and where space travel is possible, and so the novel can be straightforwardly identified as speculative—it presents a version of a possible future.

The novel has three parts. Letters and messages divided among these parts present the events in such a way that they can be related to the conventional Aristotelian plot structure of three parts: it has a clear beginning, middle and end.[177] The first part is of most significance in giving shape to the storyworld—it is the "setting of the stage" where Itäranta presents to the reader all characters, introduces a significant part of the backstory, and sketches out the environments of the speculative storyworld. The first part introduces the nature of the epistolary relationship as well as the unexpected story-inciting change.

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[177] To account for both textual and readerly dynamics, i.e., how events are arranged to unfold and how the reader is gradually subjected to and engaged with them, in *Experiencing Fiction* (2007) Phelan develops an elaborate rhetorical model of narrative progression (a term he uses to discuss plot). He highly complicates the customary Aristotelian model of a beginning, middle and ending, setting it apart into twelve specific aspects (See Phelan, "Introduction," 15–22). As in this MA thesis only a brief overview of the events of the plot is intended, Phelan's model will not be employed and narrative's movement from beginning to end will be went over using looser terms, focusing mostly on the ethically demanding closure.

This change of state is from presence to absence—the event which builds up the need for a communicative medium and forces the narrative to progress toward a resolution is the receival of Sol's first message stating that they cannot arrive to Harmonia where they and the protagonist were supposed to meet. This situation gradually evolves into an awareness of their strange disappearance, and the absence of the spouse is what sets the protagonist looking for them both through physical travel and in memory. Second part advances a variety of complications and instabilities to this changed state, giving a lot of backstory details elucidating the relationship of the spouses. Lumi travels back and forth, making more and more information about the speculative storyworld available to the reader; her wanderings fueled by her thoughts of Sol make the sense of absence even more acute. This pushes the narrative towards its climax—ecoterrorists attack the Earth, which is brought forward in the third part.

The protagonist's space travelling in search for her spouse, as well as what can be called soul travelling (an ability that Lumi has a healer) and even "travelling" through memory, are the events that form the focus of the story. These events are presented *through* correspondence—how Lumi recounts them is essential for the construction of the storyworld, but her act of writing is not really a significant event in itself if events are "causes of changes of state."[178] Rather, it helps to track how her state changes and how she evolves as a character; as Altman puts it, "[t]o write a letter is to map one's coordinates—temporal, spatial, emotional, intellectual.[179]

Lumi's act of writing in is closely linked to retrospection. According to Altman, some letter novels are "bound in a present preoccupied with the future,"[180] while in others the present is oriented toward the past.[181] Memories figure prominently in *KK*, and the *here and now* of Lumi's letters is typically turned toward the past. The story unfolds mostly in past tense. Lumi narrates the events that took place in very recent past, i.a., her travelling from one place to another in search for Sol, her conversations with strangers, detectives, journalist, and Sol's family members. But even more so, often does Lumi turn towards her distant past. Epistolary medium allows the narrator to plunge into distant memories so frequently, that recollections uncover a part of the storyworld as significant as is

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[178] Ryan, "Story/Worlds/Media," 36.

[179] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 119.

[180] Ibid., 124.

[181] Ibid., 126–128.

established by the events of the story proper. Altman notes that a tendency to get absorbed in memory is typical to epistolary relationships of separated lovers, "since memory is all one has left in absence."[182] Although this is very much in line with Lumi's situation, the protagonist constantly plunges into reminiscence not only of the pleasant memories she and Sol shares, but also of her personal past, which gradually gives a picture of the main events of protagonist's teenage years on Earth and the beginning of her and Sol's relationship. This not only allows Itäranta to put across more information about the speculative storyworld; setting forth the act of remembrance in relation to writing and *re*presenting what is long gone, like "Sol, I allow myself to travel afar and step through the gate beyond which memories live. I defy the distance that parts past from this moment and retrieve every detail of the places I knew, bring them back to life"[183] works as a reminder of the artificiality of the narrative design. However, "walk[ing] on the paths of the past,"[184] is internally motivated as Lumi does that in hope of understanding Sol, in suspicion that her teacher is somehow related to her spouse; she is looking for clues in her past that would help her get the picture: "I must tell myself of the past, and tell you, Sol: see it with new eyes through words,"[185] but with its "must tell" and similar expressions it nonetheless calls attention to the synthetic component. This allows the reader to take in the already noted themes—absence and distance, complemented with the theme of memory.

Lumi's letters present the storyworld only in part—there is also the already briefly covered segment of selected documents and electronic messages, the latter of which, as becomes clear from Lumi's letters,[186] are also carefully picked out. One important meaning-creating aspect of epistolary narratives discussed by Altman is an inclusion of the story of their own publication—although ultimately a medium of private communication, letters (and electronic messages for that matter) in epistolary narratives have the potential

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[182] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 132.

[183] Itäranta, *KK*, 35. It is gradually revealed to the reader that the place where "the memories live" is a (imaginary but real for healers) place accessible to Lumi because of her soul travel abilities. This is one of the multiple literalized metaphors of the novel; unfortunately, due to limited scope of the MA thesis only one of them will be discussed (under "Environments"). However, this one can be at least noted, because it is a strong argument to advance the idea that the novel thematizes memory.

[184] Itäranta, *KK*, 118.

[185] Ibid., 64.

[186] In one of her letters Lumi writes: "As I write this, you have yet to respond to the messages I sent you one after another. But I can see you have read them." (KK, 50) However, these messages are not part of the "document collection." This draws attention to the fact that not all messages are included in the publication, but only those that are in some way significant.

to become public.[187] The story of how Lumi's letters were got hold of, arranged together with other documents, edited and published is not part of the events that are framed by the narrative, but the fact that they were collected for a particular reason is alluded to in the first document called "A remark on date and time notation in the document collection entitled *The Moonday Letters*"[188] that stands just after the prologue, even before introducing part one and its epigraph. Written in scholarly style, featuring footnotes and referring to Lumi by her surname, it works as an editorial foreword in which certain editorial choices are explained ("For authenticity, all dates in this collection have been retained in their original format"[189]). "Remark" presents the otherwise invisible consciousness responsible for the (re)arrangement of the letters and messages, as well as the selection and placement of the documents.

The contribution of this editor is substantial—through the meaning-creating arrangement of correspondence and documents he/she definitely guides the reader's experience of the storyworld by, i.a., introducing speculative elements. In order to account for such editorial consciousnesses often present in epistolary narratives, Altman provides a detailed graph that distinguishes three diegetic levels of letter novels; the figures of the fictional editor/publisher and his/her addressee are seen as intermediary—Altman situates them in between the clearly extratextual, i.e., the real author of the epistolary novel and her reader, and the internal letter writer and his/her addressee.[190] The inferred editor of the "document collection" likewise has a mediatory role, which is twofold. First, this publication is meant for storyworld-internal addressees. The inferred story of Collection's internal publication takes place in distant future in relation to the events of 2168 (or 68 MC (Martian chronology)) that are depicted through correspondence. Temporal coordinates can be traced from headings and captions of some documents. For example, an excerpt about the principle of inviolability is obtained from "*Encyclopedia Ecologica* on the interplanetary web"[191] in 2312. The editor's purpose is, then, to bridge a significant temporal gap between two worlds in a figurative sense—the world of his/her own addressee and the sociocultural world of Lumi. Both "worlds" add up to the information

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[187] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 109–112.

[188] Itäranta, *KK*, 10.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 200– 201.

[191] Itäranta, *KK*, 102.

that determines the external reader's experience of the storyworld. The temporal frame of the novel expands to include not only Lumi's distant past, her *here and now*, but also the events that take place in the far future of the protagonist's present. This brings to the second point. Elucidating various temporally distant subtleties with the help of an assortment of documents for the sake of his/her own addressee, the inferred editorial consciousness simultaneously mediates between the storyworld and the actual world of the external reader and, as follows, just as Lumi, is a significant contributor to the introduction of the speculative storyworld.

Such indirect establishment of future events results in two different effects. On one hand, the internal publication of the "document collection" foregrounds the mimetic component by internally motivating the intermingling of correspondence with documents that help to illuminate various speculative elements to the external reader. "Remark" points to the fact that the addressee of the whole "document collection" is separated from the events introduced through correspondence by significant temporal distance. Temporal distance is why many things need to be clarified. This makes the addressee of the Collection comparable to the external reader—they are both in need of clarifications.[192] This amplifies the sense of authenticity of the speculative narrative and thus adds up to the inner consistency required for inducing belief and prompting immersion. On the other hand, with every well-placed document, the editorial consciousness common to the highly self-reflexive epistolary form reminds the reader of narrative's artificiality, setting forth the fact that in itself, the novel is an authorial design which was written, arranged, and edited in order to purposively tell a story that projects a particular world founded on a certain premise. Equally promoting both components, the fact of the internal publication of Lumi's letters entails double perspective.

