

Exploration of Identities in the Dystopias of Manjula Padmanabhan's *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls*

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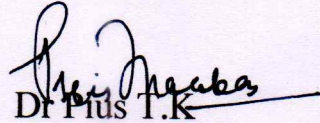
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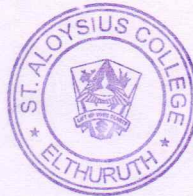
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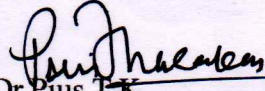
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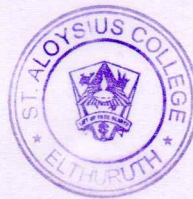
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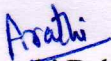
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that thesis entitled “Exploration of Identities in the Dystopias of Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls*” is an authentic record of my studies and research carried out under the guidance of Dr Pius T.K, Research Supervisor, Research and Postgraduate Department of English, St Aloysius College, Thrissur, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English. I hereby certify that no part of this work has been submitted or published for the award of any degree, diploma, title or recognition.

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Abstract

Dystopias can be defined as bad societies. Any literary works that define such societies are also called dystopias. Dystopian societies are most often defined by authoritarianism, surveillance, control of sexuality, hegemonic authoritarian discourses, suppression of individuality and individual freedom, and ecological collapse. There are different dystopias that focus on varied issues such as gender, environmental degradation, and apocalyptic scenarios. What defines all the different dystopias is the deplorable states of the citizens in them and the exercise or control over them by the dystopian society that leads them to either conform to the society or reject it. Dystopias exercise control over certain identities as well as shape them. Dystopian societies privilege identities that allow them to maintain the conditions in this dystopia and resist or reject identities that try to dismantle or change the conditions prevailing in dystopias. The conformity of citizens is essential for the dystopian society to survive. Any expressions of individuality or identities that goes against the status quo are a threat to the dystopian society.

The thesis studies identities and explores the varied relationship between identities and dystopias in the dystopian works of Manjula Padmanabhan's *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls*. The thesis studies how various identities are formed and the defining traits of such identities. The study argues that dystopias create, uphold, dismantle or resist certain identities and how certain identities uphold, resist or change the conditions in the dystopias. The study explores how the dystopian society manages to create or uphold certain identities that are beneficial to maintaining the conditions in the dystopian society and how such identities help to maintain the conditions in dystopia. The study explores how dystopian societies resist or reject certain identities that challenge or resist the conditions prevailing in dystopia and how

such identities can resist or change the conditions prevailing in dystopian society. The thesis recommends solutions or measures that can be taken which can transform this dystopia into a utopia, which involves either dismantling certain identities and also supporting and accepting certain identities.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Dystopia and Identity

Dystopias are nonexistent bad societies which are set in alternative worlds and critique the unhealthy social, political or economic trends in contemporary society. The literary texts which describe dystopias are also called dystopias. Identity situated in a dystopian society is not immune to the workings of dystopia. The politics of a dystopian society ensures that its citizens follow set rules and functions which are necessary for the survival of the dystopian order. Dystopian societies influence and shape the identities of their citizens. Individual thought and thinking which goes against collectivist thinking can prove inimical to the dystopian order and question the premise and logic of the dystopian order. Everything in the dystopian society from media, art, news, language, security and surveillance mechanisms is meant to ensure that the individual remains a docile subject who respects the authority of the dystopian regime and upholds it. Everything becomes a tool of propaganda at the hand of the dystopian regime and is meant to ensure the compliance of citizens. Classical dystopias end with the defeat of the protagonist. Any exercise of individuality and self that goes against the dystopian order is monitored, suppressed and corrected. The loss of individuality is a central element connecting various dystopias (Claeys, *Dystopia* 489). Dystopia shows the horrific nature of enforced communalism leading to the loss of subjective individual identity. There is a conflict between freely explored individuality and the demands of society in dystopian fiction. In dystopias power and order are maintained by levelling individual differences and individualities. The rulers in dystopia decide everything. Individuals have lost their

individuality and for them, there is meaning only in the commands given by their rulers. The rebel protagonist is defeated in the end and the totalitarian regime is successful. Individual wishes, desires, dreams and eccentricities are forsaken for the greater good in a dystopian society ruled by an oppressive regime. The struggle between the individual and the collective often features in a dystopia (Rosenfeld 65). Either individuals are controlled by a lot of social constraints and given less freedom or they are given a lot of freedom and live in a world of no constraints (Rosenfeld 65). Classical dystopian literature portrays a protagonist who questions the totalitarian society in which he or she lives and becomes rebellious in action, thought and speech. This protagonist is haunted by the state and loses his or her attributes, from social position to individual identity. Individuals who rebel against the regime are reprogrammed, exiled or killed so that the social fabric is impenetrable. The ideal citizen of dystopias has no self to express and is integrated with the social formation. The regimes of power in classic dystopia recognize that free agency is based on individuality that is at odds with the collective. A dystopian citizen will not feel a need to rebel without a clear sense of self to express even if such means were available to them. Dystopias exhibit a collectivist ethos (Claeys, *Dystopia* 8). People sacrifice their interests for the common good (Claeys, *Dystopia* 8). Solidarity trumps individualism in such societies (Claeys, *Dystopia* 8). In dystopia, people are coerced and there is forced solidarity (Claeys, *Dystopia* 8). There is a tension between collectivism and individualism in the dystopian society (Claeys, *Dystopia* 33). All forms of planning and collectivism lead to the demise of individualism and open the way to totalitarianism (Claeys, *Dystopia* 115). Totalitarianism and other forms of despotism try to penetrate the inner psyche of citizens (Claeys, *Dystopia* 267). The modern self is an interiorized, spiritual self with a strong sense of individual identity

(Claeys, *Dystopia* 267). Individualism threatens to hasten the disintegration of society so collectivism is enforced (Claeys, *Dystopia* 267). The control of private life, sexual desires, and individuality is necessary for collectivist regimes (Claeys, *Dystopia* 370). Dystopia is all about group identity and the loss or destruction of individuality (Claeys, *Dystopia* 489).

The nature of dystopia varies and the central issues governing each dystopia determine the subgenre to which it can be classified. A feminist dystopia exaggerates the existing power relations between men and women and showcases a world in which women are underprivileged and subjugated. Such dystopias are set in androcentric societies that have a gender-inflected oppressive regime. Gender identities and relations between men and women remain the focus of such dystopias. In apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic dystopias, the characters have to survive and deal with the aftermath of an apocalyptic event which brings out the best or worst qualities in a person (Claeys, *Dystopia* 489). In critical dystopias, there is a utopian subtext or undercurrent that the dystopia can be improved and an element of hope is retained. The rebel characters in such dystopias are not completely suppressed like in classical dystopias. They are not defeated, brainwashed and reintegrated into the dystopian order and societies like classical dystopias. The dystopian regime does not remain fully undefeated and successful at the end of a critical dystopia and the rebellion and counter-movement continue even at the end of a critical dystopian text. This also gives the possibility of exercising and articulating alternative viewpoints which go against the dystopian order. The former subjects of the dystopian regime get an opportunity to form their subjective and autonomous identity in critical dystopias as they are given some autonomy and space. Expressions of self and individual thought

which are against the status quo are given a chance to flourish and survive in critical dystopias.

1.2 Introduction to the Author Manjula Padmanabhan

Manjula Padmanabhan was born in 1953 and is a cartoonist, novelist, short story writer, playwright and illustrator. Her parents were diplomats and she grew up in Europe and Southeast Asia until settling in India in the late 1960s during her teenage years. She only knew English which made her alien to her own country and she admits to not having tried to fit in. She became famous after she received Onassis Prize for Theatre in the year 1998 for her play *Harvest*. The prize money she received helped her as an artist and writer and provided her with a source of income for years to come. Her works are *Lights Out* (1984) *Harvest* (1997), *Kleptomania: Ten Stories* (2004), *Hot Death, Cold Soup: Twelve Short Stories* (1996), *Getting there* (1999), *Mouse Attack* (2003) and *Mouse Invaders* (2004), *Unprincess* (2005) *Escape* (2008), *The Island of lost girls* (2013) and *Three virgins and other stories* (2013). She is the illustrator of twenty-four children's books. She is the author and illustrator of children's books *Pooni at The Taj Mahal*, *I Am Different! Can You Find Me? Same and Different*, *We are Different*, *The World Tour Mystery*, *Where's That Cat?*, *Animal Alphabet*, *Mama, What is the Night?*, *Pooni, Pooni, Where Are You?*, *A Visit to the City Market*, *Shrinking Vanita*. She is a culturally diverse author and her oeuvre best reflects this.

Her writings are visual. She can visualise the images and events in her mind as a mental film which translates as words in the text. This visceral quality of her writing is evident in the description of the underwater island in the novel *The Island of Lost Girls* and the undersea creatures. She seamlessly navigates all these different

mediums because of the visual quality of her writings. She does not see dystopia as a faraway concept and reality, to her the present world is dystopian and surreal. Her works are characterised by wry humour and dark comedy. Writing allows her to share her conceptions and viewpoints, especially in the genre of science fiction. As an author, she refuses to be hemmed by the rules of writing and believes in the elasticity of science fiction. She uses science fiction as it allows her to talk about issues without the fear of being critiqued and censored. Most of her works have the body as a recurrent topic in the narrative. In *The Island of Lost Girls*, Youngest's non-identification with his female body post-surgery is an issue which the author has recurrently expressed in this work. Her works have feminist concerns but the author refuses to align herself with the feminist movement. Her concerns are humanitarian and universal and she refuses to privilege any one gender. For example, even though the dystopian society presented in her novels is a patriarchal society that throws light on the condition of women, transgender persons also figure in the novels thus throwing light on their condition. She believes literature is not necessarily for activism but for enriching our life. Events in the dystopian fictional world of her novels are dark but the author still insists that there is humour to be found in them. She finds light-hearted narratives to be fostering a mood of smugness and self-complacency which she tries to disassociate herself from through her dystopian work.

She is a prolific writer who uses different genres like short stories, novels, plays, comics, and picture books. She does not make any purposeful effort to write in a specific genre or literary form. To her, it is the idea which dictates the form. It is the idea which comes and the form is present in the very nature of the idea. She does not use the title feminist to define her writings or call herself so even though her writings such as *Escape*, *The Island of Lost Girls*, *Lights Out*, and *Unprincess* have many

feminist concerns. She deals with issues which most concern her in her writings. She believes in advancing causes she is passionate about in her writings rather than raising a host of social issues. Literature opens windows and vistas for otherness to Padmanabhan. It is her failure and inability to fit in her home country and her fascination with otherness that leads her to speculative fiction. She often explores notions of otherness in her works. Youngest identifies himself as a male but is in a female body and dressing. The notion of otherness is brought as Youngest grapples to understand and accept the female body and life experiences which is an “other”. Meiji has no notion of the female gender. She has not even seen a woman until she sees women on the island and she realizes she is like them. She can only conceive a female as an “other” different from her until she sees fellow women on the island.

1.3 Padmanabhan’s Use of Dystopian Genre

The dystopian projection of societies can be found in her works *Escape*, *The Island of Lost Girls*, *Harvest*, “Gandhi toxin”, “2099”. The first two works with a scenario which shows a world in which women suffer at the hands of a patriarchal regime and the systemic exploitation of women is normalised. The play *Harvest* is set in a dystopian scenario in which automation has led to job loss and the family of Ohm is forced to trade his organs to a wealthy client named Ginni in exchange for material comforts. The play is a critique of the exploitation of third-world countries by first-world countries. In these works, she has used the genre of dystopia to satirise and critique social issues relevant to her time. The novels and the play have a common dystopian warning about the misuse of technology. Both the dystopian worlds envision a world of advanced technology only imaginable in the future which has also made surveillance and lack of privacy a concern. Her dystopian worlds are different in their treatment of issues and themes. Dystopian novels and plays have open endings

which give the possibility of hope to their readers. Her dystopian works are also interspersed with moments of levity and humour amidst the dystopia she presents.

Padmanabhan uses the dystopian genre in many of her works irrespective of the literary forms she uses. The dystopian genre is appropriate for her projections of a bleak world. Even her works which do not belong to this genre discuss serious issues and present bleak society and scenarios. She has written short stories, novels and plays in the dystopian genre. She is often accused of representing bleak joyless worlds in her writings even in her non-dystopian works. She finds the complacency associated with light-hearted narratives concerning. One of the reasons the dystopian genre comes naturally to her as it has its ground in satire. Her novels *Escape*, *The Island of Lost Girls*, play *Harvest*, and the short stories “Gandhi Toxin”, “2099” and “Sharing Air” are dystopian. She deals with several contemporary social, political and economic issues in her dystopian works. She foregrounds contemporary issues in her dystopian writings and critiques them. There is no common issue she satirizes in her works as each of her dystopian works has its central issue as a diverse and identifiable contemporary problem rooted in reality. The novels *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls* has her dealing with the issues of female infanticide, declining sex ratio, and violence towards women. Her critique in these novels is mainly directed against patriarchy. The play *Harvest* as its title suggests is about the unfair and undue harvesting of organs of poor third world country citizens by the richer elitist first world nation citizens. The play also functions as a criticism of neo-colonial endeavours. The short story “Gandhi Toxin” is a criticism of the capitalist mode of production manifested by United Gene Heritage (UGH) a transnational company which fosters unbridled consumer culture and a policy of profit at any costs. It also serves as a critique of neocolonialism. She takes up the issue of air pollution and

climate change in “Sharing Air”. It is a criticism of the lack of efforts and inaction taken for preventing climate change and protecting the environment. “2099” critiques neocolonialism and neo-imperialism. She discusses a range of issues in her dystopian works and each of the issues is specific to India.

