

The Sea and Eternal Summer: An Australian Apocalypse

Andrew Milner

Despite the international success of individual writers like Greg Egan and of individual novels like Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*,¹ Australian SF remains essentially peripheral to the wider contours of the genre. Yet there is a long history of what Adam Roberts describes as "works that located utopias and satirical dystopias on the opposite side of the globe,"² that is, in Australia. The earliest example he gives is Joseph Hall's 1605 *Mundus alter et idem sive Terra Australis ante hac semper incognita lustrata* (*A World Other and the Same, or the Land of Australia until Now Unknown*), the last Nicolas Edme Restif de la Bretonne's 1781 *La Decouverte Australe par une homme-volant* (*The Discovery of Australia by a Flying Man*).³ Lyman Tower Sargent's bibliography begins slightly later, with Peter Heglin's 1667 *An Appendix To the Former Work, Endeavouring a Discovery of the Unknown Parts of the World. Especially of Terra Australis Incognita, or the Southern Continent*, and proceeds to list something like 300 "Australian" print utopias and dystopias published during the period 1667-1999.⁴

There are yet others overlooked by even Sargent and Roberts: neither mention Denis Veiras's *L'histoire des Sévarambes*, for example, first published in part in English in 1675, in whole in French in 1679.⁵ European writers made very extensive use of Australia as a site for utopian imaginings well before the continent's conquest, exploration and colonization; even Marx's *Capital* ends its first volume with an unexpected vision of Australia as an open frontier beyond capital's grasp.⁶ There are two reasons for this, the one obvious, the other less so. First, Australia remained one of very few real-world *terrae incognitae* available for appropriation by European fantasy as late as the mid-late nineteenth century. And second, although Australia is conventionally described as a continent, it is also in fact an island,⁷ possessed of all the properties of self-containment and isolation that have proven so helpful to the authors of utopia ever since Thomas More.

Most of the earlier Australian utopian fictions took the form of an imaginary voyage narrated by travelers on their return home. Such imaginings became increasingly implausible as European explorers brought back increasingly detailed accounts of Australia's climate, topography and people. The utopias were therefore progressively relocated further into the interior, until the realities of inland exploration eventually proved equally disappointing. Thereafter, in Australia as elsewhere, utopias were increasingly superseded by future-fictional "uchronias." Robyn Walton cites Robert Ellis Dudgeon's *Colymbia*, published in 1873, as the first Australian SF utopia,⁸

¹ Nevil Shute, *On the Beach* (London, Toronto and Melbourne: Heinemann, 1957).

² Adam Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 56.

³ Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction*, 56-57, 85-86.

⁴ Lyman Tower Sargent, "Australian Utopian Literature: An Annotated, Chronological Bibliography 1667-1999," *Utopian Studies* 10,2 (1999): 138-73.

⁵ Denis Veiras, *L'Histoire des Sévarambes*, ed. A. Rosenberg (Paris: Champion, 2001 [1679]); Denis Veiras, *The History of the Sevarambians: A Utopian Novel*, eds J.C. Laursen & C. Masroori (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006 [1675-1679]).

⁶ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. I, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970 [1867]), 768.

⁷ This is not true for North America or South America, Europe or Asia or Africa. Of the six commonly recognized inhabited continents, only Australia is truly an island.

⁸ Robyn Walton, "Utopian and Dystopian Impulses in Australia," *Overland* 173 (2003), 7.

although Joseph Fraser's *Melbourne and Mars* is probably better known.⁹ In Australia, again as elsewhere, as the twentieth century proceeded utopias were also increasingly displaced by dystopias. The best-known Australian examples are almost certainly Shute's *On the Beach*, a nuclear doomsday novel, and George Turner's *The Sea and Summer*, one of the first novels to explore the fictional possibilities of the effects of global warming. Both make powerful, albeit often scientifically implausible, use of Australia's self-contained isolation.