What is more, in promoting the mimetic, the inferred fact of Collection's publication generates the effect of suspense, while in promoting the synthetic, it allows the reader to suspect what this suspense is meant to accomplish, and, arriving at a resolution, to sensitively reflect on the themes and ideas she is pointed toward. Suspense is how

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[192] Altman asserts that epistolary novel's tendency to narrativize its own internal publication blurs the distinction between external and internal reader—epistolary novels allow to pass "from the fictional to the real, historical world;" however, Altman's assertion stems from a discussing of realist 18th century novels (Altman, *Epistolarity*, 110–111). Naturally, this cannot be said of speculative novels that put forward a non-historical, "non-mimetic" storyworld. There is no way that the ideal external reader situated in the second decade of the 21st century can be equated to the addressee of the editor situated in the very distant future. Their only similarity is the temporal distance that motivates the internal explanations of various subtleties presented through correspondence.

readers can become emotionally involved in a narrative.[193] Existence of a temporally distant editorial consciousness implies that the events presented through correspondence are worthy of being presented because they are in some way significant for future populace. Already from the "Remark," Itäranta invites the reader to question the purpose for collecting and publishing documents; however, the disclosure of information is carefully controlled, even resorting to such expressions as "[f]or reasons that will be clear to the readers […]."[194] This builds some suspense, thus prompting the reader's involvement—to find out what those events are and why they are significant, the reader is engaged to follow the development of the plot. It is gradually revealed that the "document collection" is published because Lumi's letters bear witness to an important historical event—terrorist attack on Earth with a "bioliberator"[195] weapon called Inanna. This weapon, developed by a terrorist group Stoneturners of which scientist Sol was a part, would gradually purify the oceans, bring down the temperature of "overheated climate of the Earth" and restore its natural environments—the weapon is "intended to liberate Earth from the terrorist regime of Mars without bloodshed, using methods aimed at breaking human dictatorship and creating a new golden era of nature."[196] Due to this attack, strict quarantine measures are imposed and Lumi is forever locked out of her home planet— Earth is isolated from other colonies and thus begins "Inanna period."

Throughout the novel, there are signals pointing toward the reason for the internal publication of the novel. Of central significance are the encyclopedia articles with which every part of the novel closes. The first one is "The Holocene," presenting a real-life term that designates the geological epoch which the articles claims to have ended in 2040 when it was replaced with the Anthropocene, another real-life term well-known to environmentally concerned reader and scholars dealing with cli-fi. The second part closes with an article about the latter, mapping out all the damage to the Earth that human activity has caused, topicalities not too far-fetched from those of the actual world. The final article with which the whole novel closes, presents the external reader with a proposition for a possible alternative to the Anthropocene—"Biocene; Anthrobiocene." The reader is

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[193] Heta Pyrhönen, "Suspense and Surprise," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman (London: Routledge, 2010), 578.

[194] From the second technical document, the "Introduction: On technological developments of space flight prior to the Inanna period," in "A Short History of Space Flight" published by story-world internal scientist in 127MC (*KK*, 39).

[195] Itäranta, *KK*, 371.

[196] Ibid., 354.

steadfastly directed towards this proposition on multiple levels, among other things, by necessitating double perspective which allows the reader to evaluate the narrative progression as calling attention to this thematic component. This proposition related to the Earth's well-being is strongly foregrounded at the end of the novel. After the climactic moment of the attack, the reader, who is both involved with the mimetic and encouraged to reflect on the thematic component, is made to realize that the internal publication of the "collection" has to do with radical environmentalism.

This pushes the reader towards an ethically demanding closure. Lumi's letter written just after the attack is followed by a couple of other letters, several documents (mostly news articles updating on the situation on Earth), Sol's paper letter addressed to Lumi and the encyclopedia article on "Biocene; Anthrobiocene" that informs how the attack is perceived in the future. All these final documents and even letters provide no definite ethical evaluation of the event and its implications. Instead, all offer different angles on the attack. They serve as a means for stimulating the reader's own final ethical judgement. Already alluded to at the very beginning of the novel, the reasons behind publication of the "collection" generate suspense and, as the reader is made to reflect on the thematic component, prompt the evaluation and interpretation not only of the whole narrative, but also of its final proposition.

The novel ends with an epilogue that both gives a strong sense of closure and leaves it open-ended, demanding ethical judgement. As *KK* is an epistolary narrative built on absence and separation, it closes when separated correspondents reunite. Discussing the dynamics of epistolary closure, Altman notes that the end of all letter novels is parallel to the discontinuation of correspondence; this notion gives rise to a discussion of epistolary narrative's dual potential to either come to a definite closure, or to end openly without offering a resolution.[197] The sense of finality of such narratives is caused by motivated silence—when the correspondents do not have any more reasons to write to each other, for example, because they reunite (total presence), or because one of them dies (total absence). The sense of open-endedness is created by unfinished or unanswered letters—unmotivated, unexplained cessation of correspondence before the threads of the plot have been tied together.[198] These observations ground the assertion that *KK* closes with presence by reunion of the separated correspondents, which restores the disturbed status quo of the

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[197] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 147–149.
[198] Ibid., 149, 155–162.

storyworld and brings about a resolution. At first, spouses reunite in correspondence itself, as Sol finally writes a paper letter to Lumi, providing a lengthy retrospective illumination of what happened as seen from their point of view. In this letter, Sol explains their absence, providing the motives behind their actions, uncovering their sentiments and values. Sol's resolutionary letter is followed by one technical document and then a present-tense epilogue. The epilogue is written by Lumi, and it brings the reader back to the situation of the prologue—Lumi is sitting in a café on the Moon, looking through the window, observing distant Earth, writing, remembering, imagining, and waiting for Sol. The novel ends with a scene hinting at spouses' reunion:

> Against the space I see a reflection in the window glass, a distant and translucent figure that walks across the floor, stops and seeks something. Looks the other way. I push my chair back and get up. The figure stands on the opposite side of the room. A void spreads between us. Before they turn their face toward me there is a moment, as long as the universe, when I don't know if it is you, Sol, or someone else, unknown to me.[199]

The cessation of writing in *KK* is motivated by reunion and this way the novel offers a sense of finality. At the same time, these final lines of the novel leave its story open-ended. The moment of reunion is permeated with a sense of distance—Sol is in the opposite side of the room, turned away. Echoing the reoccurring images of Sol being turned or moving away, a great emphasis is put on the moment before the face of the figure is turned toward Lumi, indicating reunion by final crossing of distance. The actual moment of reunion is, however, not presented due to limitations of the epistolary form—it is impossible for narrative present to be simultaneous with the event recounted.[200] As the narrator participates in the event directly, she cannot depict the moment of arrival at total presence. Drawing on Altman's observation that the resolution of an epistolary narrative "must take place not only at the level of the narrative as a fable but at the level of the narrative as communication,"[201] it is clear that the case of epistolary communication is closed, but, at same time, the undepicted reunion of the spouses paves the way for an open end—there is no resolution offered at the level of the story, because the reader cannot witness the actual moment of reunion.

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[199] Itäranta, *KK*, 382.

[200] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 127–129.

[201] Ibid., 162.

The narrative progression of *KK* pushes the reader towards an ethical judgement—an open ending that is ethically engaging, calling for an evaluation of the whole narrative. The reader is left unsure about how the reunion of separated spouses actually went, because Itäranta does not provide Lumi's opinion on Sol playing a major part in the attack. The reader is then left to question whether Lumi considers it right or wrong and whether she will forgive Sol for separating her from her home planet and her parents, as well taking part in destroying their first home on Fuxi. The immersed reader needs to make ethical judgments on the character's behalf, which necessitates the reevaluation of her own personal values and beliefs, as well as the whole narrative. Employing the epistolary form, Itäranta creates a strong sense of closure by total presence—the separated correspondents reunite, the status quo of the storyworld is restored, and the letter medium is no longer needed; yet, the actual moment of reunion is not depicted, and this leaves the story open for interpretation and thus ethically potent—the final ethical judgement is left to the reader.

To sum up the section, Itäranta develops a single plot by means of letter communication—the events presented through correspondence form the focus of the story, and the letter form allows to dedicate equal attention to both the present moment and the past. The speculative storyworld of *The Moonday Letters* is modelled on the real world of the reader, but its "non-mimeticity" stems in part from its temporal setting—the events take place in the future of the world familiar to the reader. This future setting consists of two layers: the events that form the story presented through correspondence, and the events implied by technical documents and the fact that the "document collection" was published in the far future in relation to the *here and now* of Lumi's act of writing. These separate layers reinforce one another and work together in prompting the reader's immersion into the storyworld, engaging her with the development of the plot but at the same time encouraging her to reflect on the Earth and what can or should be done about it; bringing out double perspective, narrative progression pushes the reader toward the final ethical judgement.

## 3.2. Characters

The previous section discussed the events of the story and the dynamics of narrative progression. What about characters who act? Who are they and what are their motivations and ethical positions? Drawing on Phelan's rhetorical theory of character, the three components—mimetic (character as a possible person), thematic (as an idea),

synthetic (as an element of an artificial construct) will be used to discuss the two main characters: protagonist Lumi and her missing spouse Sol.[202] This discussion leads to a consideration of some ideas explored in the novel as well as a consideration of how they are presented.