Most of her works of speculative fiction have their setting as India or places which can be identified as India. Her works are set in the future where India is transformed by economic and technological development. *Escape* is set in the fictional dystopian country known as Brotherland. The author has abstained from giving the name or location of a real-world country to emphasize that the issues raised in the novel are universal and can apply to any place. But the names and words mentioned in the text indicate that incidents happened in India or somewhere in the Indian subcontinent. The play *Harvest* is set in the dystopian futuristic Bombay of 2050 where many people have lost their jobs due to automation and the poor residents are living in overcrowded, cramped rooms without due facilities and hygiene. The short story “Gandhi Toxin” is set in India. It uses a character named Shivram Desai, a direct descendant of Gandhi. “2099” is set in a futuristic time when there is no India as a singular country but rather an idea of India- radiation-free sectors or strips ruled by the foreign powers which are integrated virtually.

Padmanabhan’s dystopias have mostly open endings which retain an element of hope or hint at a possibility of change. The protagonists of her dystopian works devise mechanisms to escape their predicament or to change their existing conditions. In the novel *Escape* Meiji is aided by her guardian Youngest to escape from Brotherland. The novel is all about their adventures as they make their way across the dangerous terrains of Brotherland as they face the General’s security personnel boyz, predatory male characters such as Budget and Swan and the despotic ruler General

who is determined to kill all women. The two central characters have less hope of escaping from this country which is always under constant surveillance, a fact revealed right from the outset of the novel. Nonetheless, the novel has an open ending with Meiji and Youngest sharing a conversation in the Point with the hope that Meiji can make her way across this country to be given harbour by any of the neighbouring nations. *The Island of Lost Girls* follows this practice of open ending, the novel even hints at a possibility of change in the existing dystopian world. The unfair and dehumanizing war games and exploitative practices followed by the Whole World Union can come to an end with the concerted efforts of women in the island community. It is revealed that the mentors on the island have a plan which will stop the rule of the General and the dismantlement of the war games on the zone altogether. The plan is never revealed in the novel and the mentors on the island seek the help of Meiji, Youngest and Aila to provide them with information which will help them to implement this plan. The defeat of the General's clone also indicates that the women on the island have the potential for ending exploitative practices. The open ending indicates a possibility of hope and potential for change. In "Gandhi Toxin" the mercantilist system is put to an end with the dismantling of UGH. The enemies of the UGH are administered Gandhi toxin through mosquito bites. The competitors all become pacifists as a consequence of this and they band together and form a revolution to dismantle UGH putting an end to the transnational corporation which fostered an unhealthy competitive mercantilist environment. In "2099" Mr M decides to go to Perma to sleep again and wake up in the next century in the hope that his country will be in a better situation. It is never revealed to the reader what the plight of India is in the next century, the story has an open ending. The play *Harvest* has an open ending too. Jaya tells Virgil that he has to obey her demands and sets conditions

and terms for him and refuses to allow him to implant the embryo in her. She asks him to come in person to see him and also learn to correctly pronounce his name. She takes pills to stay awake so that Virgil doesn't do anything against her will. Even though the reader does not know the end consequences of Jaya's stance, it is still a victory for her and gives one the hope that at least Jaya can be free of the exploitation of Virgil.

Her dystopian works are not entirely bleak and are also filled with moments of levity and comic elements. Youngest mispronouncing the name of Penta in *Escape* is a comic element in the novel. In *The Island of Lost Girls*, the General often misnames Aila when he addresses her. The disparity between her actual name and the General's name given to Aila is a comic element. The play *Harvest* is characterized by its black comedy. The plight of the enemies of UGH following the administration of Gandhi toxin is comic. The industry heads who are otherwise without any compunctions fall into heaps of guilt and the cyber warriors abandon their workshops with tears in their eyes.

Most of her dystopian works are set in an environmentally destroyed world which has polluted water and air, extinct wildlife and a barren landscape with no trees and plants. The novel *Escape* features a country which is ravaged by an atomic bomb disaster. Much of the wildlife is extinct and greenery is destroyed due to manmade incidents like the storage of industrial waste, and detonation of the nuclear bomb. *The Island of Lost Girls* follows this pattern and showcases a world changed as a result of climate change and global warming. Many of the island nations have sunk, seas have risen and the ice caps have melted. In *Harvest*, it is known that Mumbai is polluted from Virgil's comment who reveals that he cannot survive in the polluted environs of Mumbai which will threaten his health. In "Sharing Air" breathing air naturally is not

possible and one can breathe only with a face mask. In this story, it is indicated that there is a “civil breakdown” which has led to an apocalyptic event. The civil breakdown may be a result of various interconnected issues like global warming, nuclear war and ozone depletion. Even the past was not much better than the present dystopian world as the narrator in this short story suggests that she found the air she ordered to breathe and experience the past- a blend of air from five cities from the past polluted and unpleasant to breathe. “2099” presents an India ravaged due to radiation, a remnant of the use of nuclear weapons. In the year 2015 two atomic bomb explosions wreaked India rendering much of the land uninhabitable. There were no forests left anywhere. There were only environmental parks which had a sampling of all flora and fauna which were crammed together in artificially sustained conditions. Even in the present setting or the year 2099, the story is set in; India has not recovered from the effects of its damaged environment and ecology. The majority of the land is uninhabited and the radiation-free zones are the only ones that are left and are said to be India. In Padmanabhan’s dystopian works the environmental collapse is either due to manmade activities like nuclear disasters, or nuclear weapons or phenomena like climate change, global warming or ozone depletion which humans are also culpable of.

The reliance on advanced futuristic technology is a trope found in dystopian works. Dystopian works abound in technological tools which do not exist in the present. Dystopian works focus on the negative implications of reliance on technology. Padmanabhan’s concerns about surveillance technology being used to infiltrate the privacy of citizens are best expressed in her dystopian novels and her play *Harvest*. *Escape* features a country which is monitored by tools such as dynamic surveillance orbs and satellites which has made it difficult to maintain any privacy. In

The Island of Lost, Girls Youngest is constantly under the supervision of the General and confers with the General using chips implanted in his jaws. This is an indication of how despotic regimes use futuristic surveillance equipment to maintain control over citizens and infiltrate their private space. In *Harvest*, the contact module is a video conferencing device used by Ginni to confer with Om and his family. It records the conversations of unsuspecting family members even when it is switched off. The colonial subject of the first-world country is always under the gaze of the colonizer of the first world and all their private conversations are pried upon. Ma is given Super Deluxe Video Couch model XL 5000 that offers her access to seven hundred fifty channels across the world. This video couch is also fitted with a full recycling and bio feed-in processor which means all her needs are met by this device and she no longer has to rely on or go to the outside world. Ma is completely addicted to this device and even when her son Jeetu is being wrongly taken by the guards, she does not do anything. This shows the adverse effects of addiction to new technological devices which can be debilitating. In “Sharing Air” despite all the advanced technological innovations like protein capsules for food, and incubators instead of reproduction the narrator still misses greenery which these technological innovations have not been able to replace.

Padmanabhan uses post-apocalyptic scenarios in many of her dystopian worlds, especially the ones in which the landscape is affected after a nuclear disaster. In “2099” Mr M wakes up to the year 2099 in which only parts of India remain habitable as a result of the use of nuclear weapons. Mr M had gone to Perma to sleep following the plight of India following an atomic bomb explosion in the year 2015. Even the past shows us a post-apocalyptic scenario in which a nuclear attack has taken place. The atomic bomb explosions cause radioactive poisoning and pollution.

In the post-apocalyptic scenario, gas masks had to be worn and all buildings had air seals. The majority of the population breathed poisonous air and vast tracts of land have been rendered uninhabitable due to radioactive pollution. The same concern is expressed in *Escape* in which the General detonates an atomic bomb rendering the land infertile and also leading to the extinction of wildlife. In *The Island of Lost Girls*, eco-anarchists detonate underground nuclear devices at the mouth of the Suez Canal to hasten the collapse of the petroleum industry. These explosions puncture the earth's mantle, spewing molten magma and forming a geyser. In the three years that the geyser had spewed, the Suez Canal vanished into oblivion and the Red Sea was poisoned that it came to be known as the poisoned sea. Padmanabhan is suggesting that nuclear technology when harnessed for the wrong ends wreaks havoc on the ecosystem and all living beings within it.

The misuse of biotechnology is a concern raised by the author in her dystopian works. The cement rot bacterium employed by the General in *Escape* annihilates all things cement and turns them into dust. The General and his cohorts who have invested in science and technology make bioweapons to gain power and unethically use biotechnology. In *The Island of Lost Girls* marine animals are used for producing various resources. The island or artificial floating structure itself is a giant hybrid crab whose proportion is immense. The nervous system is stimulated by the mentors and their occupants to control the crab. The mentors on the island also synthesized and repurposed the nervous systems of creatures to develop animal gadgets. For example, creature batterie was produced using electric eels, fans made from giant modified dragonfly wings and cold light fittings synthesized from fireflies. Vane assures Youngest that these creatures are neither sentient nor alive nor possess individual consciousness to assure his concerns over the use of such creatures. Meiji and

Youngest often voice concern over instrumentalizing and exploiting sentient live animals for human use. The ethics of using sentient live animals for human needs and for developing technology is questioned here. In “Gandhi Toxin” the toxin is used by the UGH to incapacitate their enemies but it also unleashes a revolution formed by the pacified enemies of UGH which dismantle UGH. The volunteers who volunteer for full-body patenting are detained in a corporate facility and given virtual entertainment to entertain themselves. In return, their families enjoy all kinds of luxury except the right to reproduce. UGH is given the right to detain any person whose genetic mutation is useful for them, which will give their clone troop an advantage in battle. Detainees are stripped of their original names and individuality and given names such as gamma two eight, pion sixty-three etc. In this way biotechnology is a tool for oppression as well as resistance in “Gandhi toxin”. In *Harvest*, the American citizen Virgil disguised as Ginni uses the body organs of Jeetu merged with a machine to sustain his life. The author is critiquing the biological exploitation of third-world citizens by rich first-world citizens. *Harvest* also shows the concern that such biotechnology, which is also connected to posthumanism, will lead to post-industrial technoscience that will take over humans. The play shows how the first-world richer nations with access to biomedical technologies can commodify and exploit the third-world population.

The dystopian fiction of Manjula Padmanabhan is characterized by its use of India as a setting, satire of contemporary social and political issues endemic to India, depiction of adverse uses of technology, levity and comedy, post-apocalyptic scenarios, depictions of damaged ecology and environment, discussions on moral and ethical concerns of the use of biotechnology.

1.4 Introduction to *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls*

The novel *Escape* is published in 2008. It features the characters Meiji, Youngest and her uncles Oldest, Middle and the antagonist the General- the misogynist head of the state who uses destructive means to usurp power. Set in the dystopian world of Brotherland which is known as the Forbidden Country to outsiders, the story is a dark dystopian tale of a country free of women. The protagonist Meiji is the sole survivor of a gender cleansing which has killed all females from infants to older women by a masculinist regime insistent on forging a country made for men only. The notion of femininity propagated by the regime is reductionist and stereotypical. Propaganda spread by the regime gives the message that women were weak and only destined to do housework, birthing and tending their children. The gender cleansing of women was also disguised as a necessary contamination measure meant to contain a strange incurable disease which afflicted women and was said to cause madness and death. The men in Brotherland cannot conceive an identity for women other than being child bearers and mothers. They are the others radically excluded from society.

Meiji is hidden and harboured in secrecy by her uncles in their estate with the hope that one day they might be able to help her escape from this country. The novelist has shunned using names and places identifiable with a real-world location to give the impression that issues raised in the novels are universal. The uncles have kept Meiji medicated which has delayed her puberty. It is decided that Meiji on reaching puberty will be escorted out of Brotherland by Youngest, the only one of her uncles who is healthy and young enough to carry this task. The novel as its title suggests is about Meiji's escape as they travel through the dangerous terrains of Brotherland inhabited by the boyz, and clones of Generals as they try to make their way out.

Meiji's identity as a female is known only to her and her uncles. The ones who come to know about her identity by any means are eliminated by her uncles. The dystopian novel can imagine a world without women and the plight of men left in this world. The novelist has made use of many common tropes in dystopian fiction such as state surveillance, a masculinist dystopian regime with an antipathy to women, control of reproduction and sexuality, propaganda to brainwash citizens and ecological collapse. The novel is open-ended and does not reveal whether Meiji and Youngest are successful in their mission.

The Island of Lost Girls (2015) continues the story presented in *Escape*. The characters of Youngest and Meiji and General appear from the previous novel barring which all the characters are new. The title itself is a reference to an underwater island where the majority of the action is set. The plight of the dystopian world other than Brotherland is known in this novel. The countries have all disintegrated, there are no national boundaries and what is left are enclaves. The nations have all joined together to form the Whole World union (WWU). The whole planet was divided into four different enclaves. In the middle of the planet was a place known as the Zone where war games are played out. The war games in the zone are endless violent games where each block is represented by warriors who fight with the opposing team to win the game. The team members are rewarded with money and women. Prostitution, slavery and murder are acceptable as long as it is done for the service of the warriors. Women born and raised in the Zone have no other option than to provide their bodies to the warriors. The inhumane system practised in this dystopian society encourages violence, objectification of women, greed and erosion of human values. The author is showing a fictional world where every activity considered wrong and criminal in the contemporary world is normalised without any compunctions. Youngest has changed

altogether as he has transformed himself from a man to the body of a woman. The events of this novel reveal that Youngest and Meiji were unsuccessful in their escape from Brotherland as they are caught by the General and are now used by him to further his plans. Aila, a trans woman is a new character introduced in this novel who contributes to the plot. Youngest is helped by Aila to reach the Collectory where Meiji is let off to the islanders. Meiji reaches the island where she is surrounded by women whom she has never seen in her life. The island is an underwater facility that harbours girls and women who have been maltreated in the Zone. The girls are taught some useful skills on the island. The mentors in the island community have their ultimate goal is to dismantle this system which they regard as the root of all evil and for having contributed to the rape, assault and objectification of women. Youngest infiltrates the island under the command of the General. He now goes by the name of Yasmine- a trans woman and thus allowed on the island which only allows women. He is forced to do the bidding of the General until he decided to give up and join the islanders. The General's plan to expand his dominion is thwarted by the women on the island who have greater plans to dismantle the unjust patriarchal system itself. The novel ends with Youngest, Aila and Meiji together with the island community with the hope and indication of a larger plan which is never fully revealed to the readers.