Much SF has been both deliberately intended by its authors and deliberately received by its readers as value-relevant. Some, but not all, science fiction consists in future stories; and some, but not all, is concerned either to advocate what its authors and readers see as desirable possible futures or to urge against what they see as undesirable ones. In short, the future story can be used as a kind of futurology. SF of this kind is intended to be politically or morally effective, that is, to be socially useful. "We badly need a literature of considered ideas," Turner himself argued in 1990: "Science fiction could be a useful tool for serious consideration, on the level of the non-specialist reader, of a future rushing on us at unstoppable speed."¹⁰ Three years earlier, in the "Postscript" to *The Sea and Summer*, he had written that: "We talk of leaving a better world to our children, but in fact do little more than rub along with day-to-day problems and hope that the long-range catastrophes will never happen." This novel, he explained, "is about the possible cost of complacency."¹¹

Much radical SF scholarship exhibits a certain antipathy to dystopia, essentially on the grounds that it tends, in Fredric Jameson's phrase, "to denounce and [...] warn against Utopian programs."¹² But many dystopias, including some of those most disliked by Jameson, actually function as implicitly utopian warnings rather than as "anti-utopias" in the strict sense of the term. This is true, I would argue, for *On the Beach* and *The Sea and Summer*. Writing in the Australian newspaper, *The Age*, in January 2008, Peter Christoff, the then-Vice President of the Australian Conservation Foundation, observed that *On the Beach* had "helped catalyse the 1960s anti-nuclear movement." Comparing the threat of nuclear war in the 1950s with that of global warming in the early twenty-first century, he warned that: "we are [...] suffering from a radical failure of imagination." When Christoff connected *On the Beach* to climate change, he did so precisely to urge the need for a parallel contemporary effort to imagine the unimaginable. "These are distressing, some will argue apocalyptic, imaginings," he admits: "But without them, we cannot undertake the very substantial efforts required to minimize the chances of their being realised."¹³ *The Sea and Summer*, it seems to me, had attempted more or less exactly this two decades previously.

Turner was born in Melbourne in 1916 and published the first of five non-SF novels in 1959. He began reviewing genre fiction for *The Age* during the 1970s, produced his first SF novel *Beloved Son* in 1978, which was followed by sequels in 1981 and 1983,¹⁴ and by the time of his death in 1997 had become in effect the genre's Australian elder statesman. He published four further SF novels between 1987 and 1994, a collection of SF short stories in 1990, and two posthumous works,

⁹ Joseph Fraser, *Melbourne and Mars: My Mysterious Life on Two Planets. Extracts from the Diary of a Melbourne Merchant* (Melbourne: E.W. Cole, 1889).

¹⁰ George Turner, "Envoi," in *A Pursuit of Miracles: Eight Stories* (Adelaide: Aphelion Publications, 1990), 209.

¹¹ George Turner, *The Sea and Summer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 318.

¹² Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005), 199.

¹³ Peter Christoff, "The End of the World as We Know It," *The Age*, January 15 2008: 13.

¹⁴ George Turner, *Beloved Son* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978); George Turner, *Vaneglorry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981); George Turner, *Yesterday's Men* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983).

an unfinished novella *And Now Time Doth Waste Me* in 1998, and the novel *Down There in Darkness* in 1999.¹⁵ All were essentially exercises in futurology, all preoccupied with the ethics of socio-political action, all distinctively Australian in tenor. By far the most critically successful was *The Sea and Summer*, which in 1988 won both the Commonwealth Writers' Prize Best Book Award for the South East Asia and South Pacific Region and the Arthur C. Clarke Award for best SF novel published in Britain (the previous year's Clarke Award had gone to Margaret Atwood for *The Handmaid's Tale*). In 1985 Turner had published a short story, "The Fittest,"¹⁶ in which he first began to explore the possible effects of global warming on his home city. He quickly expanded this story into a full-length novel that was published in 1987 as *The Sea and Summer* in Britain, and as *Drowning Towers* in the United States.¹⁷