Lumi, the protagonist of the novel is introduced only through her accounts, that is, the characteristic traits of Lumi's personality can be determined only from the content and voice of her letters. Itäranta builds a strong and characteristic presence of the writing persona and gives the protagonist a distinct voice, making the mimetic component of this character prominent. Character's mimetic component is necessary for prompting the reader's emotional involvement, which in itself is crucial to the effect of the work.[203] From Lumi's letters, some of her traits can be reconstructed: she is honest in her communication with others, but she is also very persistent in her search for the missing spouse and so she even has to resort to manipulations of minor characters, using them as ends to her means; some of her accounts have a tinge of sarcasm, which manifests in her word choice and especially epithets when depicting things that she is not fond of. For example, she makes fun of terrible food on an interplanetary spaceship by writing it an epitaph, and gently mocks her nosy train-neighbor's complaints about his health: "I had to listen to a one-hour-and-seventeen-minutes-long (I'm not making this up, I secretly timed it) dramatically meandering case history starring the gall bladder, joints and dental roots of Mr. Onion Whiff."[204] This is present mostly in her first letters, but as Sol goes missing, her voice in present-tense passages grows more and more somber as it is tinged with doubt and nostalgia stemming from acute sense of loss, while the past-tense paragraphs become more impersonal, similar to objective reports which suggests her detachment. The reader is made familiar with the whole spectrum of her sentiments. The mimetic component of the character is rather compelling, inviting the reader to get involved with the character's experience. Conversely, the synthetic is left covert although Lumi is constantly engaged in the act of writing. The multiple self-reflective passages of the novel, as argued in the previous chapter, definitely point to the synthetic component of the narrative as a whole, but it is common for the act of writing to be exposed in letters, and so this does not detract from the "liveliness" and believability of the character. By strictly adhering to the specific

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[202] This discussion on characters will also include an inevitable brief digression in that direction because social rules rule over characters' personal values and influence their actions.

[203] Phelan, *Reading People, Reading Plots*, 8.

[204] Itäranta, *KK*, 42.

epistolary dynamic, Itäranta makes an effort to compose the character in such a way that the reader could emotionally engage with her, evaluate her as a possible real person and adopt her point of view.

Lumi is born on Earth, in a holiday island called Winterland located in the North pole.[205] In storyworld's present moment she works as a healer—a shaman-like specialist who travels the solar system to treat patients. Because of the temporal setting, *KK* has noticeable sci-fi- and space opera-like elements, but Lumi's occupation as a healer introduces a great deal of the "non-mimetic" elements of the storyworld that could be recognized as fantastic. Lumi holds healing rituals wearing an androgynous costume— dress and a beard, and her rituals feature dances, songs and medicine made from plants; during them she goes into trance and travels to otherworld, or synonymously, spirit world, in order to treat her patients' soul sicknesses—"to retrieve the lost part and make the soul whole again."[206] As all healers, she has a soul helper that only she can see, and that takes a form of an animal which somehow reflects healer's personality; Lumi's soul animal is lynx, which can be related to her seclusion and travelling. This occupation makes Lumi a mediator between two worlds—accompanied by lynx, her soul is able to travel to the otherworld. Narrative progression wise, this ability helps Lumi locate Sol, but it also introduces a lot of descriptions of strange, eerie landscapes through which she must find her way home, and this mirrors her constant wandering in the physical dimension of the storyworld.

Being Earth-born and her occupation as a travelling healer make up Lumi's thematic role. The sociocultural aspect of the storyworld is not really established—the novel is preoccupied with individual human experience and so it introduces only mere allusions to the management of the colonies in the solar system, their states of affairs, cultural climate, traditions and thinking patterns, leaving most of it for the reader to fill in with her imagination. However, the backstory allows the reader to associate the Earth with poor socioeconomic conditions. Lumi recounts the struggles of her family, having to work from early age. Before her abilities to heal were discovered by Vivian, she had little perspectives for the future. Her occupation implies that she has a worldview of a healer—

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[205] Lumi's complaint about the use of gender pronouns—"Sol, how often I have wished for personal pronouns to be gender neutral in all languages, as they are in my mother's tongue" (*KK*, 43) allows the reader to associate Lumi's birthplace Winterland with Finland.

[206] Itäranta, *KK*, 205.

she is educated, very perceptive, as she physically senses soul sickness in others, and she is closely linked to nature—through her accounts, Lumi is shaped as a character who appreciates and enjoys nature, but in addition to that she has have excellent knowledge of medicinal plants, mushrooms and lichen. What is more, the guiding ethical principles of healers acknowledges the inherent value of environment. She recalls that the guiding ethical principle of her teacher Vivian was the principle of inviolability, which she has in all probability inherited. The principle of inviolability, as elucidated by one of the technical documents, is an environmentally sound idea criticizing self-centeredness of humans; according to it, "the value of or need for protection of the environment is not defined by the occurrence of life forms, but the untouched natural landscape is of inherent value in itself."[207] The storyworld-internal coiner of this term proposes that landscapes of the celestial bodies should be left untouched. This value, altogether with Lumi's various statements about hubris and carelessness of humans indicate that she is slanted towards the Earth and peaceable.

Sol stands as Lumi's exact opposite. This binary opposition is immediately visible, manifesting, among other things, in the characters' names that point to their thematic and synthetic roles. Lumi is a common Finnish name that means "snow," while her surname connotes a large, remote, uninhabited forested area or "wilderness."[208] Sol stands for "sun" in Spanish, and her surname Uriarte connotes an inhabited area—a town, settlement.[209] Itäranta draws the reader's attention to this contrast by making her characters themselves mark this. Lumi recalls her first meeting with Sol:

> Pleasure to meet you, Lumi. You raised your glass. I'm Sol.
> I should keep my distance, then, I said and was surprised at my own words. Flirting had always been alien to me, something that made me feel like I belonged to a different species altogether.
> Why?
> Surely you're aware of what sunlight does to snow?
> Are you worried you might melt if you come too close?
> Are you?

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[207] Itäranta, *KK*, 102.

[208] Kielitoimiston sanakirja, "Salo," in *Kotimaisten Kielten Keskus, Online Publication 35.* (Helsinki, 2021). Accessed April 14, 2022. https://www.kielitoimistonsanakirja.fi/salo.

[209] Patrick Hanks, "Uriarte," in *Dictionary of American Family Names* (Oxford University Press, 2006). Accessed April 14, 2022. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195081374.001.0001/acref-9780195081374-e-64685?rskey=52RuTd&result=64681&print.

> When two different worlds meet, the end result may be unpredictable, you said and clinked our glasses together.[210]

Before long, this conversation is echoed, and the opposition reaffirmed, when Lumi remembers discussing what kind of soul animal would accompany Sol if they were a healer. Lumi asserts that Sol's companion would be a raven because "they are intelligent and curious problem-solvers," and she recalls Sol remarking "Don't lynx hunt ravens?" and her reply is "Just like the sun melts the snow."[211] From these textual details the fact that characters are representatives of "two different worlds" emerges as obvious, and this opposition is also established on larger scale. Sol is Mars-born, which means they are from an affluent and influential family, and their other thematic role is scientist—Sol is an ethnobotanist that works on trying to revivify Earth. Their outlook is fundamentally different from Lumi's, and their attitude towards Lumi's occupation is rather skeptical. Sol voices their doubts in one of their messages as they reevaluate their changed outlook: "I have never kept from you the fact that my worldview is different from yours. I do not mean I don't believe your healer's experiences to be true in some way, from your subjective point of view. When you say you travel into other worlds, for you it is accurate. […] But I explain it all by the placebo effect."[212] Through these polarly different characters who grew up on different planets with different sociocultural environments and have radically different worldviews, elements that are commonly attributed to sci-fi and fantasy are literally married, combined in one speculative storyworld that interlinks mystical and mythical with scientific. The names of the characters and their obvious opposition signal that they are invented elements serving particular functions in a narrative design.

Sol's thematic dimension is foregrounded—they stand as a representative for radical environmental ideas. At the same time the mimetic aspect of the character is not fully established. Lumi recounts Sol expressing their aspirations related to "fixing" the Earth—they wish for Earth's nature and its ecosystems to recover so it could gain independence from exploitive Mars that, according to them, treats Earth, "the first home of humanity," in an arrogant way. In the same conversation Sol poses a direct question:

> If you could fix Earth, you said. What would be the highest price you'd pay for it? […] Every single day Earth inhabitants die from epidemic diseases and hunger,

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[210] Itäranta, *KK*, 169–170.

[211] Ibid., 202.

[212] Ibid., 299.

from environmental toxins, in the vessels of human traffickers in the darkness of space, you continued. If you could change that, but the condition would be you'd have to make a big sacrifice in order to achieve that outcome, what would you be ready for?[213]

Sol's rhetoric is radicalized—they list many problems that stem from ruined Earth that has been turned inhabitable and talks of personal sacrifices, which hint at Sol's determination to change the current situation, but Lumi is unable to answer this question, dismissing it with a joke. Sol's question, however, by means of direct address, can also be seen as directed to the external reader, prompting her to think about real-life climate change and its implications on everyday life. This is Sol's main function—they give voice to various Earth-centered ideas, allowing Itäranta to straightforwardly invite the reader to consider potential problems of the future.

However, Sol lacks the mimetic component. For the bigger part of the novel, they appear as a specter—a *re*presented memory, an invented image conjured by the protagonist's imagination, a projection of the future or an alternative present; Lumi's memory, functioning with the selective filter of nostalgia, either *re*presents pleasant memories or those that could work as clues for finding out what is going on, and in neither of those Sol's character can fully come to life. Although their point of view is presented in the final paper letter, their voice is not distinct—it presents a summary of events and recounts the development of sentiments, but it is a rather impersonal report. It's tone is confessional, but neither conversational nor individual. Since in the narrative present Sol never fully manifest as a possible person, the reader is not engaged with their viewpoint and dilemmas. Exactly by such undermining of the mimetic component, Itäranta switches the reader's attention to the ideas Sol represents—their thematic component is emphasized, and thus Sol's thoughts and environmental beliefs that Sol articulates can be fully taken in by the reader.