1.5 Literature Review

Various articles have been published on the novels *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls* which have focused on aspects like environmental degradation, ecofeminist concerns, the extermination of women, and female foeticide. The articles published on *Escape* mainly focus on the plight of women in the dystopian country of Brotherland and the ecofeminist concerns. The article "No Woman's Land: Woman, Nature and Dystopia in Manjula Padmanabhan's *Escape*" by Basundhara Chakraborty

emphasizes the practice of female infanticide, skewed sex ratio and its representation in the novel *Escape*. It highlights the phallogentric state apparatus in *Escape* and its role in contributing to a women-free country in *Escape*. “Scout for Grim Reality in Novel *Escape* by Manjula Padmanabhan” by Sonia Chadha and Parul Mishra is another article which focuses on the grim reality presented in *Escape* which presents issues such as skewered sex ratio, and sex-selective abortions, environmental degradation and climate change which dangers population and ecology. G. S. Deshmukh and S. S. Jagtap’s “Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Escape*: Extermination of Womanhood” is all about how the dystopian regime has exterminated women and the underlying reasons behind such an action. The book *Star Warriors of the Modern Raj* by Sami Ahmad Khan explains how women are subjugated in *Escape*. Urvashi Kuhad’s *Science Fiction and Indian Women Writers: Exploring Radical Potentials* discusses the setting, issues and concerns discussed in *Escape*. The book *Indian Science Fiction: Patterns, History and Hybridity* by Suparno Banerjee studies the presentation of India in *Escape*. Antonia Navarro-Tejero in the article “A Trans Journey Towards Resistance: Vulnerability and Resilience in the Dystopian Narrative of Manjula Padmanabhan” studies women’s role as endangered sex and the displacement of nature by technology. In Lucy Sargisson’s book *Fool’s Gold? Utopianism in the Twenty-First Century* she studies the forceful implementation of the General’s supposed utopian plan or blueprints in *Escape*. The thesis titled *Postmodern Dystopia: Historicizing Contemporary Dystopian Fiction* by Nirzari Pandit reads *Escape* as a futuristic dark vision of India. The existing research on *Escape* does not explain the treatment of individuals with gay identity in *Escape*. None of the studies has focused on the masculinity of male characters in *Escape* as

well as the gender identity of Meiji. The studies do not focus on the identities of transhuman life in novel such as the *Generals*.

Articles such as “Contrasting Spiritual and Social Eco femininity in Mitra Phukan’s *The Collector’s Wife* and Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Escape*” by Punyashree, Panda and Panchali Bhattacharya, “Discourse of the Oppressed: An Ecofeminist Reading of Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, Sarah Joseph’s *Gift in Green* and Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Escape*” by Reshma R are all ecofeminist readings which finds the oppression of women and nature rooted in a patriarchal order. The existing ecofeminist readings on *Escape* even though acknowledge the patriarchal order which is responsible for the environmental degradation and suffering of women do not emphasize the underlying logic or the dualistic hegemonic framework which denigrates nature. The studies hitherto on the novel also seem to be lacking in how the feminization of nature and the nature-woman association works in a way to undermine both nature and women.

The article “In Search of Women: Deciphering Gender in Manjula Padmanabhan's *The Island of Lost Girls*” by Suchitra S studies how male spaces can restrict women and sexualise them and depicts how the woman’s only space on the island is an area of control and discipline. “An Eco-anarchism analysis of Manjula Padmanabhan’s *The Island of Lost Girls*” by Pankaj Kumar focuses on the environmental degradation presented in the novel. The close association of women with nature seen as a source of strength is not highlighted in any of the studies on *The Island of Lost Girls*. The research on *The Island of Lost Girls* is entirely lacking in the study of transgender individuals and their treatment in the dystopian world. The conceptualization of transsexual identity, the separateness of this identity, and the discriminatory attitude and treatment towards transsexual individuals are all lacking in

the current research. The relationship between women in the island community is not emphasized or studied in the research articles and theses. The studies on this novel also do not explore the masculinities of characters such as Amir and the warriors. The gender identity of women such as Vane, Rahmato'u and Meiji is not explored in any of these studies.

The research articles on *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls* do not explain the identity of animals, their treatment and their perception in the dystopian world. The studies on both novels even though acknowledge it as dystopian do not focus on characteristic features that define such a society. There is also no discussion of *Escape* as a feminist dystopia and *The Island of Lost Girls* as a critical dystopia. The relationship between identity and a dystopian society is not explored or studied in depth in any of the research outputs produced in these works.

1.6 Research Objectives

The thesis studies the diverse identities found in the dystopias of *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls*. The identities found in the novels are situated in a dystopia. These identities are identities beyond humans such as that of animals, nature and transhuman identity, heterosexual identity, gay identity and lesbian identity, and varied gender identities. The thesis examines diverse identities, how these identities are formed and their relationship to dystopias. The dystopian societies' characteristic features are studied in detail to define the dystopian society and understand the relationships between varied identities and the dystopian society. The thesis studies how dystopias support, create, uphold, resist or reject certain identities and how certain identities try to uphold, dismantle or resist the conditions prevailing in dystopia. The thesis examines how dystopias support, uphold or creates certain

identities and how these identities help to maintain the conditions that define this dystopia. It aims to show dystopias reject or resist certain identities that challenge or resist the conditions in dystopia and how these identities try to change or resist the conditions in this dystopia. The study also recommends solutions that can be undertaken for transforming dystopia into a utopia, which involves dismantling or rejecting certain identities and accepting and acknowledging some other identities. The role of the despotic regime, the use of propaganda, the ecological collapse, gender imbalance, the control of sex, suppression of individuality, surveillance mechanisms, the use of technology, exploitation of women in patriarchal dystopia, and control over language, memory and history are some of the dystopian themes which are interrogated and studied. The thesis explains and categorises the texts according to their sub-genres which define the specific nature of dystopian societies which host these identities. It studies the conceptualization of identities beyond humans such as that of non-human nature and animals and transhuman identity. The study probes the question of the identity of life forms not strictly human and determines how a conceptualization or denial of identity dictates their treatment and examines the dystopian society's role in fashioning beings with certain traits. The conceptualization of the identity of animals and their treatment in the dystopian world is analysed. The thesis aims to study the different facets of animal identity such as animals as persons, as property, the instrumentalization of animals, and the politics of meat and animal identity. The study examines how the acknowledgement of animal identity or denial of animal identity can transform the conditions in this dystopia. It probes how technology provides the means to instrumentalise animals. The study examines how nature has been imparted with a feminine identity using the identity politics deployed in ecofeminism that gives a common identity to women and nature.

The thesis examines how nature is gendered as feminine in both dystopias and the implications of such a gendering. The study probes the identity of the General and his clones as transhuman and as transhumanist cyborgs. It examines the technologically reliant dystopian society's role and its influence in producing transhuman identities such as that of the General and his clones. The thesis aims to define heterosexual, gay and lesbian identities and the dystopian society's treatment of these identity categories and the reasons for such a treatment. The thesis examines the factors that make it difficult for people with heterosexual identities to express their sexuality. The study examines the treatment and perception of individuals with gay identity and probes the reasons for the acceptability and tolerance of gay identity. The study probes on how the dystopian society by supporting gay identity and the existence and expression of gay identity can help maintain the conditions in this dystopia. It aims to define and examine lesbian identity as existing in the island community of *The Island of Lost Girls* and its implications on the dystopian world. The study examines how lesbian identity and heterosexual identity try to change or resist the conditions in dystopia and examines the dystopian society's rejection or resistance of such identities. The study also aims to define the varied gender in the dystopias which are men, women and transgender. The study examines the varied gender identities situated in dystopias and shows how dystopias support or perpetuate certain harmful gender notions and how these identities, in turn, help to maintain the dystopian conditions. The thesis also examines how certain gender identities are rejected or resisted by dystopias as it is viewed as a threat to the dystopian society's status quo and how such identities in turn try to change or resist the condition in dystopia. The masculinity of characters such as Blackson, Middle and Eldest, Youngest, and Amir is discussed. The thesis examines the androcentric dystopian society's control of memory, language, history and

information, suppression of individuality, and its role as a surveillance state and its influence or impact on male gender identities. The study probes the identities of women in dystopias – of Meiji, Vane, and Rahmato'u. Meiji's stages in identity development such as her sheltered existence in her guardian's house, her initiation to gendered discourses and her internalisation of it, her time on the island being confused and ignorant about her gender, her eventual comfort and acceptance of her gender identity and integration to the woman only community of the island are subjected to analysis. It examines how dystopian society contributes to the making of Meiji's identity. The thesis studies the identity of Vane and how her views on gender undo gender. Rahmato'u and her identity, the notion of femininity internalised by her, her sexual objectification, her lack of autonomous self and the way she gains an autonomous self are subjected to analysis. The study also probes the connection between the undoing of harmful gendered notions and critical dystopian text. The thesis examines Aila's identity as a transsexual woman and the various facets of her identity such as the role of sex reassignment surgery, milestones in her life as a transsexual person and the hope offered to her for her upliftment as a trans person by the island community. The study investigates the treatment of trans identities in dystopias specifically genderist beliefs, transphobia, gender bashing, cissexism, transsexualization and transmisogyny evident in the treatment of trans persons. The island community's attempts to uplift trans identities are also discussed.

1.7 Research Methodology

The study analyzes the nature of dystopian societies in both texts. For this purpose, Rosenfeld's criterion for the judgement of literary dystopias has been used. Aaron S Rosenfeld also gives criteria to judge dystopian fiction which is through an interpretation of authorial intention, themes and reader response (52). The definition

of feminist dystopia provided by Margaret Atwood, Ildney Cavalcanti and Raffaella Baccolini is used for the categorization of *Escape* as a feminist dystopia. The definition of critical dystopia by Peter Fitting, Vita Fortunati, Raffaella Baccolini, and Peter G. Stillman is used for the categorization of *The Island of Lost Girls* as a critical dystopia.

The study of animal identity has been established using Gary L Francione's views on the person status given to animals and Matthew Calarco's views on animal identity. Gary Francione is an animal rights activist who believes that animals shouldn't be treated as things and should be given the same rights as humans (*Animals as Persons* 61). The notion that animals do not have any sentience is used to discredit them and deny them any identity. Francione argues that animals should be given the status of persons as they are sentient and have interests. (*Animals as Persons* 61). Matthew Calarco says what animals and humans share are interests which is the common identity shared by them (14). The association of nature with women and the feminine identity imparted to nature is explored using the views of radical eco-feminists such as Karen J Warren and Sherry J Ortner. According to cultural ecofeminists, women and nature are symbolically associated with each other. The ways in which nature and woman get associated with each other and how their identity is merged are studied using the views of cultural ecofeminists. Transhuman identities such as that of the Generals and clones are studied using theories from transhumanism.

Heterosexual identity, gay identity and lesbian identity has been explained and defined in the study. Factors that make it difficult for people with heterosexual identities to pursue their romantic or sexual desires have been explained using textual analysis, using the specific conditions prevailing in the dystopia that make it difficult

for heterosexual people to exercise their sexuality. The freedom and ease for people with gay identity to exercise their sexuality have been similarly studied using textual analysis, by examining and analyzing the conditions prevailing in the dystopia that is conducive to the exercise of sexuality of gay people. Adrienne Rich's concept of lesbian identity has been used to describe the relationship shared by women in the island community. Adrienne Rich's concept of lesbian identity describes it as a friendship between women, their roles as comrades and companions, the communality enjoyed by women, the mental and political support given by each other and resistance to male domination (648,650,656).