Like *On the Beach*, *The Sea and Summer* is set mainly in and around Melbourne, a vividly described place, terrifyingly transformed into the utterly unfamiliar. The novel is organized into a core narrative, comprising two parts set in the mid twenty-first century, and a frame narrative, comprising three shorter parts set a thousand years later amongst "the Autumn People" of the "New City," located in what are today the Dandenong Ranges to the east of Melbourne.¹⁸ The core narrative deals with the immediate future of our "Greenhouse Culture," the frame narrative with the retrospective reactions to it of a slowly cooling world. The latter depicts a utopian future society, which uses submarine archaeology to explore the drowned remains of the "Old City," but which is also simultaneously aware of the imminence of a "Long Winter" that might well last a hundred thousand years. The novel opens by introducing the frame narrative's three main characters: Marin, a part-time student and enthusiastic Christian, who pilots the powercraft used to explore the drowned city; his great-aunt, Professor Lenna Wilson, an expert on the collapse of the Greenhouse Culture in Australia, who teaches history at the University; and Andra Andrasson, a visiting actor-playwright from Sydney, researching the twenty-first century as possible material for a play.¹⁹ Together they explore the remains of the substantially submerged "Tower Twenty-three" (6-11) and investigate the ruins of the only Swill "Enclave" never to have flooded (93-96), debating their meaning both on-site and at the University.

The core narrative takes the form of a novel within the novel, also titled *The Sea and Summer*, written by Lenna as an "Historical Reconstruction" of the thirty-first century's real past (15). In form it is polyphonic, tracing the development of the Greenhouse Culture through a set of memoirs and diary extracts written during the years 2044-2061 by six main protagonists: Alison Conway, Francis Conway, Teddy Conway, Nola Parkes, Captain Nikopoulos and Arthur Derrick. The only silent voice is that of the Tower Boss, Billy Kovacs, the novel's central character and also, perhaps, its central enigma, the remains of whose flat Lenna and Andra explore (9). This core narrative is counter-chronological, beginning and ending in 2061, but moving through the 2040s and 50s as it proceeds. The sections set in 2061 might therefore be considered a frame within the frame. In the first of these, Alison recalls her own childish delight in play on the beach at Elwood,

¹⁵ Turner, *The Sea and Summer*; George Turner, *Brainchild* (New York: William Morrow, 1991); George Turner, *The Destiny Makers* (New York: William Morrow, 1993); George Turner, *Genetic Soldier* (New York: William Morrow, 1994); Turner, *A Pursuit of Miracles*; George Turner, "And Now Time Doth Waste Me," in Jack Dann and Janeen Webb (eds), *Dreaming Down-Under* (Sydney: Voyager, 1998); George Turner, *Down There in Darkness* (New York: Tor Books, 1999).

¹⁶ George Turner, "The Fittest," in David King and Russell Blackford (eds), *Urban Fantasies* (Melbourne: Ebony Books, 1985).

¹⁷ George Turner, *Drowning Towers* (New York: Arbor House, 1987).

¹⁸ Turner, *The Sea and Summer*, 3-16, 87-100, 315-316.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-6. All subsequent references will be given in the text.

from the vantage point of what we will later learn to be the last year of her life. She wistfully concludes: “The ageing woman has what the child desired—the sea and eternal summer.” (20) In the second, her son Francis records his intermittent diary entries from the period February 2056 to March 2061, concluding with that for 20th March:

Mum is dead ... Once, she said very forcefully, ‘I’ve had a *good* life, Francis. So full.’ Full, I thought, of what would have been avoided in a saner world ... Billy came in later, but by then she was rambling about the past, about summertime and the glistening sea. (311)