In their final resolutionary paper letter, Sol explains their motivations for joining Stoneturners, and their confession works as an alternative viewpoint which adds force to the importance of final ethical judgement. In the letter, Sol gives their version of the story: they desperately wish to change Earth's situation, to bring to an end Mars's destructive behavior towards the planet, and so they join Stoneturners—an activist organization that has "striven for decades to increase awareness of environmental issues and questions of

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[213] Itäranta, *KK*, 205.

power that go with them,"[214] at first by peaceful but ineffective means, then gradually becoming more radical. Encouraged by the extremist group, Sol starts developing a weapon that would "make another world, where nature dictates the direction [and] create a new epoch, the Biocene," and they recount that this pursuit for "politically, economically and ecologically free planet, purified of its past" gives them "a direction [they] had been lacking."[215] Sol's ponderings on the actions of the radical kernel of the group and Sol's internal last-minute ethical debates are presented. Although realizing immense personal implications on Lumi's life, they do not completely regret their choice: "I know that because of what I have done, you will never be able to return home, not to the one Earth was for you. Is. But as I look at the life growing along seabeds and giving new lungs to the entire planet, I am unable to feel only grief over how things are."[216] Sol is content with the results of their more-than-ten-years-work—a miracle that significantly accelerates Earth's betterment, and, as implied by technical documents, overall succeeds. However, since Sol is a purely thematic character, the significance of their actions, their motivations, and dilemmas is melted, as those these sentiments only come to matter in relation to Lumi, her story and her reaction, and in turn the reader's ethical judgments of the characters and the narrative overall.

The characters make up a binary opposition that demonstrates two contrary sets of values and different principles of taking action. Sol and Lumi are brought up in different sociocultural conditions—affluent Mars and poverty-stricken, exhausted Earth; they have different outlooks to the world—one is scientific, the other is spiritual, but they both care about the Earth. Lumi's the attitude and wish for change stems from her personal experience—she longs for its nature and wishes for Earth to improve because she cares about the conditions an future prospects of people who inhabit it just as she did; Sol's interest is scientific and it stems in part from the role their home planet had to play in making the conditions on Earth even worse. Although Sol recounts their radicality diminishing, overall, their care for nature is placed above humans, and all their ethical decisions are guided by their preoccupation with betterment of the Earth that is related to their scientific interests. Lumi, acting in accordance with the principle of inviolability—that humans should intervene as little as possible when it comes to the nature of Earth and

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214 Itäranta, *KK*, 367.

215 Ibid., 370–371.

216 Ibid., 376.

other planets, is a peaceful, a more reactive character that tends to observe, while Sol is proactive, characterized almost only by their radical ideas and decisions that put the Earth to the forefront, but in a way that harshly intervenes with its natural processes. Itäranta never discloses Lumi's viewpoint on the terrorist attack and Sol's role in it, so the final ethical judgement on how Lumi will or should react, and, overall, whether it is morally acceptable is left for the reader. Sol's outlook, juxtaposed with Lumi's, brings in a new angle to better grasp and evaluate Lumi's viewpoint, which can reinforce the reader's ethical judgments.

Since Sol's mimetic component is never fully established, the radical Earth-centered ideas that they articulate are brough to spotlight and served up directly for the reader to consider: a life dedicated to "fix the Earth," actively taking responsibility for destructive human behavior and aiming to change it, personal sacrifices in favor of the Earth, nonhuman nature as significant as humans etc. But the reader's interest in Lumi as a chiefly mimetic character—entanglement with her experiences and point of view that is strengthened by the lyricality of the narrative—also allow Itäranta to put forward an important point not as straightforwardly. Making use of double perspective, Itäranta's narrative enacts the proposition presented via documents and voiced by Sol—from Anthropocene to nature-centered Biocene. After the terrorist's attack, Lumi's final letter presents the reader with a sudden shift in perspective. From the persistent first-person narration, she switches to we-narration because her consciousness merges with her soul animal's:

> The animal's eyesight lives within my eyes, and I live under her skin; she lends me her senses and the strength of her muscles, and I don't want to return to my own skin again. The change strikes me as a light storm, an explosion that cannot be reversed and forced back into its shell. […]
> We grow smaller smaller smaller
>
> until everything is bigger than us, cells and atoms and the dark matter in between. Everything is clear and bright, and I see it. [217]

The passages in which Lumi depicts what she sees together with and through the animal's eyes lack punctuation, some are provided in italic font and even feature changes in font size. However, the experience is recounted in a letter, evocative we-narration is intermingled with reflective comments. This letter creates high tension between the

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[217] Itäranta, *KK*, 362–363.

synthetic and the mimetic, because an illusion of this powerful experience as happening in the *here and now* is being created while it still placed inside a letter, which signals that it is a recounted memory—"This happens one morning after sleep […]."[218] However, the whole letter is written in present-tense, *re*presenting the experience by trying to act it out with the help of present tense and changes in font. Subjected to these changes which point to the difficultness of describing such an experience on the level of the character-narrator, and the challenge of complying to the epistolary dynamic on the level of the author, the reader is made aware of the artificiality of the narrative; at the same time, having fully adopted the viewpoint of the narrator and immersed into the storyworld, the reader is prompted to see through the eyes of Lumi-and-lynx and experience her experience.

Doubled, the reader's gaze is directed toward the idea of Biocene. This final letter is an enactment of the proposed shift from the human-centered Anthropocene toward Earth-centeredness and nonhuman inclusivity. This is one of the ways in which the narrative makes use of double perspective to consistently puts up themes and ideas related to the environment. This idea, a proposition for a positive shift away from the current destructive paradigm—from human-centered to all-nature-encompassing—is communicated by means of documents, voiced by the character as well as more subtly enacted in one of the letters. Imaginative quality of sf and double perspective inherent to it allows Itäranta to bring this idea forward both effectively and affectively.

### 3.3. Environments

As much as they are temporal, the term itself designates that storyworlds are spatial designs—events are inseparably bound to the spaces they take place in. The particular rendering of time and space characterizes a storyworld. Letter form allows to clearly establish not only temporal, but also spatial coordinates of the autodiegetic narrator— almost all Lumi's letters indicate her location, specifying both the name of city and planet. The spatial coordinates of the first letter ("long-distance starship somewhere between Jupiter and Mars"[219]) as well as the following ones that state familiar names of real planets and moons such as Mars and Europa, together with a clear indication of time (year 2168) and even its explanation in "Remark," make the reader immediately aware of the fact that

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[218] Itäranta, *KK*, 356.

[219] Ibid., 15.

she is dealing with a speculative storyworld, and that it deviates from the actual world by depicting the future. To what kind of a future is the reader subjected? An inquiry into the depictions of nature and other environments is a crucial part of an econarratological reading—it sheds light into what kind of environments the reader immerses herself. This section elaborates on the future world depicted in the novel, targeting the meanings that are given to storyworld's environments[220]—both visited, imagined and remembered by the protagonist, with special focus on nature; these observations, in reconstructing the speculative premise around which the narrative and its world are organized, lead to a conclusory discussion of the thematic center of the novel.

The events presented through the four months of correspondence take place on several planets and moons of the solar system, but the range of environments brought froward through Lumi's letters extends from various physically visited locations to places that are remembered, imagined, or visited during soul travelling. Lumi begins her notebook on her way from Europa heading to meet Sol on Mars, and throughout the novel she physically travels to several cities on Mars, a cylinder city orbiting Mars where she and Sol live—Nüwa, British Isles on Earth and then the Moon. In her memory, she most frequently visits her poverty-stricken childhood home in the North pole of Earth—Winterland, and a cylinder city called Fuxi—her first home with Sol, as well as a home that she and Sol are constructing together in their imagination—Moonday House.

The novel envisions a future in which humans have colonized the solar system and adapted to very different conditions. From dome cities of Moon and Mars to cylinder cities orbiting Earth and Mars in which the action takes place, from allusions to underground gardens of Mars to underwater cities of Europa and sky cities of Venus, Itäranta constructs a speculative storyworld with a teeming variety of space settlements. However, although inhabited and adapted to, the outer space is represented as ill-suited for humans. Such meaning is articulated through Lumi's accounts. On multiple occasions Lumi notes how space is unfitting for humans—she imagines the consequences of leaving a Martian transportation vessel without protection—"thin atmosphere and the gnawing temperature would enclose your skin immediately, they'd poison your lungs and thicken the blood in

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[220] Physical laws will not be discussed because the storyworld of the novel is not an entirely Secondary world, but rather an augmentation of the actual one by means of speculation about the future. What about the technology that permits space travel? Itäranta makes an effort to explain it scientifically and coherently, providing a historical overview of its developments, implying that it is not some kind of magic, but a technology aligned with the physical laws of the real-world, a technology which could be possible in the readers future; she makes it a technology recognizable to the reader as feasibly possible—the engine that enables space travel "uses dark matter as its primary energy source" (*KK*, 39).

your veins;"[221] satirizes the unchanging scenery of Mars and notes that it is made habitable only by determination, which for her is not as much an achievement, but hubris: "an endless lifeless landscape on a hostile piece of rock floating in space where no human should ever have set foot, but the hubris of our species knows no bounds."[222] Protagonist's reflections about space and its colonization are generally negatively tinged.