The study of gender identities, that of men and women and transgender is part of the analysis. Masculinity and men's studies are useful for examining notions of the gender identities of men. Masculinity and men's studies focusses on many culturally and historically associated notions attached to masculinity such as the men's drive to acquire money, power, wealth, their physicality, built and strength, repudiation of the feminine, power, control and domination. The physical sense of male body, how men conduct their bodies and present themselves to others is attached to notions of masculinity (Connell, *Gender and Power* 94). Manhood is often associated with the drive for power, status and wealth (Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia" 125, 136). Masculinity is also dictated by sexual division of labour (Bem 31). Violence is connected to masculinity (Kimmel, "Violence" 811). Combat and military experience are tied to notions of masculinity (Morgan 166). Masculinity is often defined as anti-femininity (Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia" 126). Masculinity is defined using such traits and the characters evince such notions of the masculine which makes masculinity and men's studies useful for such an analysis. The association of femininity with the female body and sexuality is examined in this study. Femininity is

defined as attractiveness to men and women's ability to please men's sexual needs which can be damaging to women (Mackinnon 530). The sexual objectification of women depersonalizes them and objectifies them (Stoltenberg 39). Important and pertinent feminist theories by scholars such as Andrea Dworkin, John Stoltenberg, Sandra Lee Bartky and Linda C Pelzer are used to study how women such as Rahmato'u are objectified and stripped of an autonomous self. Notions and behaviour that undo gender have been studied. Barbara J Risman's article has been used to study how characters such as Vane and Rahmato'u undo gender. Transgender studies are mainly used to study the identities of trans characters in novels. Various aspects of trans people's life like their identification with different gender, their pursuit of surgical means, important milestones in their life, and the discriminatory attitudes faced by them are subjected to analysis. Surgical means are necessary for the trans individual to get a body according to their preference and which is syn with their identity. The reliance on surgery for bodily reconstruction by many trans people shows us that their view of identity is not divorced from the body. The realization that one's gender identity does not match with their sex, changing names and pronounces, living a lifestyle appropriate to one's gender and coming out of the closet are all important milestones in the lives of transgender people. Various discriminations carried out against trans people in this dystopian world can be explained by the concepts of genderism, transphobia, femmephobia, gender bashing, transmisogyny, trans-sexualization and cissexism. Transphobia is the dislike, hatred and all negative attitudes towards trans people (Bettcher 46). Genderism is a system of beliefs that regards there are only two genders- men and women and a negative evaluation and judgement of any gender identity whose gender does not match with their sex (Hill 119). Gender bashing is discriminatory behaviour towards trans people (Hill 120).

Femmephobia is the devaluation of femininity (Hoskin). Genderist beliefs and femmephobia causes transphobia which is an attitude and gender bashing is the behaviour. Trans misogyny is a discriminatory attitude that shames and criticizes trans women for their failure to uphold gender norms as well as for their display of femininity (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Transmisogyny is rooted in oppositional sexism and traditional sexism that regards men and women as distinct gender categories with different norms and attributes as well as the superiority of men over women (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Cissexism is another discriminatory attitude that regards transsexual people as inferior to cisgender people (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Trans-sexualization is the notion that men transition to become trans women to invite male sexual advances and attention (Serano, *Whipping Girl*).

1.8 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis constitutes of seven chapters in total. Each chapter is further divided into sections and subsections with headings and subheadings, all numbered. It consists of an introductory chapter, four core chapters, a conclusion and a recommendation. The relationship between various identities and the dystopian societies they inhabit is established by linking various sections together.

The introductory chapter introduces all the topics covered in the thesis. The chapter discusses the connection between identities and dystopias. It introduces the author, her writing style and her oeuvre. A general discussion of Manjula Padmanabhan's use of the dystopian genre is included. The primary texts are introduced and a literature review is done leading to the identification of the research gap. The research objectives are stated in this chapter. A structure of the thesis is provided and the relevance of the study is discussed.

The second chapter titled “*Escape and The Island of Lost Girls as Dystopias*” examines the nature of society presented in both texts and proves it as dystopian. Rosenfeld has given three criteria for the judgement of dystopian fiction which are used for this analysis. The categorisation of these two dystopias into its subgenres helps to understand the nature of these dystopias.

The identities found in the dystopias are non-human identities such as that of animals and nature, transhuman identity, heterosexual, gay and lesbian identities and gender identities. Each chapter of the thesis discusses each of these identities.

The third chapter titled “Identities beyond Human” discusses the identities that have exceeded the limits of humans and are no longer strictly human such as non-human animals and nature and transhuman beings. This chapter examines the treatment and perception of animals in the dystopian world. This chapter discusses how animals are treated and perceived in the dystopian world of both novels. Gary Francione’s and Matthew Calarco’s views regarding the personhood status of animals and views on animal identity are used to define the identities of animals found in dystopias. This chapter explains how hybrid animals in dystopias are regarded as properties and commodities without any selves. The chapter elucidates the treatment and perception of animals in *The Island of Lost Girls* such as hybrid turtles, hybrid marine crabs, and hybrid lizards. The sections of this chapter are devoted to studying the identity of animals such as Noor the whale, hybrid crab, Golliath Chellion, and hybrid lizard. Francione’s arguments are helpful to prove the personhood status of animals. This chapter also examines how the dystopian world instrumentalizes animals and turns them into commodities for human use and convenience. The reduction of animals to meat and denying their selfhood is a point of discussion in this chapter. This chapter elucidates how the dystopian world denies any self to animals

when they are consumed as meat by the dystopia's inhabitants. The views of eco-feminists such as Sherry B Otner and Carolyn Merchant are used to study the association of nature with women in *Escape* and how feminine identity is constructed of nature. The special link between women and nature in *The Island of Lost Girls* and how nature is feminized is a subject of analysis in this chapter. The identity of the General and his clones have been analyzed using a transhumanist reading.

The fourth chapter titled "Heterosexual, Gay and Lesbian identities" discusses the various sexual orientations in the dystopian world. The chapter defines and probes heterosexual identity and the treatment of individuals with such an identity. Factors that make it difficult for people with heterosexual identities to express their sexuality are analysed. This chapter defines gay identity and discusses the perception and treatment of same-sex relationships between men in *Brotherland*. This chapter also defines the relationship between women in the island-only community defined in terms of Rich's concept of lesbian identity. Adrienne Rich's concept of the lesbian continuum is used to define the relationship between women on the island.

The fifth chapter titled "Gender Identities" discusses varied gender identities found in dystopias – that of men, women and transgender. The male characters discussed are Blackson, Eldest and Middle, Youngest, and Amir and the female characters discussed are Meiji, Rahmato'u and Vane. The identity of transsexual woman Aila has been studied and the treatment of transgender people in the dystopian society has been examined. Masculinity and men's studies are mainly used to analyze the gender identities of men in the novel. The relationship between the men and women in the dystopian society and how the dystopian society influences them is a part of this analysis. Many of the male characters have traits which are commonly associated with masculinity such as success, wealth, money, physicality and strength.

Each subsection discusses specific notions attached to the masculinity of each character. The section on women characters features three main characters Meiji, Rahmato'u and Vane. Meiji's upbringing in Brotherland, her notion about gender identity, initiation to gendered discourses, displacement, anxiety on the island and her acceptance of her gender identity are all analyzed as part of her gender identity as a woman. The harmful notions of femininity internalized by Rahmato'u, her undoing of such notions and her efforts to develop an autonomous self are studied as part of her gender identity. Vane's notions about her gender identity and the way she imparts the same to girls are discussed in this chapter. Transsexual identity is defined in this chapter. Aila is a transsexual character in the novel. Her childhood days, the decision to change her gender, gender identification, and her relationship with her family is all examined as part of the analysis of identity. Her decision to undergo sex reassignment surgery and her motivation for it is an essential part of the analysis as a transsexual is the preferred medical term for any individual who undergoes surgical means to align their body with their identity. The erasure of transsexual identity and intersubjectivity that comes with passing is discussed. The role of sex reassignment surgery and its impact on Aila's life is examined in this chapter. The milestones undergone by Aila as a transsexual woman are discussed. Anti-trans feelings are studied to understand their root causes and implications. Genderism, transphobia, gender bashing, and cissexism are some of the discriminatory attitudes towards people with transgender identities discussed in this chapter. This chapter also focuses on transmisogyny which targets transgender women. The chapter discusses the cissexism prevalent in the dystopian world.

The concluding chapter sums up the findings in all the preceding chapters. This chapter provides a holistic reading of the thesis interlinking all the disparate

chapters together to provide a comprehensive view of identities in dystopias. The final chapter gives an insight on how dystopias reject or resist certain identities at the same time how dystopias support or create certain identities that is beneficial for them. The concluding chapter defines how certain identities try to change the conditions in the dystopian society. The solutions that can change a dystopia to a utopia are also elucidated.

The last chapter is recommendations that suggest topics for further study in these texts.

1.9 Relevance of Research

The way identity is conceived, formed and performed in dystopia and its relationship to dystopia is a relevant subject of enquiry and research. A study of identity would help us understand how identities are formed and perceived by others and the social roles attached to each identity position. The study of identity helps to understand how certain groups and individuals are otherwise, marginalized and deprived of rights. A dystopian society is not a mere background or setting which houses various identities, the very features of such society influence identities. The present study analyzes this enmeshment between identities and dystopian societies. A study of the characteristic features of dystopias reveals the nature of dystopias in each text. The core issues, themes and anxieties presented in each dystopia vary and it has an impact on the way fictional relationships, characters, and power dynamics are presented in these texts. Dystopias favour collectivism and group identities over individuality which may lead to dissent and rebellion. The functioning of individuals with various identities can help in upholding or destroying the order in a dystopian society. An analysis of identity categories reveals the extent to which the dystopian

regimes and orders are invested in maintaining these identity categories and roles which would benefit them. The present study focuses on various identities and how dystopias support, perpetuate, create or resist certain identity categories and how certain identity categories dismantle, support or uphold the conditions in the dystopian society. A dystopia is unlike a real-world society as it is always an oppressive futuristic society, a bad place that exaggerates our anxieties and fears. Any study on identities set in a dystopia has to study the implications of such a dystopia which distorts and defamiliarizes everything ranging from setting, relationships, technology, power dynamics, and social roles. Dystopias are not merely fictional nonexistent bad places; they are also extrapolations from the present. This study examines issues satirized in these dystopias which are rooted in the contemporary world. A dystopia set in the Indian sub-continent has issues and themes relevant and rooted to such societies which are absent in the majority of speculative fiction from the West. Representation in fiction matters and the present study probes some real-world issues which are endemic to the Indian sub-continent and discusses how the author Manjula Padmanabhan contributes to a discussion and articulation of these issues through the genre of dystopia. Since dystopias are a critique of contemporary society and the unhealthy trends in societies, the study analyzes the presentation of these issues that will contribute to the larger research on the emerging field of Indian English dystopian literature.

Chapter Two

Escape and The Island of Lost Girls as Dystopias

2.1 Introduction

Lyman Tower Sargent in her article “Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited” defines dystopia as an imaginary society located in a time and place, described in great detail by the author and intended to be recognized by the reader as worse than his or her contemporary society (9). The word dystopia can be applied to the description of societies which are uninhabitable as well as any works of literature which seek to describe such societies. In dystopian societies, there is no human volition or control (Claeys, “Three Variants on the Concept of Dystopia” 17). Authoritative control supersedes individual will and volition in such societies (Claeys, “Three Variants” 17). Authoritative control can refer to control and interference from the government, aliens, party, race and so on (Claeys, “Three Variants” 17). Dystopia is a post-political or anti-political society (Claeys, “Three Variants” 17). A dystopian society does not espouse the values of a democracy (Claeys, “Three Variants” 17). In a dystopian society, the inhabitants are deprived of the benefits which a democratic society may have (Claeys, “Three Variants” 17). The inhabitants of such a society are subject to the control and manipulation of an authority which does not give them a right to make decisions regarding the conditions in their society and life (Claeys, “Three Variants” 17). In a dystopian society, the majority suffer slavery or forms of oppression as a result of human action (Claeys, “Three Variants” 17). The chapter establishes the primary texts selected for study as dystopian fiction by using the characteristic traits of the genre as given by scholars such as Aaron S. Rosenfeld. Each dystopia differs based on the nature of the society depicted and can be

subcategorised into various kinds such as feminist dystopia, apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic dystopia, critical dystopia, and eco dystopia. The chapter also probes the specific conditions existing in each dystopia of the texts and categorises them. *Escape* is categorised as a feminist dystopia and the definitions from Margaret Atwood, Ildney Cavalcanti and Raffaella Baccolini, are used for the analysis. *The Island of Lost Girls* is analysed as a critical dystopia and definitions from various scholars such as Peter Fitting, Vita Fortunati, Raffaella Baccolini, Peter G. Stillman are used for the study.

2.2 *Escape* as a Dystopia- Introduction

Three criteria are used to judge and categorise *Escape* as dystopian fiction. The first is the author's intention (Rosenfeld 52). The author determines whether the text is dystopian or utopian. The second is themes (Rosenfeld 52). A reading of various themes will help establish the text as dystopian or utopian (Rosenfeld 52). An interpretation can be done to determine whether the text follows the themes commonly featured in dystopian literature. The third is the reader's response (Rosenfeld 52). The reader's assessment of the narrative determines whether it is dystopian or not. *Escape* can be further sub-categorised into feminist dystopia. The definitions of feminist dystopia from Margaret Atwood and Ildney Cavalcanti are sourced for this purpose. The characteristic features that are used to judge the text as dystopian are also used to understand the features of the society presented in this text as dystopian works are after all a depiction of such bad societies.

2.2.1 Authorial Intention

The authorial intention remains a key factor that determines a text as dystopian. The author has given various interviews where she has discussed her work

Escape as dystopian fiction and her intention in projecting dystopian scenarios in her novel. The author says so about her preference for writing dystopian fiction such as *Harvest* and *Escape*, “I don't think I set out to write dystopia-lit. It's sort of the other way around – an idea occurs to me, e.g. the organ transplant trade in *Harvest*, and as I try to frame a story, it becomes necessary to reach outside the frame of current reference” (“Q&A with Manjula Padmanabhan”). The novel *Escape* was primarily written by the author to address the problem of female infanticide and gender imbalance. In her interview with the blog *Jabberwock*, she says,

In the case of *Escape*, the idea presented itself originally as a newspaper “middle”, which would take the form of a page from the diary of the last Indian woman left alive. It was just the fingerprint of an idea I had around the turn of the millennium, when there was talk of the Year – or Decade – of the Woman and I kept thinking that despite all the positive stuff going on, it seemed more likely that women – Indian women anyway – appeared to be on the decline (“Q&A with Manjula Padmanabhan”).