Professor Wilson’s historical reconstruction depicts the twenty-first century as a world of mass unemployment and social polarization, where rising sea levels have resulted in the inundation of the city’s bayside suburbs. As it opens, the poor “Swill” already live in high-rise tower blocks, the lower floors of which are progressively submerged; the wealthier “Sweet” in suburbia on higher ground; the “Fringe” in the zones between. In 2033 a third of Australia has been set aside for Asian population relocation, by 2041 the global population has reached ten billion and the cost of iceberg tows and desalinization projects has brought the economy close to bankruptcy (29, 21, 30). On his sixth birthday in 2041, Francis and his nine-year old brother, Teddy, are taken by their parents, Fred and Alison, to see the sea. What they find is a concrete wall “stretching out of sight in both directions.” Francis’s mother surprises him, however, by explaining that: “This is Elwood and there was a beach here once. I used to paddle here. Then the water came up and there were the storm years and the pollution, and the water became too filthy.” “It must be terrible over there in Newport when the river floods,” she continues: “A high tide covers the ground levels of the tenements” (23-24). In 2044 Fred is laid off and commits suicide, leaving Allie and the boys to move to Newport (30-34). There they meet Billy Kovacs, who becomes Alison’s lover, Francis’s mentor and the reader’s guide to the social geography of an Australian dystopia.

In adolescence both Teddy and Francis abandon their mother in pursuit of upward social mobility, although both will eventually be returned “home.” For Teddy, mobility comes through formal education, leading to Police Intelligence Recruit School (48-49) and thence to a career as a Police Intelligence Officer. For Francis, it comes by way of an unusual aptitude for mental arithmetic, leading to a career as a “cally that spouts answers without using a key or chip” (57), for illicit business deals. Each acquires an appropriate sponsor: for Teddy, “Nick” Nikopoulos, a Captain in Police Intelligence (113); for Francis, Mrs. Nola Parkes, the owner of a small import-export firm, who, after the collapse of the money economy, directs the State sub-department performing essentially the same function (72). Alison and the boys tell their own stories, Nikopoulos and Parkes retell the stories from different vantage points and, eventually, these are all contextualized by Derrick, a senior State official with a quite literal power of life or death over the other characters (291). “Why don’t you all go home?” he tells them. “We’re finished here” (301).

The novel is at its most compelling in its representations of the everyday horror of life in the drowning towers, and of the sheer ferocity of status consciousness within a class structure mutating into a caste system. Both are recurrent motifs in both the frame and core narratives, although in the latter they invariably prove more telling because more experientially grounded. There is a terrible poignancy, for example, to Francis’s diary entries for 11 February 2056:

Five years back in the Fringe and resigned to it. Not reconciled, never that. What a hopeless, helpless lot the Swill are. (306)

And 22 March 2057:

Three times this month the water has raced through the house. Sea water, salt and cold. We pay now for our great-grandparents’ refusal to admit that tomorrow would eventually come. (306-307)

In the novel's final sub-plot, Captain Nikopoulos, Billy Kovacs and Teddy discover that Mrs. Parkes and Francis are unwittingly involved in a State-sponsored conspiracy to "cull" the Swill, by means of a highly addictive "chewey" designed to produce infertility. "A State that strikes its own," Nola Parkes protests, "at random, for experiment, is past hope" (303). Arthur Derrick's response is directed at Turner's twentieth century readers as much as at Parkes herself:

Nola, idealism was for the last century, when there was still time ... we're down to more primitive needs. The sea will rise, the cities will grind to a halt and the people will desert them ... the State has no time to concern itself with moral quibbles ... (304)

II.

The debates amongst the Autumn People in the frame narrative are clearly designed to make meaningful sense of the Greenhouse Culture. For Marin, its meaning is straightforward and simple: "They were wicked—they ... ruined the world for all who came after ... they *denied* history." (6) Lenna, however, conceives of their distant ancestors more sympathetically, as victims of the unintended consequences of their own collective action. "In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries," she tells Andra, "the entire planet stood with its fingers plugging dykes of its own creation until the sea washed over their muddled status quo. Literally" (13). Andra's own underlying response is incomprehension. Attempting to grapple with the social inequalities of the Greenhouse era, he can only ask: "*How did this division arise? Why no revolution?*" (16) Lenna suggests the answer might lie in the "rise of the Tower Bosses" to run "small states within the State." This allowed the poor "a measure of contentment," she explains, "by letting them run their own affairs." Moreover, she continues, the Political Security executive was also able "to convince the Tower Bosses that only a condition of status quo could preserve a collapsing civilization." (93) Ultimately, however, Andra remains as uncomprehending as ever and, after "three years and a dozen attempts," abandons his play (315).