Lumi tends to personify space and depict it as a dangerous, even hostile, or, at best, uninterested creature. One of her first letters in which she depicts her arrival to a spaceport on Mars serves as a vivid example of this:

> Sol, [o]n Mars light never looks quite the same as on Earth. On the surface it falls wan and muted, even when there are no dust storms cloaking the sun. Between the dome cities rests a darkness: that of a world long devoid of life when our kind first arrived. We dug our way deep below the surface, so we could survive in spaces never meant for our bodies and thoughts, and we built the brightest lamps we knew how. We made fields and forests in a remote resemblance of what Earth held for us once. But we all know that just outside the fragile sphere of light the dark lays its heavy fingers onto the thick glass. It was here before us and will remain long after we are gone, hungry, untamed, uninterested in anything but itself. And yet, in passing moments when the angle and time of day are just right, and the season favorable, it is possible to be fooled. […] as my eyes followed the shafts of light filtering through the frosted glass and blossoming branches, a sensation passed through me that was soft and sharp at once. For a brief spell I felt like I was home. The moment did not last.[223]

Observing her surroundings, she begins her letter by evaluating the landscape and drawing attention to the danger that lays behind the technological excellence of human settlements. The danger that space poses for humans is expressed through rather conventional imagery—light, essential to life and signifying vivacity, safety for humans is in constant opposition with the ominous darkness of space. Space and its darkness is contemplated as eternal. Lumi sees it as lively and threatening; such meaning is articulated through reoccurring personifying metaphors: it is "hungry, untamed," it has as a tongue, arms[224] and "heavy fingers." Space is portrayed as an antagonistic, ominous being, primarily a threat to humankind, and so such imagery emphasizes the fragility of human lives in outer space.

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[221] Itäranta, KK, 117.

[222] Ibid., 195.

[223] Ibid., 21.

[224] "[…] Europa looked beautiful and remote as it fell into the arms of darkness" (*KK*, 19).

Introducing rooftop gardens on affluent buildings of Mars, green spaces and even full-sized natural parks built inside cylinder cities orbiting various space bodies, the novel is booming with descriptions of lush nature, its thriving flora and fauna. Lumi's letters feature numerous accounts of such environments, most of which are human made. Lumi is well-aware of nature's artificiality and tends to point it out: "The humidity of the waterfall fell in drops onto my skin. The sun that wasn't the sun drew prisms in the mist floating above the water,"[225] or "The dome that sheltered the city arched far above, its thousands of lamps casting daylight imitating rays into the garden."[226] While appreciating artificial environments, she sees them as lesser imitations of the real thing. It is especially relevant to light: on Mars it is not "quite the same as," in Nüwa it is "almost like Earth sunlight."[227] Earth-born protagonist is poignantly aware of the imitative quality of space settlements' artificial environments and compares them to the natural ones of her home planet.

Pointing up the hostility of space and the inferiority of artificial nature draws the reader's attention to the real thing—the Earth. Since the very beginning of the novel, it is alluded that there is something wrong with it. The extensive quote above contains a line in which a powerful characterizing stamp "once" is brought forward: "We made fields and forests in a remote resemblance of what Earth held for us once." This unspecific deictic word references to the past and simultaneously implies "not anymore" without giving more information to the external reader. Keeping in line with the epistolary dynamic, Lumi's letters offer only suspense-generating allusions to common knowledge about what had happened to the Earth and how does it look like now. As the narrative progresses, it is conveyed to the reader that the Earth has been impacted by "drought, famine, a war that ground everything to dust"[228] in the past, and characterized by polluted land and water, extinct trees and animals, dangerous plastic recycling jobs, and space vessels with people fleeing from its poor natural and socioeconomic conditions in the storyworld's present. As the reader works through the narrative, more information is given about the Earth and it gradually appears as lost—although still inhabited, its nature is devastated, it is polluted, ridden with wars, pandemics, poverty, famine, illnesses etc.

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[225] Itäranta, *KK*, 203.

[226] Ibid., 24.

[227] Ibid., 362.

[228] Ibid., 114.

Present-day environmental concerns are embodied in the speculative elements, and so they work as a provocation to reflect on present-day environmental issues. Itäranta envisages a future where the Earth is devastated and establishes a link between the real world and the 2168 of storyworld by repeatedly making reference to its past, in which the problems of the storyworld take root. For example, the first document—"a report on technical developments prior to Inanna period"[229] contains a footnote referring to a fossil fuel crisis in the 2030 and the "impacts of climate change, which had turned acute."[230] This past roughly corresponds to the reader's temporal coordinates, and since the reader's understanding of the storyworld builds on her own experience, the environmental and other global issues depicted are more or less recognizable to her. Contrasting the real with the invented, it becomes clear that the problems of the storyworld's Earth are the same as those of the real Earth, just larger in scale. For example, people trying to escape to Mars in space vessels is a clear enlargement of the present-day issue of climate and war refugees. This issue is enlarged by bringing it to the interplanetary level. The hostile space, in addition to both devastated natural environments of Earth, as well as the recreated artificial ones, are all inhabited during the process of reading, and through direct link with present day, the reader's attention is directed to the topicalities of their present. Speculative elements related to the projection of a grim future for the Earth encourage reflections on topical issues and work as an indirect call for real-life change, if not as a warning that current problems will gradually increase if nothing will be done.

To turn the discussion of environments into a theme-related direction, in addition to artificial and real nature, the novel features multiple depictions of interiors—of cafés, vehicles, hotels, homes etc. Those are locations from which Lumi writes, and so short delineations are inevitable for establishing the *here and now* essential to epistolary form. Of central significance is, however, and imagined interior—the Moonday House—a "shared home in [Lumi's and Sol's] thoughts."[231] The reader is made aware that it was a conversational routine of the couple to build a house with the help of imagination. It is a space where they can meet when they are separated and think of each other; Sol writes: "In the Moonday House I am always with you, at home."[232] Imaginatively building a shared

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[229] Itäranta, *KK*, 37.

[230] Ibid., 39n3.

[231] Ibid., 171.

[232] Ibid.

home figuratively represents the process of developing a relationship—Lumi begins one of her letters by asking "Sol, Do you still remember how we began to build the Moonday House?"[233] and then recounts their first meeting. At the same time, it is built imaginatively. When together, the spouses negotiate how various rooms look like, constantly adding new spaces; when travelling alone, in present-tense passages Lumi describes how she builds new rooms or wanders through the house and imagines meeting Sol there, providing the reader with rich descriptions of this imagined environment. This imaginative project constantly expands as new spaces are added, while the already existing ones are revised, and so the shapeshifting Moonday House is characterized by its perpetual change.

The ever-changing and expanding Moonday House allows Itäranta to convey the sentiments of the protagonist. At the beginning of the novel, as Lumi looks forward to meeting her spouse, Moonday House embodies homeliness and puts across character's confident anticipation: "I close my eyes for a moment and in my mind I walk in the rooms of the Moonday House. I warm my hands in front of the fireplace, I breathe in the scent of the flowers placed on the oak table. In the kitchen that we built together I listen to your humming from the next room. When I open my eyes, you will be here."[234] As mental distance between spouses grows, Lumi writes that she cannot find Sol anymore, just hears their footsteps, and when she starts to distrust Sol as she uncovers more details about what might be happening, the Moonday House likewise reflects her sentiments: "[…] I wander about and do not see you. The house grows and stretches between us to separate where it once connected, pushing us ever farther from each other, until you can no longer catch even a glimpse of me."[235] Instead of connecting, the shapeshifting house estranges. In this way, the reader can take hold of the protagonist's changing emotional state. The Moonday House works as an embodiment of character's sentiments, changing as the character's outlook on the situation changes.

What is more, the Moonday House exposes worldbuilding operations central to sf. Developing Seo-Young Chu's influential idea about sci-fi literalizing metaphors,[236] Brian

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[233] Itäranta, *KK*, 165.

[234] Ibid., 45.

[235] Ibid., 274–275.

[236] Understanding sci-fi as inherently mimetic, in *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep?* (2010), Chu proposes that this genre represents nonimaginary things in a way that is cognitively estranging, that is, by making various poetic figures literally functioning in and even characterizing storyworlds, them becoming the basis around which sci-fi can be shaped. A minor example of a literalized metaphor in *KK* could be a saying "They are from different planets," which in everyday language is taken metaphorically and often

McHale argues that sf is a highly self-reflective genre that tends to literalize not only poetic images, but also narratological terms, narrative devices and structures.[237] He links, for example, prolepsis to time travel in sf, focalization with characters taking over the bodies and minds of other characters, as well as worldbuilding that occurs within the storyworld and the building of the storyworld itself. To paraphrase McHale, in the latter case the imaginative and intellectual process of construction is literalized as it becomes an event within the storyworld.[238] Drawing on this notion, the ongoing process of constructing the Moonday House can be read as mimicking and exposing the process of constructing a narrative and its storyworld.