The declining sex ratio, a contemporary concern in the Indian subcontinent is the primary issue dealt with in the novel. The author believes that the declining sex ratio would eventually reach an endpoint (“Q&A with Manjula Padmanabhan”). She has used the medium of dystopian fiction to imagine a world with no women and its resultant disastrous effects. The genre of dystopia allows the writer to creatively imagine the end and fatal consequences of gender imbalance. Dystopian fiction projects futuristic scenarios which show the end consequences of the present harmful social, and political trends in society. It is intended to be a prophecy and warning to its readers about worst-case scenarios which they may encounter in the future. As the writer, Padmanabhan has said in her interview with the *Indian Express*:

In ways in which gender issues are being talked of these days, we are always told that things are getting better. So my effort was to talk about supposing it isn't better, supposing we are moving towards a new dark age. If that is so — I am not making a prediction — how do we protect ourselves? Where do we place our minds? How do we plan to survive? (“And still I rise”)

Escape features a post-apocalyptic world in which all women have been eliminated. All females have been eliminated in the period called the “Change”. Female infanticide and gender imbalance are the central issues which the novelist has brought to the reader’s attention by placing it in a dystopian setting. The text follows one of the many basic criteria for evaluating dystopian fiction- authorial intention. The society depicted by the author is dystopian and the author uses this genre as it allows her to show the worst outcomes of declining sex ratio and gender imbalance in society.

2.2.2 Themes in *Escape*

A reading of various themes commonly found in dystopian texts such as totalitarianism, oppressive surveillance mechanisms, harmful effects of technology, control of sexual relations, unequal gender relations, destroyed and desolate environment, favouring of collective ethic over individuality, discursive control of past and information, control of memory will help to evaluate the text as dystopian or utopian.

One common theme in dystopia is totalitarianism or despotism of any sort. Dystopian societies are characterised by authoritarian control (Claeys, “Three Variants” 17). The Brotherland in *Escape* is ruled by a dictator named the General. The Brotherland has an autocratic regime which suppresses all dissent against it. The

form of governance practised in the country is undemocratic. All rebellions are actively suppressed by the regime. The General's orders are carried out by the regime without consulting the citizens. The borders of the country are sealed so that no citizen can escape from it. The General rules the country by intimidating the citizens. He suppresses all dissent so that he can be the sole ruler of Brotherland. He regards unlimited and sole control of the country as the dream of every ruler which he boastfully claims to have succeeded in doing. He asks Youngest, "Tell me, is it not astounding that in a bare twenty years- twenty one this autumn- we have achieved what no ruler has even dreamed of in all the ages before ours- that is, total, absolute control? (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 371). His security personnel known as boyz threaten the citizens and conduct inspections across the country. All his policies are autocratic such as killing women despite the resistance against it, bombing the country to clear off the excess population, unleashing cement rot bacterium that reduces all cement structures to dust, destruction of all literature and replacement of it with the regime's propaganda, banning of heterosexual unions, imposing cloning technology on the population thereby denying them the right to produce naturally and beget offspring. Propaganda is used to glorify the regime and brainwash the masses. It is used to maintain the autocratic rule of the General. Instructional manuals containing the General's advice and instructions to his citizens glorify his regime. They advocate values such as a collective ethic, ruthlessness and violence. The manuals project Brotherland as heaven and depict the past civilizations as profligate and underdeveloped. These manuals also justify the mass genocide of women, atomic bombing and all other such heinous acts committed by the regime. The manuals are the only literature available in Brotherland for the citizens. The citizens do not have access to any other literature which will let them know an alternative viewpoint. The

Change – the years in which the genocide of women takes place are explained as just measures carried out to protect men. These manuals encourage the citizens to give up their beliefs in God and traditional religions. Any belief in supernatural phenomena is discouraged as it is seen as a threat to the regime. It instead seeks to inculcate a scientific temper and blind faith in science and technology in them. The manuals are propaganda which is used to depict the General as a charismatic and progressive leader who is described as a sculptor who moulds reality. They are described as the future and the pinnacle of human existence. They encourage servility and blind obedience to the regime. The regime insists on keeping the citizens ignorant. The manuals spread the message that ignorance is the key to efficient leadership. These instruction booklets justify the mass killings committed by the regime by depicting death as a chisel which is used by the regime to perfect reality and brainwash the citizens to accept the dictatorial policies of the regime. The dystopia in *Escape* is ruled by a dictatorial ruler who uses propaganda, misinformation, and terror to intimidate and subjugate its citizens.

Control of sexual relations is a theme in dystopian fiction. There is a great deal of control of sex in dystopias (Sargent and Sargisson 305). In dystopias, sexual relations reproduced power structures (Sargent and Sargisson 316). In *Escape*, the General wants to restrict the male citizens from having sexual relations with females. He wants to create a country of males free from the existence of female genes. He views females as amateurs who are tasked with the important task of bringing forth new generations. The clone generation technology is invented to replace the female role in reproduction. The General believes that cloning technology can create intellectually and physically sound and superior male species free from contaminated female genes. The General believes that females were killed as it is “about

continuance in the highest and most refined form: relieved of the contamination of dual parentage. There is no longer any reason to fear eventual degeneration and race annihilation” (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 73). The General fear that biologically inferior and degenerate offspring will be produced as a result of the male and female union as the female genes are considered inferior and contaminated. The General’s regime has strictly forbidden heterosexual relations which it views as the main reason for the production of degenerate and biologically inferior species. Females are eliminated to control the breeding technology as well as to negate the threat of dual parentage. Gay couples and their relations are accepted in by the dystopian regime.

The presence of oppressive surveillance mechanisms is another theme in dystopian fiction. In modern dystopias, consciousness is assaulted by surveillance (Marks 86). The Brotherland in *Escape* is a dystopian society which offers no privacy to citizens. The General keeps a database of all sentient beings in his country. The regime has access to all facts and information about individual citizens. Prying into the personal lives of the citizens is essential for the regime to suppress dissent. The regime uses several sophisticated technologies for surveillance. The surveillance mechanisms used by the regime enable the General to keep track of every movement of his citizens. The General’s government is a surveillance state that spies on the lives of citizens. The regime makes use of tools like satellites and dynamic surveillance orbs to keep track of its citizens. The satellites which Youngest claims “can zoom in on the pearl drop in your ear” (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 48) are operated by the Boyz. The satellite allows the General to keep track of every movement of his citizens. The surveillance orbs which look like spiders are devices which can climb up the sides of buildings. These are operated by the Boyz and can record the conversations and take a video of the citizens without their will. The boyz—the

General's security personnel are used by the General to conduct inspections of the countryside. The Boyz who are mass-produced in laboratories is used to police the population. The boyz, three hundred in number, wear the same black robes, gloves and boots and looked identical to each other. They are tasked with the responsibility of surveilling the citizens and catching lawbreakers. The General also uses boyz to inspect the estates to check that they do not harbour any women as often has been the case.

Dystopian orders maintain power through the discursive control of information and history (Hanson 9). The dystopian regime's control of information and the past is another theme often featured in this novel. All information is controlled by the regime. The citizens are not supposed to remember their past which is considered profligate. The General emphasises knowing about the present only. The Generals do not believe in educating their masses as they believe that "[l]iteracy gives a man airs" (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 55). All the literature of the past is also destroyed by the General. The instructional manuals are the only remaining literature in Brotherland. The manuals project an alternative history to the masses and justify the regime. These manuals present the regime's views on everything ranging from history, God, morality, and genocide. Women or vermin as they are called in the manuals are defined as weak and unfit. The manuals depict God as a bogeyman, something that does not exist. They also give importance to collective ethics, ruthlessness and violence and define the Brotherland as heaven. There are different versions of the past, all of which depict a poor image of women and justify the mass murders. For instance, Pigeon an estate worker believes that there are no females in the rest of the world just like Brotherland and he wonders about the rationale for creating a specialised breed such as women to give birth to men considering that it is

possible with cloning. Blackson was told a different account altogether. He tells Youngest that he was told that women were weak, small and dim-witted, unable to take care of themselves and were always confined to their homes. He is led to believe that they were subordinates to men always needing their protection and a strange disease without any cure came to afflict women that caused madness, suffering and death. He is given the justification that women were killed to preserve the remaining men in the country so that this strange disease does not spread and afflict them. There are no records of the female genocide, atomic bomb explosion and the incident regarding the release of the cement rot bacterium in Brotherland. The General believes that “[i]gnorance is the key to efficient leadership. Ignorant people are happy people” (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 175). The citizens in Brotherland born after the Change do not have any idea about the Time Before. The radio broadcasts the General’s messages and propaganda throughout the day thereby denying the citizens access to news from any other domain. The General’s regime is not a democratic society which allows free and open discussion amongst its citizens.

The preoccupation with technology is a constant theme in dystopian fiction. The totalitarian state in dystopia is dependent on technology (Beauchamp 54). Technological apparatus is misused by totalitarian rulers for their motives (Beauchamp 55). The dystopian society also views the technology itself as destructive and not simply a neutral tool misused by certain individuals (Beauchamp 55). The dystopian society in this sense is technophobic (Beauchamp 55). In the dystopian text *Escape*, technology is projected as a tool used by the totalitarian regime to institute itself in power and control its citizens. The Generals are mass-produced by the General’s forefathers using cloning technology in a genetic laboratory. The General’s unnamed forefathers clone Generals without the knowledge of their sponsors who

funded the genetic laboratories. The General's autocratic regime is set up solely based on technological advancements. The control of the populace and setting up of the autocratic setup is not possible without cloning the Generals in large numbers. Each territory of the country is ruled by a particular General who was radio linked to his other clone brothers which allows them to continuously transmit messages to each other. Dystopian fiction raises several questions about humans in a society which has many negative versions of techno-organic syntheses (Wanat 151). Cyborg captures the anxiety engendered by the negative effects of technology (Garner 88). The General is also a cyborg who has some technological artefacts fused to his body. The General can be regarded as a negative image or version of the techno-organic synthesis that dystopian fiction often projects. Cloning technology is misused for setting up the totalitarian regime. Cloning technology also makes use of animals that are killed after its use which is a negative consequence of using this technology. The totalitarian setup has control over drone technology and uses it to institute itself in power. Drone generation technology is seen as begetting a negative impact on society as it is used by the regime to sustain its power and monopolise its control over the population. The drone technology is given to families who have pledged their alliance to the General and his regime. The General has a monopoly over this technology and uses this to bribe wealthy families to accept his rule.

The demise of individuality and individual differences constitute another theme of dystopian fiction. All individual differences are suppressed for the authoritarian government to keep itself in power. In the article "Mind the Gap", Calin Andrei Mihailescu says that "[t]he loss of the self is the character's final acknowledgement of, and ultimate contribution to, society's being definitively victorious" (215). The General's Brotherland is formed on the value of collective

ethics. The General disregards concepts like name, identity and individuality as his Brotherland is based on fellowship, brotherhood and the power of the collective over the individual. The General and his regime destroy everything signifying individuality, he says, “We reject individuality. Names, dates, history- all are irrelevant” (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 139). The General’s administration also releases a list of official names every year from which the citizens are supposed to name themselves. This ensures that individuality is denied to the citizen as every year a new list of official names is released from which the citizens should take a new name. The regime regards dissent as its enemy and does not support any constructive criticism. The General uses violence, the threat of death as well as incentive schemes to suppress all individual differences and dissent. Those opposing the regime’s policies are not given any incentive schemes, havens, or safe and unlimited food and water supplies. The non-collaborators are just given the option to collaborate with the regime or die in a radioactively poisoned land. The populace is forced into accepting the regime as for the non-collaborators there are “no warnings, no shelters, no hope” (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 305). The rich families which constituted the General’s support groups are just given a choice to collude with the regime or be killed by the regime. The General intimidates this support group into accepting his rule and rewards them with estates and drone technology to ensure their obedience to him. They were not given access to havens, under the control of a regime which would have protected them from radioactive poisoning. Moreover, sophisticated treatments which pre-empted radioactive sickness are also denied to such non-collaborators. Seditious activities are punished by the regime. Harboring females without the knowledge of the regime is considered a seditious activity as the concept of Brotherland entails the negation of females. The General deprives an estate owner of

his estate when he finds out about the existence of a girl whom the estate owner- the girl's grandfather hid in his estate. He confiscates all their drones and drains their fuel as a punitive measure. Bamboo's estate owner's estate was confiscated and forced to pay hefty compensation as a punishment for harbouring a mother and a daughter.