A primary effect of this frame narrative is to blunt the force of dystopian inevitability driving the core narrative. "We're very well equipped to endure a million years of cold," Lenna tells Andra. [...] We have knowledge and we have the Forward Planning Centres. We'll make the change smoothly" (12-13). A secondary effect, however, is to suggest how little control humanity can actually exercise over its destiny. "It is history that makes *us*..." Andra observes in his closing letter to Lenna: "The Greenhouse years should have shown that plainly; the Long Winter will render it inescapable" (315). Much the same is true of the frame within the frame when it moves forward into the late 2050s. For here we learn how Teddy, Nikopoulos and Kovacs, and eventually even Francis and Derrick, become involved in an attempt by the "New Men" to organize the Swill in preparation "for the dark years coming" (310). The crisis will not be averted, we know from the thirty-first century, but "little human glimpses *do* help," Lenna will conclude, "if only in confirming our confidence in steadfast courage" (316).

The least persuasive aspect of the novel is in its understanding of how the crisis developed. In the "Postscript" Turner identifies six "major matters" of futurological concern: population growth, food shortage, mass unemployment, financial collapse, nuclear war and the Greenhouse effect, only one of which—nuclear war—fails to feature in the novel, because it seemed to him increasingly unlikely in any foreseeable future (98, 317-318). Empirically, Turner's predictions have often proven surprisingly close to the mark. In the novel, world population reaches ten billion during the early 2040s (21); according to the 2010 biennial revision of the United Nations *World*

Population Prospects, it will reach between 8 billion (low projection) and 10.5 billion (high projection) by 2050.²⁰ In the novel, “two-thirds of the world starves” by 2045 (158). This might have seemed hopelessly pessimistic during the 1980s and 1990s, when world hunger rates were persistently trending downwards. But the numbers of hungry people increased from 825 million people in 1995-97, to 857 million in 2000-02, 873 million in 2004-06, and were projected to reach a historic high of 1,020 million, or a sixth of the world’s population, by the end of the decade.²¹ In the novel, the Australian and world unemployment rate has reached 90% by 2041 (25). Again, this must have seemed an extraordinarily gloomy prognosis on the book’s first publication, as indeed it still is for Australia, where the unemployment rate was as low as 4.9% early in 2012.²² But the situation is very different across much of the European Union, where Spain has an unemployment rate of 23.6%, Greece 21%, Portugal 15%, Ireland 14.7% and France 10%.²³ Moreover, youth unemployment rates are higher still: in the fourth quarter of 2011, the figure was 49.3% for Greece, 48.9% for Spain, 34.1% for Portugal, 30.5% for both Ireland and Italy, 22.7% for France and 22% for the United Kingdom.²⁴

In the novel, the financial crisis that bespeaks the collapse of the international monetary system comes in the 2040s; in reality, something like it almost certainly began during the Global Financial Crisis, of 2007-2012. In the novel, there have been no nuclear wars, but the “armaments factories” nonetheless continue “belching out weapons ... for a war nobody dared start ... and an industry nobody dared stop” (71); in reality, we have indeed been spared nuclear war, but nonetheless, as at January 2011, eight states possessed between them about 20,530 nuclear warheads, 5,000 ready for use and 2,000 on high operational alert.²⁵ In the novel, average temperatures have risen by 4½ degrees and sea levels by 30 centimeters between 1990 and 2041 (74-75); the current projections of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change are less dramatic, pointing to temperature increases of between 1.1 and 6.4 degrees between 1980-99 and 2090-99 and rises in sea level of between 18 and 59 centimeters.²⁶ But there is near-consensus amongst climate scientists that current levels of atmospheric greenhouse gas are sufficient to alter global weather patterns to disastrous effect and also strong evidence that recent increases in extreme weather events, such as heat waves and flooding, are related to climate change.²⁷ The experience of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and Hurricane Sandy in 2012 tends to confirm these suspicions.

²⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects, the 2010 Revision* (New York: United Nations, 2010). <http://esa.un.org/wpp/Other-Information/faq.htm#q3>.

²¹ Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, *More People Than Ever are Victims of Hunger*, Press Release (Rome: FAO Media Centre, 2008): 1.

²² Turner would almost certainly have been surprised by how easily Australia withstood the GFC (to date, it is the only OECD country to have escaped recession), as also by the probable cause: the long-term restructuring of Australian trade relationships away from America and Europe towards China and India.

²³ ‘List of Countries by Unemployment Rate’, *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_unemployment_rate.

²⁴ European Commission, *Unemployment Statistics* (Luxembourg: Eurostat, 2012).

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics.

²⁵ Stockholm Institute for Peace Research, *SIPRI Yearbook 2011: Armaments, Disarmaments and International Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 319-320.

²⁶ ‘Summary for Policymakers’, in S. Solomon, D. Qin, M. Manning, Z. Chen, M. Marquis, K.B. Averyt, M. Tignor and H.L. Miller (eds), *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 13.

²⁷ Gabriele.C. Hegerl, Francis W. Zwiers, Pascale Braconnot, Nathan P. Gillett, Yong Luo, Jose A. Marengo Orsini, Neville Nicholls, Joyce E. Penner and Peter A. Stott, ‘Understanding and Attributing Climate Change’ in Solomon et al, *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis*, 727; Stephen H. Schneider, Serguei Semenov, Anand

Nonetheless, neither Turner nor his characters have any sense of which, if any, of these processes is the driver of the catastrophic crisis that overcame the Greenhouse Culture. One suspects his own answer might well have been essentially Malthusian. Mine, by contrast, would be Marxian, that is, that all six—including the nuclear arms race, if not nuclear war itself—are likely outcomes, within a world of finite resources, of any system of unregulated competitive capital accumulation akin to that sketched in *The Communist Manifesto* and analyzed in detail in *Capital*.²⁸ No doubt, the days are long gone when one could take a creative writer to task simply for being insufficiently Marxist. One might, however, still object to the implausibility of a thousand years of hindsight failing to provide the history profession with any generally accepted account of so significant an event as the collapse of an entire social order.

This isn't entirely fair: Professor Wilson has, in fact, written a 5,000-page *Preliminary Survey of Factors Affecting the Collapse of the Greenhouse Culture in Australia* (13). But she decides to offer Andra her fictionalized account because he lacks the "general historical and technical grounding" necessary to understand the longer work (14). Three years later he still appears not to have read her *Survey*. So we do not know what, ultimately, drove the system into crisis. We do, however, know how Turner thought it could best be avoided, that is, by rational planning based on scientific advice. The epigraph to the novel, repeated in the "Postscript," is taken from Sir Macfarlane Burnet, the Australian virologist, immunologist and public policy activist, who won the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1960: "We must plan for five years ahead and twenty years and a hundred years" (317). Lenna Wilson gives Andra Andrasson essentially cognate advice:

Keep up as well as you can with the scientific information and you could be able to think usefully if the time for action should arrive. Otherwise, live as suits you. Be like the Swill, aware but unworried. (99)

The obvious question to ask is why, when faced with the incontrovertible evidence of impending catastrophe, not only the Swill, but also the Sweet, the Fringers and, the State, should have failed to plan adequately. The novel is clear that science had indeed sounded warnings. "As I understand it," Andra observes to Lenna, "... they knew what was coming [...] Yet they did nothing about it." "They fell into destruction," she replies, "because they *could* do nothing about it; they had started a sequence which had to run its course in unbalancing the climate" (13). What neither she nor Turner adequately explain, however, is *why* they were unable to do anything about it, why they had started this sequence, and why it had to run its course. Logically, the answer can only be that some social power prevented them from acting on the scientific advice.