Such a literalization allows the reader to reflect on the workings and effects of various narrative techniques.[239] The Moonday House draws attention to the importance of descriptive passages in establishing a storyworld—descriptions, even if minimal or allusive, are crucial for giving the reader a sense of the storyworld's environments, objects, and persons. In one of her accounts, Lumi tells how she expands the Moonday House by building a new room—she constructs it by imagining it and uses language to convey it to her addressee:

> While I wait, I close my eyes, step into the Moonday House in my mind and build a new room there. […] With a few waves of my fingers I set the floor planks in place and cover them with a soft, handwoven rug. I make the walls white and wood-paneled: you like wooden surfaces. […] In the middle of the room, I mount a sofa upholstered in gray velvet, the right size for the two of us to sit on. Next to it, on a small table, I place a steaming pot of jasmine tea, two cups, an untouched notebook and a fountain pen. This is a good place for you to come.[240]

She acts like a conductor, relaying her vision to the reader with the help of her words. As she describes the room, she uses deictic language ("in place," "in the middle of the room," "next to it") to map the space and fill it, and her present-tense description works as performative language—the room is not described but made substantial and visible through the description itself, as it is called to both the internal and external reader's mind. This

refers to peoples' differences, but in the novel is turned into a fact—Sol is born on Mars and Lumi is Earth-born.

[237] Brian McHale, "Speculative Fiction, or, Literal Narratology," in The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Narrative Theories, ed. Zara Dinnen and Robyn R. Warhol, Edinburgh Companions to Literature (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 317–31.

[238] Ibid., 327–328.

[239] Ibid., 329.

[240] Itäranta, *KK*, 100–101.

makes the narrative extremely self-reflexive on smaller scale. Lumi's present-tense "building" is parallel to the author's act of constructing a storyworld by means of confining her imaginative vision to the boundaries of language through which it becomes accessible to others and can be grasped, fulfilled, and transformed in the mind of the reader.

McHale argues that exposing various narrative devices always draws attention to artificiality of narratives.[241] Laying bare the process of world construction in *KK* sets into motion the mimetic-synthetic rhetoric of sf. On one hand, the imaginative shared space established by rich descriptions makes the storyworld more complex and vivid, prompting immersion and, as it allows Itäranta to make protagonist's sentiments more substantial, it leads to engagement with the mimetic component of the protagonist. On the other, exposing processes related to "constructing" puts into spotlight the synthetic component of the narrative without ruling out the mimetic. Double exposure makes the reader more aware of the thematic component—in the *KK* this means taking in its environmental inflection and perceiving its thematic emphases.

Moonday House, in connection to the meanings given to the environments of the storyworld and especially the Earth, establishes the key theme of the novel—home, or rather, its loss. The theme of loss of home is brough in already by the dedication to "all those who have lost their homes," and it comes to life with narrative progression. For Lumi, her spouse Sol stands for a home which she loses; Sol's already foregrounded thematic function extends to incorporate her role as a home for Lumi—in their arms she feels like she is at home.[242] Since in her *here and now* she loses the spouse, Lumi loses the feeling of homeliness, and so her travelling is motivated by the desire for reunion with the spouse—coming back home. In the state of lack, the protagonist can resort either to memory or to the Moonday House, an imaginary space which allows her to feel like being at home.

The theme of loss of home to which the dedication points is called forth by repeated images, the reflections of characters, and even the narrative progression. Lumi's story is essentially about the loss of home—not only the plot-significant loss of the spouse, but also numerous other losses: trying to find them she loses her spirit helper; other than the Earth, Lumi constantly revisits her and Sol's first shared home on Fuxi which "[…]

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[241] Itäranta, *KK*, 329.

[242] This can be inferred from such lines as "In the fragile cocoon of light in the middle of all-consuming space we were one creature and yet two, far away from home yet home" (190).

was the first place that felt like home since [Lumi] left Earth as a teenager,"[243] but which was destroyed by a plant disease. As is gradually revealed, the disease was accidentally let off by Sol while they were working on the Inanna weapon. Just as Sol's absence sets the narrative into motion, Lumi's story climaxes with yet another loss of home. With the terrorist attack she loses her childhood home—the Earth, because due to strict quarantine measures neither she nor anyone else can ever come travel there.

What is more, in Lumi's notes Earth is rendered as the ultimate home. Theme of loss of home is further set up in relation to "soul sickness"—a mental disease caused in part by homesickness that healers help with. The soul-devouring homesickness is related to the Earth, no matter on which planet a person is born. The topic is introduced in one of Sol's and Lumi's conversations that she recounts:

> Did you know that even people who have never been to Earth miss it? I asked after a while.
> I've heard of the phenomenon, you said. In medicine it is known as the birth-home syndrome. I've seen it in my patients. People who were born and grew up on Mars long for Earth. For the horizon, the open sea, the sky and the sun. Science believes it is because evolution has not caught up with the changes. As a species, we evolved in Earth conditions and for them, not for underground artificial light. A longing like that can lock itself under the skin and eat a person from within. Healers believe it is one of the reasons for soul-sickness.[244]

This means that in the novel, Earth comes to stand for the ultimate home—not only of Lumi, but of the human species. This home is also lost—although still existing, it is no longer the same as "once" due to destructive human activity, climate change that resulted in environmental degradation and the sociocultural problems that followed. "Birth home syndrome" places an equal sign between home and Earth, so ultimately, the main theme of the novel is loss of home—homes as physical spaces, spouse as a home, and, most importantly, the Earth.

"What if home was lost?" where "home" also stands for "the Earth," rests at the core of the speculative storyworld as a purposive design, both in terms of its content and form. Making use of double perspective—immersion into the viewpoint of a character that negatively renders artificial environments taken together the overtly synthetic construction of the Moonday House, *KK* points the reader toward the theme of loss of home. If turned into a question, this can be regarded as the speculative premise on the basis of which

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[243] Itäranta, *KK*, 114.

[244] Itäranta, *KK*, 204–205.

Itäranta constructs her speculative novel and its storyworld. As a premise, "what if home was lost?" in itself is relatively mundane rather than speculative, but the rhetorical power of sf consists in the process of developing the premise, building on it.[245] Itäranta does exactly that—when discerned, this can be seen as ruling over both narrative techniques and the content of the storyworld. Environmental degradation is given as the reason why humans have sought to settle elsewhere in the solar system in the first place, which means that one of the key speculative elements of the novel (space travel) comes about exactly because Earth, the ultimate home, is lost. Introduced already in the dedication, loss of home is also brought about by narrative progression—absent spouse who needs to be found sets the protagonist travelling. This is reflected in other, both minor and major events of the novel: loss of spirit helper, loss of first shared home, as well as the climax of the novel—permanent separation with home planet caused by a bioattack which, paradoxically, strives for "fixing" that home. Through Lumi's eyes, the reader sees Earth as the ultimate home which is lost, and in this lies the environmental charge of the novel.

This theme is also reinforced by thematizing distance, with which the epistolary medium and its bridge/barrier properties also connects. In *KK*, letters function both as means for open communication, as a spatiotemporal bridge through present tense bringing together the letter writer and its absent addressee, binding together present, past and future, imagination, anticipation and reflection. They also lay emphasis on absence. The epistolary form affords accommodating longing-induced preoccupation with the past because of the desire to relate it to the present.

What are the implications of thematizing loss of home? The multipart desire for homecoming invokes a strong sense of nostalgia. Longing for a lost home—at the beginning of the narrative only the absent spouse, a feeling gradually complemented with other losses—is nostalgia in its most verbatim sense.[246] It presides over all Lumi's accounts. Lumi is as focused on the past as is on the events of the narrative present; she constantly revisits her memories because of the longing engendered by absence—she misses her absent spouse, their lost home on Fuxi and with the help of memory returns to her childhood home on Earth from which she is far away, and with which she later is

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[245] Roine, "The Rhetoric of Worldbuilding," 46–47.

[246] The word is a combination of two Greek words: *nostos* [return to one's native land], and *algos* [pain]; as a compound word it stands for "the longing to return to a lost homeland." John J Su, "Introduction: Nostalgia, Ethics, and Contemporary Anglophone Literature," in Ethics and Nostalgia in the Contemporary Novel (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1, 1n1.

permanently separated as well. The letters seem to allow to *re*present what is absent, but reminiscing cannot make the absent things truly present. There is always a substantial gap between the absent and the present, and nostalgia—longing for what once was but is no more—arises from this unbreachable gap. In the present moment of her writing act, Lumi has hold only of that which has never been real, or of that which is lost. Memory is where her lost homes are still accessible: "We carry within us every home, including those that no longer exist, so we'd have somewhere to return to."[247] Lumi longs for a feeling of being at home, and only through memory, by *re*presenting it, she can reunite with what is otherwise no longer accessible. However, memory of the past cannot be truly *re*presented—made present, substantial and actually felt in the *here and now*. Nostalgia is an immediate effect of thematizing loss of home. The reader who taps into Lumi's experience through her letters is put through this deep sense of longing for what is lost, and her gaze is constantly directed towards the Earth as the ultimate home.

Imbuing the narrative with a sense of nostalgia is a powerful means of changing the reader's outlook on the actual world. Kortekallio makes a brief case that the novel produces solastalgia.[248] A term related to human wellbeing in the time of climate change, *solastalgia* was introduced by environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht to denote distress caused by environmental change—it is "the pain experienced when there is recognition that the place where one resides and that one loves is under immediate assault (physical desolation)."[249] Extending Kortekallio's point, it can be argued that the immersed reader taps into the protagonist's acute nostalgia, and for the reader, by means of double perspective, it potentially manifests as solastalgia—drawing on Kortekallio, nostalgia felt in and for the present moment, a feeling caused by the anticipation of future loss.[250] In other words the immersed reader is made to anticipate possible future loss of home—the Earth to which globally destructive behaviors pose a threat.