The control and censorship of language constitute another theme in dystopian fiction. Language is used as an instrument for the enforcement of the dystopian regime. The dystopian regime considers language as a subversive tool because of which they control language (Booker, *Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature* 81). It is used as a means to control their subjects (Booker, *Dystopian Impulse* 81). Controlling language also helps them to control their perception of reality (Booker, *Dystopian Impulse* 81). In dystopia, any linguistic changes are unwelcome as they may lead to subversiveness or resistance against the dystopian regime (Booker, *Dystopian Impulse* 81). Literature shocks language opening up new meanings that might upset utopia or dystopia (Rosenfeld 4). Dystopias manipulate the conventions of language (Millward 96). In a dystopia, the use of language is constricted or prescribed by ideological governing structures or authoritarian structures (Millward 96). The dystopian regime denies access to reading (Millward 99). A literate population is prone to subversion and incendiary activities (Millward 99). Language has the potential to incite revolution. The dystopian regime recognizes this power of language and tries to prevent it (Millward 99). The authoritarian regime in *Escape* strictly controls language to suppress any subversive tendencies as well as to inculcate the values upheld by the regime in the populace. The regime does not believe in making the populace literate. All the literature in the country is also destroyed by the regime as the regime knows that the citizens will get access to knowledge that can change their views on many topics such as the General, women, and history that can

potentially topple the regime. He doesn't want the citizens to use language as it is a subversive tool which would topple his regime. The General in one of his manuals claims literacy gives a man airs. Some citizens do not know to read or write the language, an ignorance that is beneficial to the regime. This is shown in various instances. Blackson, an estate worker does not even know to sign his name. Bamboo, another worker only knows to write his name. Youngest plans to send the letter addressed to his brothers through merchants who are illiterate and cannot grasp the content of the message. The General believes that ignorance is beneficial for maintaining his regime. He wants to keep the citizens illiterate and ignorant to suppress all dissent. There is also censorship of the usage of language. The use of female pronouns and words indicating femininity is seen as against the interests of the regime. The regime wants to purge the language to remove any nouns, pronouns and adjectives which denote the female sex. The General does not like any word which is a reminder of femininity. He abhors the word nation as it reminds him of nativity and excess. Nation reminds the General of birth- of female reproduction which the General had eradicated from Brotherland. The General even replaces the word woman with vermin in his instructional manuals. He does not accord any respect to females and dehumanises them by assigning them the signifier vermin. All words related to female and feminine identity are redundant in Brotherland as there are no females in Brotherland. Youngest explains the word "sister" to Meiji as a word that "stands for a type of person that doesn't exist anymore" (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 251). Even the usage of female pronouns can invite suspicion of harbouring women, a seditious activity. Youngest conceals the gender identity of Meiji by using the pronoun "he" and addressing Meiji as his little brother in his letter addressed to his brothers because of the fear of being caught by the General. Discouraging and banning the use of such

words prohibits the citizens to know or talk about women thus cementing the citizens' bias and stereotypical views on women and gender roles which is beneficial to the sustenance of the androcentric totalitarian regime. The General does not believe in the supernatural as well as in any organized religion. In his manuals, he calls God a "bogeyman". Youngest explains to Meiji about the meaning of God which is no longer used in Brotherland: "It used to be a very common word, but it's not allowed any more. I mean, we're not officially allowed to say it. It means a...a supreme being. Something like the General, but a lot bigger. And not real -" (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 286). The word God is banned in Brotherland because of the General's aversion and disbelief towards this concept.

Control of memory is another theme that figures in dystopian fiction. Authoritarian hegemonic discourse shapes the narrative about the past and collective memory to the point that individual memory has been erased (Baccolini, "A Useful Knowledge of the Present Is Rooted in the Past" 130). In *Escape*, the despotic regime replaces all the memory of the past with the official records which present a distorted and wrong perception of the past. The regime does not want the citizens to be influenced by the ideas of the past. The General believes that "[w]e will be honoured by the future for what we erased in the past" (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 141). Youngest calls the Generals erasers, he says, "They erase history, geography, and whole generations of people. First by removing them, then by ensuring that all reference to them is cancelled out of existence. They should have been called erasers, not Generals-" (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 120). The General believes in the present progress rather than looking up to the past. He regards the worship of the past as profane and perverse, he says, "To this very day, in the Outside World, people continue with the worship of the past- their worship of death. It disgust me. My gorge rises up in horror

-” (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 76). He regards the habits of the past civilization as waste and profligacy. The literature of the past is all destroyed and replaced by instructional manuals which present a distorted notion of reality. All existing literature and records are destroyed to conceal the General’s mass killings and incidents such as the release of the cement bacterium, atomic bomb explosion and murder of women. The period of these incidents was referred to as the Change and the time preceding the rise of the Generals is referred to as the Time Before. The General and his regime made all efforts to destroy all memory of the time before as well as the incidents which took place during the change. Youngest says so about the rise of the Generals and his forefathers, “Then it was time for the pair of brothers to fade from memory, for the entire past to slide into oblivion, for history to become a figment of the collective imagination and for the rest of the planet to seal its borders and switch off its tolerance” (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 306). The manuals are the General’s propaganda material which glorified the regime and presented the General’s view of the past which favoured him. Many of the citizens born after the Change do not have any idea or semblance of life in the Time Before. The General’s instructional manuals send out the message that “[g]enocide is misunderstood” (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 102). The real reasons for decimating women are concealed by the regime. Bamboo and other estate workers born after the Change are told that the advent of an incurable disease amongst females was responsible for their demise. The regime spreads misinformation about the role of women in society. Many born after the change like Bamboo, Blackson and Pigeon believe that a female’s role is tied to her reproductive abilities. Blackson, an estate worker is told a different story altogether about the demise of women in Brotherland. The “wi-men” as he calls them are regarded as dim-witted, intellectually inferior to men and incapable of taking care of themselves outside the confines of the

home thereby needing the supervision and protection of men. He was told that it is a practice for each family to have one female who produced a new generation of children. These females, he was told, after completing their cycle of generation would gradually age and then die. He regards the advent of a rare disease amongst females which causes madness, suffering and eventual death to be a reason for their annihilation. He believes that the present system came into being after the disease was found to be contagious and transferable to men because of which females were killed to contain the spread of this disease. All the estate owners born after the Change believe that females were eliminated to preserve the male populace. He thinks that a woman's utility and worth in society are tied to her role as a progenitor. The estate workers do not know that it was drone generation technology which had contributed to the eventual genocide of women by the General's regime. The estate workers do not even know what a woman looks like as all existing literature has been destroyed by the General. The citizens born after the Change have no memory of a woman. They are influenced by the official memory, one that paints a favourable image of the General and the regime. Recovery of history and literacy, and individual and collective memory are necessary tools for resistance for the protagonist of women writers' recent dystopian fiction (Baccolini, "A Useful Knowledge of the Present Is Rooted in the Past" 130). It is only by recovering memory that the character will recognize the true extent of his/her experience and the fissures within the social system (Hanson 110-111). The memory of the past is pristine and unaffected by the hegemonic discourse of the regime for Youngest, Eldest and Middle. He still remembers his mothers, sisters and cousins and knows about women unlike the other citizens of the country who have a biased view and general ignorance about women. He corrects Blackson when he says that the mysterious illness that afflicted women

was responsible for their demise. He tells Blackson that drone generation technology hastened the process of killing all women as their domestic labour was replaced with the help of drones. Youngest's memory is intact and is not influenced by the official records that paint a favourable view of the regime. He knows about important events in the country that led to the institution of the dystopian regime such as sponsorship given to the General's forefathers, the advent of the General and his clones, the release of cement rot bacterium and the atomic bomb explosions. The memory of events in the past is intact in the mind of Youngest which is one of the reasons he realizes the extent of his conditions in this dystopia. Eldest and Middle were adults when the events known as Change happened. They have a clearer understanding and idea of the events that transpired that led to the institution of the Generals and the killing of women. Eldest reminisces about the time when libraries of books were available that showcased the attraction between men and women. This indicates he has a memory and knowledge of the past untainted by the hegemonic discourse of the regime. Eldest has realistic memories of women as he was an adult man when the event known as the Change happened. He and Middle know about the ascension of the General to power and the oppressive means employed by the regime. They also know much about women and do not have biased views on women unlike the other citizens brainwashed by the regime. The greatest example of their resistance against the regime is the harbouring of their ward Meiji which is a seditious activity. Eldest, Middle and Youngest would never have harboured a girl at the risk of their life in this dystopian society if they had been brainwashed by the regime and influenced by the regime's constructed memory and past.

Gregory Claeys in his *Dystopia* says that new issues like the spectre of environmental degradation and climate change inform the content of dystopian fiction

(Claeys, *Dystopia* 447). The author provides enough information in the text to understand how otherwise a healthy environment in a country turned into a radioactive wasteland. From Youngest's comments about the past one knows that the country turns into a radioactive wasteland after the General uses an atomic bomb on it. It is also revealed that the cement rot bacterium which is released initially turns everything cement into dust and the atomic bombs which are used consecutively annihilates the rest. Youngest also explains that the General's forefathers ruin the country with genetic mutations, wildlife extinctions, and contaminated water supply; what was initially said to be a glorious enterprise for ending poverty, hunger and disease claimed by the forefathers of General turn to be a dystopian nightmare leading to the destruction of the environment. The environment presented in the text is a radioactive wasteland which has no vegetation. men are alienated from nature in this dystopian world and there is scarce vegetation to sustain them.

2.2.3 Reader Response

The response of the reader is one of the criteria followed by Rosenfeld. The reader discerns whether the society projected in the text is worse than the reader's contemporary society or not (Varsam 205).

2.2.4 *Escape* as a Feminist Dystopia

The dystopia presented in *Escape* can be also called a feminist dystopia. According to Margaret Atwood, a feminist dystopia features a society strictly divided on gender lines, where the plight of women is worse than that of men (par. 16). In feminist dystopia, women are underprivileged compared to men. The extent to which feminist dystopias show the nexus between power and gender varies (Cavalcanti, "Very Inspiring and Still Highly in Demand" 270). Women's dystopias show

women's experience of oppression set in an androcentric society (Cavalcanti, "Very Inspiring and Still Highly in Demand" 270). Gender oppression is a major source of conflict in feminist dystopias (Cavalcanti, "The Writing of Utopia and the Feminist Critical Dystopia" 48). Feminist dystopias deal with gender and power (Cavalcanti, "The Writing of Utopia and the Feminist Critical Dystopia" 48). Gender relations are the main source of narrative conflicts in feminist dystopias and such dystopias exaggerate the power relations between sexes (Cavalcanti, "The Writing of Utopia and the Feminist Critical Dystopia" 48). Such dystopias are characterised by the suppression of female desire and the presence of a gender-inflected oppressive order (Cavalcanti, "The Writing of Utopia and the Feminist Critical Dystopia" 49). The novel is set in Brotherland a dystopian society which consists of only men. The name Brotherland itself signifies that the country is a land of brothers. The General and his regime commit mass murder of females to establish his ideal of Brotherland. Thus, gender is the determining factor in the construction of society. The General and his dystopian regime view women as sub-human and beyond worthy of any ethical consideration. The power relations in Brotherland are tilted in favour of men as women are outlawed in this society. The author exaggerates the gender relations between men and women to showcase a society where women's very existence is deemed irrelevant. Females are regarded as impure, genetically, physically and intellectually inferior to the male population. The General calls females "vermin" -- a derogatory epithet coined by him to denote the status of the female. They are regarded as unfit subjects to occupy his country. The General only regards females in the roles of progenitor and nurturer. A fully grown female is only prized for her reproductive abilities as per the General's view. He invalidates any other social role for women. He regards the male species as fit citizens and inhabitants of his country as he feels they

have the sufficient physical strength and intellectual abilities compared to the female. He equates females to the traditional and stereotypical role of a mother and nurturer. The male species is regarded as the breadwinner of the basic family unit by the General because of the supposed superior physical strength exhibited by them. He is critical of the female species whom he feels have only used their reproductive abilities as leverage to demand equal rights. He does not believe in equal rights for both sexes as he feels females are inferior beings who do not require the same rights as men. The General's misogynist and deep-seated hatred toward women culminate in the mass killing of women. The General and his clone brothers conduct public executions of females. Their desires and right to live are not considered in this country. The female desire for sex and the need to procreate is also seen as a threat to society by the regime as the General feels that women possess inferior genes which will produce degenerate offsprings that will be subjected to eventual racial annihilation. He suppresses the desires of women by eliminating them as their reproductive role can be now performed by cloning technology. Females are against the collective ethic envisioned by him. Genetic research laboratories which are outlawed in all other nations are set up in Brotherland with the supposed aim of human progress. These labs are used to generate General and his clone brothers as well as to invent the cloning technology which replaced the females as progenitors. The General harnesses science and technology to replace the female as nurturer and mother. Blood samples of the male progenitor are taken to produce a clone of the parent. His supposed aim to eliminate females is to create a country of physically and intellectually well-endowed male species. He wants the Brotherland to be inhabited by the biologically superior human species which according to him are men. Supporting or harbouring females was considered a traitorous act and even punishable by death. The male population

mostly followed the General's scheme to eliminate women due to the power and authority wielded by the General. In women's dystopian fiction gendered identities are shown as a product of discourses which are totalitarian and androcentric (Baccolini, "Dystopia Matters" 3). Women's dystopian fiction shows gender inequality in dystopian fiction and demonstrates how gendered identities are all artificial and not natural (Baccolini, "Dystopia Matters" 3). In the society of Brotherland, there exist many notions of outdated and stereotypical gender roles as well as other harmful biases and stereotypes about women due to the hegemonic androcentric discourse. Brotherland lacks a counter-discourse that will help the brainwashed citizens to get rid of such harmful notions as all literature is destroyed by the General's regime and replaced by instructional manuals which glorified his regime and degraded women. The manuals written by the General for his citizens presented the General's views regarding women which are factually incorrect. The manuals described women as vermin and as physically weak and unfit. The male citizens in Brotherland do not know what a woman looks like as there do not exist any images or literature about women which are all destroyed. Misinformation and wrong facts about women are spread by the regime to justify the genocide of women.

Blackson, an estate worker was told, presumably by the General's state mechanism, a well-constructed lie which justified the killing of women in Brotherland. Blackson, born after the Change, was told that "Wi-men" was a race different from men, inferior to them in physical and intellectual abilities. Those born before the Change believe that a woman's social role is confined to reproduction alone. The emergence of an incurable and rare disease which caused madness, suffering and death in women was claimed as the reason for outlawing them. Most citizens born after the Change do not understand that it is the invention of drone generation technology and cloning

technology which contributed to the invalidation of the domestic labour and reproductive role done by women. The memory of women is erased from the minds of all male inhabitants and the new generation of male offspring born after the Change do not have any memory or idea about females.