Yet, Turner is at pains to insist that his fictional Australian elites were essentially well motivated. As Marin tells Andra:

The idea was not oppression but preservation. The Sweet, educated and by and large the most competent sector of the population ... were necessary to administer the State. With the collapse of trade and ... industry the Swill became a burden on the economy, easier and cheaper to support if ... concentrated into small areas. (91)

Patwardhan, Ian Burton, Chris H. Magadza, Michael Oppenheimer, A. Barrie Pittock, Atiq Rahman, Joel B. Smith, Avelino Suarez and Farhana Yamin, 'Assessing Key Vulnerabilities and the Risk from Climate Change', in Martin Parry, Osvaldo Canziani, Jean Palutikof, Paul van der Linden and Clair Hanson (eds) *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 796.

²⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Samuel Moore (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967 [1848]), 80-90; Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, 612-648; Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. III, ed. Frederick Engels (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1972 [1894]), 211-231.

When Derrick, the most senior representative of Turner's Australian State, defends the cull to Nola, he does so in similarly benevolent terms:

If there has to be a cull—and you know damned well that sooner or later there has to be—let's at least learn to do it with a minimum of suffering for the culled. (297)

How could an elite so well educated, so competent, so concerned to minimize suffering—in short, so much like the one Macfarlane Burnet had hoped for—have failed to prevent such preventable catastrophe? The answer must be that it, in turn, had been confronted by social powers more powerful and also less rational than itself. No doubt, there are a range of possible candidates available in the real world, but none within the novel. The competition between global capitalist corporations fits the bill rather nicely, however, as explanation for this peculiar combination of historically unprecedented power with historically unprecedented irrationality.

Which leads me, finally, to the linked questions of Turner's representations of the State and of Australian insularity. The novel is clear that, when the world financial system collapses, the nation state takes over the administration of the economy. So Francis Conway recalls that:

I was fifteen when the money system collapsed worldwide. That, in a single sentence, records the passing of ... private-sector capitalism ... The commercial Sweet had spent months preparing for the changeover [...] With forgetful speed it became *convenient* to present an allocation card at a State Distribution Store ... (71)

This is also the moment at which Mrs. Parkes's import-export company becomes a Government sub-department. At one level, Turner is very astute here, recognizing the way conventional left versus right disputes over public versus private ownership actually obscure the more fundamental continuities in management and structure that persisted, in both western and eastern Europe, through both the socializations of the 1940s and 50s and the privatizations of the 1980s and 90s. But, at another, he ignores the likelihood that truly global corporations might not be as readily devolved into state subsidiaries as are national firms. No matter how convenient the fictional device of insularity might be to utopian writers, one is left wondering what had happened to the international parent companies, to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the United States Federal Reserve Bank, the European Central Bank, the People's Bank of China, and so on. Did the economy simply wither away, much as Engels had imagined the state might?²⁹ It seems unlikely.

Turner's *The Sea and Summer* is clearly not the game-changing climate change dystopia for which Christoff might have hoped. It has been out of print for over a decade and, unlike *On the Beach*, has never been adapted for film, television or radio. As Verity Burgmann and Hans Baer recently observed: "*The Sea and Summer* is an extraordinarily well-crafted and gripping novel that received international awards and critical acclaim but has not received the popular attention it deserves."³⁰ It has its flaws, no doubt, not least an underlying failure to acknowledge the deep contradictions between the emancipatory potential of scientific research and the political economy of late capitalism. Nonetheless, Turner's novel is long overdue positive critical re-evaluation and, hopefully, this essay will make some small contribution to that effect. I for one have very selfish reasons to hope so, for I live in Elwood, only a few minutes walk from the beach where Alison Conway used to play as a little girl.

²⁹ Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959 [1878]): 387.

³⁰ Verity Burgmann and Hans A. Baer, *Climate Politics and the Climate Movement in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2012): 37.