This section can be concluded by an argument that the environments of the novel lead to the theme of loss of home, and, subsequently, nostalgia. The reader immerses herself into a speculative storyworld which is created by augmenting the topical problems of the real world; she is made to reflect on it because Itäranta establishes a direct link with

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[247] Itäranta, *KK*, 36.

[248] Kortekallio, "Maan Maankaltaistamisesta," 48.

[249] Glenn Albrecht, "'Solastalgia' : A New Concept in Health and Identity," *PAN: Philosophy Activism Nature*, no. 3 (2005), 45.

[250] Kortekallio, "Maan Maankaltaistamisesta," 48.

the reader's present. The environments of the future world are rendered as either hostile, in the case of space settlements and eerie planetscapes, artificial—having an imitative quality and thus lesser although enjoyable, or devastated—in the case of natural environments of Earth, which are mostly alluded to but not directly represented. All these negative meanings make the reader question the state of the future Earth—the ultimate home, a meaning conveyed by making it the home planet of the protagonist as well as by introducing soul sickness. In the narrative present this home is lost, devastated, but the protagonist is aware of the lost conditions of the "once," which directly links the external reader with the speculative storyworld and the future depicted. As a result of the meanings given to environments, the Moonday House and the characters' reflections pointing to the theme of home, the reader, too, is prompted to conceive of the Earth as the home. Thematization of absence has to do with epistolary form, and this, together with the letter writer's preoccupation with the unattainable past and the idea of loss of home around which the narrative is shaped, invokes a strong sense of nostalgia which, this MA thesis argues, is a powerful "consciousness raising" effect.

### 3.4. Conclusions to Chapter

Targeting the content of the speculative storyworld of *KK,* this chapter looked into the main events of the story, narrative progression, the roles and personal values of characters, the particular rendering of time and space with the focus on environments of the storyworld—a discussion which, through noting how the narrative opens double perspective on smaller scale, led to the thematic center of the novel.

Itäranta's narrative presents the reader with a version of a future the temporal setting of which is clearly established. In this speculative future-world, space travel is possible, and Earth is devastated: ridden with wars, diseases, and poverty, all a result of its environmental degradation. The spatiotemporal setting suggests that the speculative storyworld of the novel is modelled on and deviates from the actual world in such a way that it amplifies present-day issues of the actual world. The storyworld in which the reader immerses herself envisions a grim future for the Earth, and the reader is engaged to reflect on this grim speculative future and its relationship with the present of the real world via direct link established by referencing to the reader's temporal coordinates. Such reflection is also prompted by characters and narrative progression. Earth-centered ideas and environmental concerns are straightforwardly voiced by the two main characters who

represent different "worlds." The reader's view of and outlook on the storyworld is determined by the spiritual-personal-passive and sensitive protagonist; since this autodiegetic narrator has a well-established mimetic component, readers are involved with her experiences, reflections on various things and events, internal debates as well as sentiments, and take on her perspective, which is contrasted with her counterparts, making Sol's radical ideas even more articulate. This contributes to the reader's ethical judgement—as the narrative approaches its end, the reader is prompted to interpret the open end of the novel by evaluating the ideas and actions of the protagonist's spouse through her eyes, which calls for assessment of own values.

A call for a reassessment of values is further extended by a sudden shift in perspective—from the dominant human viewpoint the reader is immersed into a conjoint human-animal viewpoint, an experience which is an embodiment and enlargement of the ideas that are straightforwardly put forth by technical documents and articulated by Sol. Those technical documents are arranged by an implicit editorial consciousness; an allusion to it generates suspense because the reader anticipates that letters are depicting significant events. Introducing various documents and alluding to the internal publication of the narrative, inherently self-reflexive epistolary form as employed by Itäranta entails double perspective, urging the reader to reflect on the narrative's ideas and thematic emphases, an invitation to which Moonday House as a literalized metaphor also adds. *KK* thematizes, among other things, absence, distance, memory, one's role in solving environmental issues, but the central idea in accordance with which the narrative is designed is "what if home was lost?" This idea, developed throughout the narrative by means of both content and form of the narrative, points to nostalgia with which the narrative is imbued. Nostalgia is an effective and affective means of making the reader reflect on the current state and future prospects of the Earth and its environments.

# CONCLUSIONS

> The purpose of a thought-experiment, as the term was first used by Schrödinger and other physicists, is not to predict the future […] but to describe reality, the present world. Science fiction is not predictive; it is descriptive.
> — Ursula K. Le Guin, "Author's Note"

The epigraph, a passage from the celebrated Ursula K. Le Guin's reflection about the workings of science fiction, explicates the notion that even highly imaginative phenomena—seemingly non-mimetic fiction, to some degree always stands facing the actual world. Composed in the time of climate crisis and presenting the reader with a possible future, Itäranta's speculative novel *The Moonday Letters* is a multidimensional aesthetically admirable exploration of complex questions, ideas and themes related to real-life environmental change. The aim of this study was, first, to explore the theoretical premises allowing to claim that works of speculative fiction are able to affect the real reader and direct her gaze toward the natural world, and then, to single out the in-text ways in which the narrative targets the reader's outlook on real-life environments.

In the light of the theoretical framework proposed, Itäranta's narrative was studied as a dynamic rhetorical design through which she conveys values, beliefs and ideas, and which has the power to affect its reader. Phelan's model of the synthetic, thematic, and mimetic components of narratives was developed by employing Erin James' *storyworld* and incorporating Roine's insights on sf, which proved to be a productive angle for approaching an environmentally inflected work of speculative fiction and accounting for its rhetoric. The novel was analyzed, first, by attending to narrative form and examining the techniques employed to construct the narrative and its storyworld; second, by looking at the content of the speculative storyworld of *KK*.

The analysis showed that *The Moonday Letters* aims at instigating actual change on the reader's outlook on real-life environments by such means:

1) Epistolary form and narrative techniques (present-tense narration and lyrical descriptions) that together bring out both the mimetic and the synthetic components on larger scale. Self-reflexivity is part of epistolary form; it empowers direct reader address, exposes the act of writing and writer's intention, as well as contains allusions to storyworld-internal publication of the "document collection." Simultaneously, a compelling mimetic illusion is created. Itäranta achieves this by complying to the inherent requirement for authenticity, making use of documents, messages, lyrical descriptions teeming

with poetic devices facilitating the conception of non-mimetic elements, as well as by making the protagonist a believable character and instigating the reader's engagement with her point of view. These techniques entail double perspective for the reader; typical to speculative fiction, this is how the reader is encouraged to think through the ideas and themes explored in the novel.

2) A speculative storyworld that allows the reader to experience a possible future envisioned by amplifying urgent present-day real-life issues (wars, refugees, poor sociocultural conditions, famine, and pandemics). Experience of such a world that demonstrates the devastating global effects of unattended climate change has great environmentally orienting potential. The reader's immersion into the storyworld is facilitated by techniques foregrounding the mimetic component of the narrative. The reader not only immerses herself in the storyworld but is also encouraged to reflect on the actual world by direct link established between her present and the storyworld by overtly pointing to her spatiotemporal coordinates and alluding to the issues that made this future with a devastated Earth a possibility.

3) Challenging the reader's values by exploring difficult questions such as ecoterrorism. *KK* instigates the reader's ethical judgment by narrative progression. Suspense generating allusions steadfastly direct the reader toward the climactic event—ecoterrorists' attack on Earth, but no final evaluation of this act of radical environmentalism nor of other events is offered for the reader from the protagonist's point of view. An open end necessitates ethical judgment of the characters' actions and the whole narrative; such judgment potentially calls for a re-evaluation of the reader's own personal values.

4) Conveying environment-orienting ideas. This is done in various ways. First, by contrasting the two main characters and their outlooks, and making an overtly thematic character Sol give voice to various radical, consciousness-raising ideas. Secondly, fictional documents such as encyclopedia articles introduce various concepts such as principle of inviolability or Biocene that advocate the value of all nature and propose more sound alternatives to the current destructive paradigm. Thirdly, these propositions are enacted in the narrative. A sudden shift in perspective enacts the shift from human-centered Anthropocene to nonhuman nature inclusive Biocene: the reader, having adopted the protagonist point of view, takes on the joint animal-human viewpoint.

Conveying environmental ideas in these various ways allows the reader to take them in both by intellectual engagement and by affectively experiencing them, which, taken together, have the power to encourage more harmonious ways of being in and with the Earth.

5) Finally, by imbuing the narrative with nostalgia directed toward potential future loss. Several key themes are explored in the novel: i.a., distance, absence, memory, loss of home; all of them can be related to the environment. Double perspective that *KK* entails prompts the reader to take these themes in and reflect on them. The thematic center of the novel is loss of home, where "home" also refers to "the Earth." Established immediately by dedication, the theme of loss of home rules over both narrative form and content: change from presence to absence (loss of spouse that stands for a home) is the event that sets off the progression of the narrative; the epistolary situation builds on absence; throughout the narrative, the protagonist experiences multiple losses and with the climatic ecoterrorist attack she loses her home planet; the protagonist is preoccupied with unattainable past and tries to *re*present it in present-tense writing; suspense is generated by allusions to devastation of the Earth; space and various artificial environments are rendered negatively, compared to the real thing—the Earth. Most importantly, the reader is directed toward reflecting on this theme by means of double perspective on smaller scale: Moonday House works both as an embodiment of the character's sentiments and as a literalized metaphor drawing attention to worldbuilding procedures and so the artificiality of narrative. Thematizing of loss of home, the narrative is imbued with a strong sense of nostalgia. Lumi's perception of Earth and her spouse as a cherished lost home permeate her accounts. The reader experiences the storyworld through those accounts and Lumi's viewpoint, so the nostalgia felt by the protagonist is gradually instilled into the reader. This might affect the reader's outlook toward the environments of the real world. By making the reader aware of the possibility of loss of the Earth in the future and inducing longing for it in advance, the narrative encourages her to reappreciate this ultimate home.