The regime tries to actively eliminate everything associated with women. Youngest has to describe words like women and sister to Meiji - the sole surviving female in Brotherland, as these words are alien to her. Youngest can only describe and define these words to Meiji in the confines of their home as the General's regime had outlawed the usage of any words which denote the female species. General even thinks the word nation has been polluted and corrupted because of its association with mothering and nurture- an activity typically associated with the female. The General's security personnel called boyz conducted raids of the estate to not only check for seditious activities but also for any female presence. Estate workers are known to harbour women and young girls without the knowledge of the General. The General is paranoid about the presence of females in Brotherland and fears that the presence of females will lead to the creation of offspring of dual parentage. Females found hiding in the estate by the General's regime are executed in public display.

The General tries to erase everything associated with women. Even remembering a woman is considered an act against the regime. The General was unhappy when he found out about the existence of a man who tried to record himself talking about the memories of his dead mother and sell it. Selling anything associated with women or a reminder of them is banned by the General's regime. Reminiscing about a woman is considered a crime in Brotherland. The regime wants to actively suppress anything remotely associated with women. All the civilized nations of the world as well as the United Nations erase the name of Brotherland from the record of

countries and outlaw their existence for the crimes committed against women. The novel presents a society which is strictly governed by the male gender. Women's presence is not allowed in Brotherland. Misinformation, propaganda, and surveillance mechanisms are used by the regime to discredit as well as exterminate women.

Escape can be termed as a feminist dystopia as it features a totalitarian androcentric society where power relations are skewed in favour of men.

2.3 *Escape* as a Dystopia- Conclusion

Escape is a dystopian fiction that subscribes to the traits found in many dystopias. The author intends this text to be a dystopia that shows the worst outcomes of gender imbalance. The text follows many themes commonly found in dystopias. It has a despotic regime that controls the life of every citizen and punishes those who do not follow its dictates. Every aspect of an individual life such as a person's sexuality, individuality, and behaviour is controlled. The dystopian society depicted in the text is defined by its despotism, control and manipulation of information, history and memory, suppression of individuality, control of sexuality, desolate environment, oppressive surveillance mechanisms, and reliance on technology that is often causing negative effects. The power relations in this dystopia are also skewed in favour of men. It is a feminist dystopia that oppresses women.

2.4 *The Island of Lost Girls* as a Dystopia- Introduction

Dystopian fiction is judged using three broad criteria given by Rosenfeld - authorial intention, themes and reader response. Authorial intention, that is Manjula Padmanabhan's intention in writing the sequel to *Escape* and whether it is depicted as dystopian or utopian is discerned based on the interviews she has given about her work. The author's comments on her work help to establish the categorisation of the

novel as dystopian. The study of themes helps to judge the work as dystopian. An analysis can be done by determining whether the dystopian text features many themes commonly found in such dystopian literature. Reader response, judgement and perception after reading the work is a factor that is used to judge whether the work is dystopian or not. The novel can be also subcategorised as a critical dystopia based on the hope or possibility of change and renewal it offers to the reader. The characteristic features of dystopian works help to determine the features of the dystopian society too.

2.4.1 Author's Intention

The novelist in her interview with Kanishka Ramchandani acknowledges the novel as dystopian and cites reality as her inspiration for writing this novel (“Through a Glass Darkly”). She believes that what people all around the world are experiencing is a dystopia and that whatever her novel depicts is only mildly fictional and futuristic while acknowledging that it is something that can happen in the present even though the world portrayed in the novel is dystopian (“Through a Glass Darkly”). Gender issues form the crux of the novel according to Padmanabhan (“I create mental films of the story”). She feels that violence towards women is due to an unconscious desire to kill the surplus life as the world is currently overpopulated (“I create mental films of the story”). According to Padmanabhan while in earlier times women were treated with special care because of their sacred duty to give birth, the present times do not require any more children in the world as it is already overpopulated (“I create mental films of the story”). The author satirizes gender violence rampant in our world (“I create mental films of the story”). She feels that it is bad if it has degraded to the level of a battlefield (“I create mental films of the story”). In the novel, the women in the Zone serve as prostitutes, and sex slaves for the warriors. They are also at the

receiving end of many acts of sexual abuse from which they cannot escape. The author is critiquing the gender violence rampant in our world through the portrayal of the Zone and the system of female sexual slavery. The author also says that the world featured in the novel is a chaotic world in which there is a moral degradation of the social fabric (“Through a Glass Darkly”). The author intends to portray a society where there is an erosion of human values. The author has satirised the erosion of human values and destroyed social fabric through the projection of the Zone. In the Zone, each team member engages in a battle lasting till the opposite team member is injured and defeated. Merciless and endless violence is celebrated as entertainment in the Zone. The author projects a dystopian world which shows the worst outcome of gender violence and chaotic social order.

2.4.2 Themes in *The Island of Lost Girls*

A dystopia is judged based on its content. Reading of themes can help illuminate the relationships portrayed in dystopia. The text is analysed to know whether it subscribes to the common themes featured in dystopian literature.

Dystopias magnify issues such as gender relations (Baccolini, “Living in Dystopia” 45). In dystopia, people of different gender are oppressed (Schlobin 14). Dystopia in *The Island of Lost Girls* is defined by its unequal gender relations. There is a disparity in the relations between men and women in this dystopian world. Men hold considerable power over women. An example of this is the power warriors hold over feems or women from the Zone. The Whole World Union and the Zone, all the power centres favour men. All nations of the world had joined together to form the Whole World Union. The rich nations of the world had started the Zone and the war games there. Each player nation or alliance were represented by a team of warriors

who engage in physical combat with another set of warriors. Victories and defeats reflect in the stock exchanges of the respective player nations. Participation of women and trans women was denied on account of lack of sponsorship. The masculinity of warriors was celebrated as participation in Zone involves the ability to engage in combat – a physically arduous task reserved for manly men. Women end up becoming sex slaves, prostitutes and booties once they are denied participation in these war games. They do not hold power in this scheme of things and the feems or women in the Zone are prostituted to warriors to fulfil their sexual desires. Transsexual people are also victims of sexual exploitation as they are forced into prostitution. They are treated badly by other genders.

Suffocative surveillance is a theme in dystopian fiction. In Foucault's vision of dystopia, the average citizen is always under surveillance (Booker, *Dystopian Impulse* 79). Constant surveillance holds individuals accountable for their actions (Brost 92). It leads them to change their behaviour deliberately (Brost 92). The dystopia features surveillance mechanisms that can be oppressive to its inhabitants. Youngest has three electronic leashes that tie him to the General and are used by the General to spy on Youngest and monitor him. These are used by the General so that he can plant Youngest and Meiji in the island facility to know its secrets and whereabouts and thereby infiltrate and gain control of this island. He has twin satellite locators, one on his wrist, the other over his heart and the pain radio in his teeth. The radio transmitter attached to his mouth is used by the General to communicate with him and confer with him. The General could also hear everything that Youngest said when the radio link was active. The pain radio in his mouth connects directly to the nerves in Youngest's teeth and the General uses this to torture and intimidate Youngest to do his bidding. The satellite locators are used by the General to track Meiji and they also

have poison sacs within them that when released unleashes neurotoxins that could kill Youngest if he does not obey the General.

Control of sexuality is another theme in dystopian fiction. Sexuality is repressed in dystopias because it holds the potential for subversion (Booker, “Utopia, Dystopia and Social Critique” 12). Sexual relations are manipulated as a means of social control in dystopias (Sargent and Sargisson 304). In the novel, “feems” or women in the Zone are considered the warriors’ resources and are prostituted to them. Transsexual people are also reduced to prostitutes and are not allowed any other career roles or opportunities. At the outset itself, Aila tells Youngest that transsexual people engage in prostitution. There is also a dress code for transsexual people that marks them out from the rest of the population. At the outset when the novel begins Youngest is seen as wearing a dark blue hijab. This dress marks him as a transsexual person engaged in prostitution. The dystopian world, therefore, exercises control concerning sex; it dictates who can engage in sex with whom. Sex is used as a means to exercise control over groups such as women and transsexual people and keep them subjugated.

Desolate and barren land and man’s alienation from nature are constant themes in dystopian fiction. Dystopia is marked by environmental degradation and discourse on climate change (Claeys, *Dystopia* 447). Much of dystopian fiction explores the relationship between humans and the natural world (Hughes and Wheeler 2). Dystopias are often set in apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic scenarios that express anxiety about the future of humanity and the planet (Ferreira 49). The environment featured in the novel is destroyed. The novelist regards climate change as a serious concern that has been depicted in the dystopian novel. The novel features dystopian scenarios that depict nations that have been submerged under water, sea levels that

have risen, ice caps of the world that have been melted and large-scale pollution. The deadly ocean or the void, a body of water in this dystopian world is so radioactive that birds that fly over it would get sick and drop out of the sky. The shores of the Mediterranean have also dried up and blackened hinting at pollution. The oil industry has collapsed and many of the world's nations have been destroyed. Many nations have joined together to form various enclaves. The world features four enclaves. The changed realities of the world, especially the climate and the environment have led to the formation of different enclaves. The Equator was called the Zero Meridian. The countries that were the former Americas, Poles and Australia were now the Ring Enclave. Asia and Europe had joined together to become the Sunrise Enclave. The Pacific Enclave consists of many island nations that have been submerged and the traffic was hated between them due to lack of fuel. Dystopian fiction often shows catastrophic scenarios that feature a destroyed environment and ecology; a bleak future that allows the authors to show the worst outcomes of issues such as climate change and global warming. The novelist in the novel *The Island of Lost Girls* does the same and regards the destroyed environment of the planet as a dystopian future reality.

The negative impact of technology is a recurring theme in dystopian fiction. The intrusion of technology into human is a major motif of much dystopian fiction (Booker, *Dystopian Impulse* 149). A society dependent on technology also uses it for surveillance, monitoring and controlling individuals (Claeys, *Dystopia* 490). The dystopian novel features futuristic technology that is often misused. For instance, gadgets that are produced with the advanced technology used in the dystopian world of the novel can pose a threat to the privacy of individuals. For instance, Aila had a wrist viewer, a strip of metal worn on the wrist that could relay the image and

conversation recorded by Shutterfly which were tiny flying machines that hovered in the air. She is very careful in her conversation with Youngest as she complains that Shutterfly record a lot of conversation and she wants to ensure her safety as well as Youngest's. Aila wants to lead Youngest away from the Shutterfly and asks him to come alongside her to View Point as she knows that Youngest has murdered her father and is also from Forbidden country, both pieces of information that could endanger the life of Youngest. This suggests how devices can be used to pry into the lives of unsuspecting individuals and pose a threat to their privacy. Experimentation on animals to produce organic machines comes under the field of biotechnology. The Zoobiotic models developed in the lab on the island make use of animal parts to produce what they call organic machines. The creature batteries developed in these labs make use of eels. The well-being and interest of this animal is disregarded when used in this manner. Biotechnology such as gene sculpting is used for fashioning or producing hybrid whales that are suited for use by the mentors on the island. The mentors on the island do not care about the well-being of the whale, it is merely bred for its utility. The ethicality of using biotechnology for fashioning or creating hybrid species with specific traits for human utility is questionable and can be said to be a misuse of biotechnology.

2.4.3 Reader Response

The author's intention can be discerned by the reader. The Reader's understanding of the narrator's message will determine if the text portrayed is good or bad (Varsam 205).

2.4.4 *The Island of Lost Girls* as a Critical Dystopia

Critical dystopias are fiction published after the 1980s (Fortunati 29). It reveals the utopian tensions in society and deconstructs reality (Fortunati 29). This kind of fiction reveals the hope that there can be a utopia and to achieve that action has to be taken in the present (Fortunati 29). The critical nature of dystopias reflects their affiliation with postmodernity (Resheq and Majdoubeh 180). There is always a utopian horizon and an undercurrent of hope in critical dystopias (Fortunati 35). The former subjects of the dystopian regime strive for an alternative space or utopian horizon in critical dystopias (Resheq and Majdoubeh 180). In critical dystopias even though the subjects are oppressed by dictatorial powers they try to find a solution or way out of this condition (Resheq and Majdoubeh 77). Critical dystopias show the possibility for change and political renewal (Baccolini, "Ursula K Le Guinn's Critical Dystopias" 41). It gives space to contest and oppose ex-centric subjects like women who have been ignored by the hegemonic discourse and who are yet to attain their subject status (Baccolini, "Persistence of Hope" 520). The island community in this dystopian world is the only place that offers hope for ameliorating the conditions of the dystopian society. Vane and other like-minded women form a collective that began the island community that looks for ways to dismantle the Zone and its oppressive practices that objectify and perpetuate violence against women. The mentors on the island are unsatisfied with the practices in the Zone and those followed by the Whole World Union but they are denied the right to actively engage in any sort of politics. The mentors form a community in the hopes of healing and rehabilitating the girls and women who have been victims of social and sexual violence in the Zone. The island is a haven for women who escape from the Zone. It does this mainly by empowering the erstwhile victims of the Zone who have been denied any sort of

subjectivity such as the girls and women who have been victimised in the Zone. The island community helps these women to discard harmful notions about their bodies and self that they have internalised. In this way, they are not able to fall victim to the inhumane practices carried out in Zone. The young women, as they are admitted to the island are asked to disrobe to embrace their bodies with all their infirmities and scars that allow them not to see the body as a cause of their social oppression. The girls are also trained to do various tasks on the island. They are given credits for the successful completion of each task and those with high credits can join the ranks of mentors. The tasks allotted to girls such as riding and controlling a whale underwater and a hybrid lizard equip girls with the necessary skills. The women victimised in the Zone are allowed to improve their lives and escape their predicament by the mentors in the island community. Such women are given a space to express themselves and empower themselves on the island, which they were denied while in the Zone. The girls and women such as Rahmato'u who is an erstwhile sexual slave in the Zone come to the island in the hopes of securing a better life. Vane tells Youngest that the mentors on the island are planning a strategy to upturn the Zone and its practices. The General and his cohorts are killed by one of the hybrid lizards controlled by Meiji and other girls towards the end of the novel. This signifies the start of the many strategies that mentors have in mind to upturn the patriarchal setup such as that of the General and the Zone. Vane tells Youngest that the island community will no longer remain neutral and is actively looking for ways to dismantle the zone signifying the hope that conditions in the dystopian society will be remedied and improved.