A separate inquiry into the narrative form and content was attempted, but it proved rather inefficient because the form of *The Moonday Letters* is inseparable from its thematic emphases, while the ideas conveyed rule over the narrative form, techniques, and devices.

Although this study was quite comprehensive in its attention to theory, form, content as well as themes, the possibilities for analytical angles on the multilayered novel are far from exhausted. Discussion of means that evoke nostalgia could be developed further by examining the content and imagery more extensively. The analysis of environment-orienting rhetoric of the novel could also be extended by attending to the multiple literalized metaphors, most significant of which is a "place where memories live"[251] pointing toward the customary cognitive metaphorization of memory as a place; such an analysis would be extremely fruitful if combined with inquiries into other works of Itäranta, which all thematize memory. Featuring such passages as "I look at the time and space, and everything happens at once, each story we might have lived or left unlive,"[252] that explicitly reflect on the plurality possible of pasts and futures, this novel could prove to be a very interesting case study in connection to Ryan's theoretization about possible worlds.

In its careful attention to the development of the thematic, the mimetic, and the synthetic components, narrative progression with an ethically demanding closure, explicitly voiced "consciousness raising" ideas, exploration of difficult questions, and, above all, the focus on human experience, complex feelings, relationships to others and the Earth, the speculative narrative speaks to the reader on multiple levels. The reader is engaged with a pleasant but ethically challenging reading experience and invited to immerse into and reflect on a grim vision of the future while at the same time being guided toward a brighter alternative. Letters from a possible future world encourage to move away from the destructive behaviors of the past in order to work towards a future in which the Earth—"a flawless, rounded drop of water that contains everything: each day, past and future"[253] is no longer threatened.

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[251] Itäranta, *KK*, 240.

[252] Ibid., 360–361.

[253] Ibid., *KK,* 7.

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# SANTRAUKA

Klimato katastrofos akivaizdoje, kaip spekuliatyviosios grožinės literatūros kūriniai siekia kreipti skaitytojų žvilgsnį link Žemės ir jos gamtos? Šiame darbe analizuojamas suomių rašytojos Emmi'ės Itäranta'os spekuliatyvus epistolinis romanas „Kuunpäivän kirjeet" (2020). Darbo tikslas – išsami šio romano analizė siekiant įvardinti būdus, kuriais romanas skatina atkreipti dėmesį į aplinkosaugos problemas.

Teorinėje dalyje išdėstomos prielaidos grindžiančios teiginį, kad spekuliatyviosios grožinės literatūros kūriniai gali paveikti skaitytojų požiūrį ir skatinti kurti sąmoningesnį santykį su tikruoju pasauliu ir gamta. James'o Phelan'o plėtojama retorinė naratologija atveria galimybes apmąstyti literatūros kūrinius kaip komunikacijos priemonę – idėjas, įsitikinimus, vertybes nešantys bei įvairias temas svarstantys pasakojimai yra sukurti autorių, siekiančių paveikti skaitytojus. Ši teorija apjungiama su Erin'os James'ės kultyvuojama ekonaratologija; perimama jos aktualizuota pasakojamojo pasaulio koncepcija. Pasakojamasis pasaulis – tai pasakojimu suprojektuotas pasaulis į kurį skaitytojas įsigyvena skaitymo proceso metu, sekdamas į tekstą sudėtais signalais. James'ė teigia, jog susidūrimas su pasakojimo iššauktu pasauliu (kitas žvilgsnis į pažįstamą pasaulį ar kito, nepažįstamo pasaulio patirtis) gali keisti skaitytojo požiūrį į jį supančią aplinką. Siekiant svarstyti spekuliatyviąją literatūrą pasitelkiamos Hanna-Riikka'os Roine'ės įžvalgos apie tokio pobūdžio literatūrą bei jai būdingas komunikacijos strategijas, ypač savybę sudvigubinti skaitytojo žvilgsnį. Visas teorinis pagrindas gali būti apibendrintas darbe pasiūloma Phelan'o pasakojimo komponentų modelio plėtote: spekuliatyviųjų kūrinių retorinis potencialas glūdi gebėjime ne vien projektuoti įsigyvenimus pasaulius (mimetinis komponentas), bet ir tuo pat metu skatinti refleksiją, kad šis pasaulis yra dirbtinis darinys (sintetinis komponentas), skirtas be kita ko, tam tikroms idėjoms svarstyti (teminis komponentas). Dvigubo žvilgsnio dėka, t.y. įsitraukiant į pasakojimą tuo pačiu priimant jo dirbtinumo faktą, skaitytojas gali perprasti kūrinyje iškeliamas bei jo sąrangą lemiančias idėjas.

Šis modelis pasitelkiami analizuoti ir „Kuunpäivän kirjeet" struktūrai, ir turiniui. Epistolinė romano forma bei jos įgalinamos pasakojimo strategijos (savirefleksyvus esamojo laiko pasakojimas, lyriški aprašymai) yra svarbi link tikrojo pasaulio aplinkos kreipiančios kūrinio retorikos dalis. Šios strategijos leidžia autorei sukurti darnią bei įtikimą mimetinę iliuziją, tuo pačiu metu diegiant suvokimą, jog tai – tik iliuzija iššaukta tam tikru tikslu padaryto pasakojimo. Tokiu būdu skaitytojui atsiveria kūrinyje svarstomos temos bei juo iškeliamos idėjos. Savo ruožtu, spekuliatyvaus Itäranta'os pasakojamojo

pasaulio turinio (įvykių, veikėjų, aplinkų – veiksmo vietos ir laiko) analizė įtraukia ne tik patį pasaulio kaip skaitytojui atveriamos patirties aptarimą, bet apima pasakojimo progresijos (laipsniškos siužeto plėtotės) apmąstymą, pasakojimu nagrinėjamų temų ir vystomų idėjų išskleidimą, bei į pastarąsias skaitytojo dėmesį atkreipiančios komponentų sąveikos svarstymą.

Spekuliatyvusis Itäranta'os pasakojamais pasaulis atveria skaitytojo patirčiai tokią galimos ateities versiją, kuri išryškina įvairias šiandienos tikrojo pasaulio aplinkos problemas įkūnijant jas spekuliatyvaus pasakojimo pagalba. Tokio pasaulio patirtis gali paskatinti skaitytoją apmąstyti tas aktualias problemas. Tačiau tai tik vienas iš būdų, kuriais romanas kreipia skaitytojo žvilgsnį link Žemės ir dabartinės jos būklės. Siužeto plėtotė stumia skaitytoją link atviros pabaigos, kurios aiškinimas bei veikėjų veiksmų etiškumo įvertinimas reikalauja ne tik viso pasakojimo, bet ir savų vertybių permąstymo. Be to, aplinkosauginį sąmoningumą skatinančios idėjos artikuliuojamos tiesiogiai, įdedant jas į veikėjų lūpas, įgyvendinant jas ir taip išryškinant jas pasakojime, bei svarstant jas fikciniuose dokumentuose, kurie taip pat yra epistolinės romano formos dalis. Temos, kurias skaitytojas gali įsisąmoninti dvigubo žvilgsnio pagalba, yra svarbus kūrinio retorikos dėmuo. Šiame darbe plačiau aptariamos šios romane plėtojamos temos: atstumas (atskirtis), nebuvimas (trūkumas), atmintis bei namų netektis. Būtent namų netektis yra romano teminis centras. Jis susieja visas kitas temas, nulemia pasakojimo formą ir turinį. Klausimas „o jei namai būtų prarasti?", kai „namai" taip pat nurodo į Žemę, yra romano pagrindas ir jį plėtojant konstruojamas spekuliayvusis pasakojamasis pasaulis. Tiesioginė namų netekties tematizavimo pasekmė yra nostalgija, ir šiame darbe teigiama, jog romaną persmelkiantis to, kas prarasta, ilgesys, yra vienas iš esminių būdų keisti skaitytojo požiūrį į tikrąjį pasaulį. Ilgesys to, kas bus prarasta ateityje, skatina atsigręžti į Žemę – vienintelius namus, kuriems gresia naikinantys žmonių veiksmai ir klimato katastrofa.

Šio magistro darbo naujumą lemia ne tik pasirinktas analizės objektas, bet ir darbo teorinis pagrindas, apjungiantis kelių mokslininkų įžvalgas, bei leidžiantis pasiūlyti būdą nagrinėti spekuliatyviosios grožinės literatūros kūrinius kreipiant dėmesį į jų aplinkosauginę retoriką. Leidžiančios turiningiau kalbėti apie naujus kultūrinius reiškinius susijusius su besikeičiančiu pasauliu ir jo gamta, tokios specifinės prieigos kaip siūlomoji yra reikšmingos siekiant analizuoti šiuolaikinius literatūros kūrinius, ypač tuos, kurie arba tiesiogiai vaizduoja, arba kitaip paliečia tokias aktualias dabarties problemas kaip klimato kaita ir tokiu būdu įgalina jų supratimą.