Critical dystopia brings into focus urgent issues afflicting our society (Fortunati 35). Environmental degradation, global warming, and climate change are some of the issues that often figure out in dystopian fiction because of the ability of

dystopias to show bleak scenarios. The society presented in *The Island of Lost Girls* is set in the aftermath of a cataclysmic event. The environment portrayed in this world is damaged and destroyed. The dystopian world features countries divided into different enclaves, polluted shores of the Mediterranean, submerged island nations, melted ice caps, and rising sea levels. The rampant violence toward women is an issue in society which is critiqued and satirised through the depiction of the Zone and the plight of women in this arena. Women slaves and prostitutes are often at the receiving end of sexual and social violence that is never condemned because of the social system that perpetuates it. The destruction of the social fabric of society is an issue that the author has brought to light by showing the needless violence displayed in the competitive arena of the Zone that is celebrated as entertainment. Critical dystopia offers a warning to its readers to act to change the present to prevent a dystopian future (Stillman 367). The author through the depiction of violence in Zone, sexual violence such as the forced prostitution of “feems” or females and the destroyed environment in the dystopian world is warning the readers to take proactive action to prevent the dystopian future as depicted in the text.

Critical dystopias present unfamiliar worlds in which the unthinkable such as nuclear war is presented as real (Stillman 366). It defamiliarizes the familiar world by approaching it from a fresh perspective. In critical dystopias, everything is defamiliarized by bringing in new perspectives, non-dominant interpretive paradigms and new contexts in which something which is regarded as unthinkable is presented as real (Stillman 366). The dystopian world in *The Island of Lost Girls* is a world that is unfamiliar to the reader. The world, as we know it, is presented as radically altered and changed in the novel. Nations of the world had disintegrated to be reborn as the Whole World Union. Nations of the world no longer existed in this dystopia. The

world was divided into four different enclaves now. There were no trade, communications, or travel arrangements between the enclaves. The Equator was called the Zero Meridian, the country that was the former Americas, Poles and Australia was now the Ring Enclave, and continents such as Europe and Asia were now called the Sunrise Enclave. The Pacific Enclave consists of several island nations that have been submerged and traffic halted across them due to a lack of fuel. The ice caps of the planet had also melted due to which the seas rose. In this new climate, only the fittest of animal and plant species could survive with the majority of the rest dead. The author by employing the defamiliarization technique is presenting to us a world with a drastic climate change that alters the reader's perception of the planet we are residing in. The world presented is unfamiliar to the reader as it is a world that accepts and celebrates violence towards human beings. This manifests in the brutal combats in the Zone where players engage in physical battles to defeat the opposing team and also the prostitution of women in the zone. Mindless violence and murder are celebrated as entertainment. The warriors are cheered on by the crowd as they engage in physical combat at times to the point of killing and maiming persons from the opposite team. Women in the Zone are sold off as slaves and prostituted and this is a system that is continued and never condemned even when it violates all human dignity and rights. The world presented is thus completely unfamiliar to the reader as violence, both social and sexual, that is otherwise condemned in the real world is regarded as acceptable. This shows the reader the consequences of being desensitised and indifferent to such social evils.

Critical dystopias maintain open endings and resist closure thereby providing hope to their protagonists and readers (Baccolini, "Persistence of Hope" 520). The open ending ensures that finality and a comfortable conclusion are averted as the

characters are left to grapple with their choices and responsibilities (Baccolini, “Persistence of Hope” 521). The text *The Island of Lost Girls* has an open ending. The General and his cohorts are devoured and killed by the lizards and Meiji is reunited with Youngest. Vane offers Youngest and Meiji hospitality and training in exchange for information about the General and the forbidden country as they call it. She tells Youngest and Meiji that there is a possible conflict ahead for the island community and that the mentors in the island community are now actively seeking to dismantle and defeat General and the Zone. There is no finality to the novel. Even though the girls were successful in managing to kill off the General, it is revealed that there are many such clones of the General in the Forbidden Country. Many questions are unanswered even when the novel ends such as the plan of the mentors on the island, the plight of Meiji, and Youngest and their role in the future conflict and the result of the conflict that figures the Zone, the dystopian regime of the General and the island community. The readers are left grappling with such questions and the novelist does not give a conclusive answer or resolution to any of these conflicts. The open ending of the novel ensures that finality is averted unlike the classical dystopias and gives the possibility or hope that conditions in a dystopia can be ameliorated.

Critical dystopias show a world which shows the negative impact of technology (Stillman 366). It also presents advanced technology begetting unintended consequences with its use (Stillman 366). Biotechnology possesses a threat to animal life in the dystopian world. This technology is harnessed to produce products that make use of animals thus endangering animals, a negative effect of using this technology. For instance, in the lab of the island zoobiotic models were in development such as creature batteries which were based on animals such as electric eels. Eels are exploited by the mentors for their use. Gene sculpting is also utilised to

produce a hybrid version of a whale with specific futures that is then used by the mentors for their own purpose. Such whales such as Noor are killed when they do not obey mentors' commands. Technology is harnessed to produce products that make use of animal parts without any consideration for the ethical aspects of using animals.

Critical in critical dystopia implies an explanation of how the dystopian situation came about as much as what should be done about it (Fitting 156). It is revealed that wealthy nations of the world had created the Zone. All the bloodshed and strife of history was now concentrated into a single gigantic sports-cum-battlefield known as the Zone. Teams representing various enclaves and alliances battled out against each other in the Zone with the defeats and victories being translated to gains and losses in the stock exchanges of the player nations. The zone is a space that celebrates brutality, murder and violence. The creation of Zone and the physical battles and combats are responsible for the erosion of every conceivable human value and deplorable conditions in the dystopian world according to Vane. The exploitation of women as sex slaves and prostitutes also began because of the inability of women to participate in these war games. The novelist through the characters and incidents suggests that the creation of the Zone led to many social evils and a dystopian nightmare for women stuck in the Zone. The author also suggests a possible solution or hope to remedy the conditions of this dystopian world through the depiction of the island community. The island community comprises of like-minded women who wanted to escape from this toxic world and its inhuman practices. Even though they were given space and permission to form a community based on their promise of neutrality they have since changed their stance to formulate secret strategies and plan to dismantle the Zone. The novelist through incidents and various scenarios in the text provides a critical account, that is it gives the explanation or the

reason for the dystopian scenarios as well as the steps taken for improving these conditions thus attesting to the character trait of critical dystopia.

The novel has all the characteristic traits of a critical dystopia. It features a dystopian world that shows bleak scenarios such as rising sea levels, submerged nations, radioactive pollution, forced prostitution of women, and endorsement of violence yet it gives hope to the readers that such conditions can be remedied with the projection of the island community- an all-female enclave, consisting of erstwhile marginalised subjects of the Zone that has a plan set in motion to dismantle the unjust system and therefore improve the conditions of this dystopian world.

2.5 *The Island of Lost Girls* as a Dystopia – Conclusion

The novel adheres to the characteristic traits of dystopian fiction. The author depicts a dystopian society to criticize the rampant violence against women, climate change and destruction of the social fabric. An analysis of the content reveals that the text has many themes that are present in dystopian fiction such as the negative impact of using technology, oppressive surveillance mechanisms, control of sexual relations, discourse on environmental issues, and unequal gender relations. Reader's response is a criterion that should be also taken into account for the judgement of a text as dystopian. The novel is a critical dystopia as it gives hope for change in the dystopian society. The island community in the novel hold the possibility of changing the dystopian conditions and replacing them with a better society.

2.6 Conclusion

The texts *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls* are both dystopian fiction. *Escape* features a despotic regime that exercises control over every aspect of an individual's life. Surveillance mechanisms, propaganda, suppression of individuality,

discursive control of information and the past, control of memory, technology, and punitive measures are used to oppress the population and make them follow the regime's dictates. The text offers no hope to its readers for the possibility of a change. The dystopian society presented supports collectivist ethics and discourages individuality. It is an androcentric society that has no women. The text is a feminist dystopia; the society depicted is a patriarchal society that completely disregards women. *The Island of Lost Girls* is the follow-up novel to *Escape* that features the same protagonists as *Escape*. The world presented in the text is also dystopian. The dystopian world projected also features oppressive surveillance mechanisms, unequal gender relations, control of sex, adverse use of technology and a desolate and barren environment just like *Escape*. Women and trans women are victims of the social order of this dystopian world. The text however offers hope to its readers through its open ending and the depiction of the island community that can remedy the conditions of the dystopia. The text is a critical dystopia, it offers the possibility of ameliorating the dystopian society.

Chapter Three

Identities beyond Human

3.1 Introduction

There are many identities that are not human in the dystopian world of these novels such as that of non-human nature and animals and transhuman identity. Such identities are not human and exceed the limit or boundaries of human species identity. The study of such identities is essential as the dystopian world not only consists of the human community but also beings that are not human, yet an essential part of the dystopia. The chapter probes and examines the question of the identity of life forms not strictly human. The study probes whether animals possess an identity and how the treatment of non-human animals can be connected to the identity of animals. The study examines whether nature has an identity and the implications of constructing such an identity for nature. The thesis studies how modern technologies can construct and lead to the emergence of life forms with new identity categories that exceed all notions of humans and the implications of having beings with such identities in a dystopian society. The study contends that animals in the dystopian world are denied an identity, a philosophical or ethical construct that signifies their kinship with humans as beings who have interests, when used as resources and instrumentalised in various ways. The thesis argues that the dystopian society by exploiting animals in various ways denies an identity to animals and that resisting or denying an identity to animals is the root cause of their exploitation. By resisting or denying an identity to animals, the exploitation of animals- the prevailing condition in this dystopia is maintained. The chapter contends that all sentient animals with a minimum degree of self-awareness or subjective awareness can be recognised as persons which means that they do share a fundamental identity with humans, as beings with interests. In this

case, humans and animals share one interest at least if not all interests which is an interest in their continued existence. Gary L Francione, an animal rights activist's views on animals as persons and Matthew Calarco's views on the identity of animals are used to define the identity of sentient animals in the dystopian novels. Francione's views on animals as property are used to characterise and define the treatment of the citizens of the dystopian world toward animals and to understand how such a treatment denies an identity to animals. The study probes the question of the identity of nature in the dystopian world of the novels. The study employs the identity politics of ecofeminism to contend that a woman's identity and nature's identity are merged. The thesis examines the implications of such a construction of identity for nature. The study argues that in the dystopian society in *Escape* there is a view of the identity of nature and women as merged and as part of a nature-culture dualism that leads them to be viewed as inferior to male-identified culture and contends that such a perception of nature is responsible for environmental destruction- which defines the dystopia. Karren J Warren's patriarchal conceptual framework and Sherry B Ortner's views regarding the association of nature with women are used to discuss the association of nature with women in *Escape*. The chapter contends that the positive association of women with nature, of their identity, as existing in the island community in *The Island of Lost Girls*, will lead to respect and reverence of nature that can change the desolate and destroyed environment in the dystopian society. The depiction of nature in *The Island of Lost Girls* as feminine is analysed using the views of cultural ecofeminists. The chapter argues that the dystopian identity with its reliance and investment in futuristic technologies creates transhuman identities such as that of the General and his clones that also helps to maintain authoritarianism in the dystopian society. The theory of transhumanism is used to discuss the transhuman identities of

the Generals in the novel. The definition of the cyborg is used to categorise the General as a cyborg being. The study recommends measures or solutions to be taken that involve accepting or dismantling certain identities that can transform this dystopia into a utopia.

3.2 Animals as Persons and as Property

Francione's definition of "person" signifies a being who has sufficient morally significant interests in not suffering, subject to the principle of equal consideration and is not treated as a thing (*Animals as Persons* 61). All persons have interests if not the same interests (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 193). But all persons have one interest that saves them from exploitation or being killed- that is an interest in their continued existence (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 193). According to Francione, animals are used as food, in experiments for clothing or entertainment because they are regarded as things whose interests are irrelevant compared to human interests (*Animals as Persons* 187). Bentham opined that one does not violate the principle of equal consideration of interests when one uses animals as resources as they lack self-awareness (qtd. in Francione, *Animals as Persons* 55). Sentience is a trait that also denotes self-awareness in animals (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 11). Sentience is a trait given to animals to safeguard their lives and protect themselves (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 55). The sensation of pain allows animals to escape situations that are painful and threatening to their existence and the sensation of pleasure makes them pursue situations that enhance their lives (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 55). A sentient being recognizes that it is that being and not any other who is experiencing pain or pleasure (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 56). Any sensation like pain or pleasure can only exist if a being recognizes it as happening to it (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 55). Francione surmises his arguments by concluding that all animals who

are perceptually aware also possess a degree of self-awareness too (*Animals as Persons* 56). He disproves the common misconception that humans have mental characteristics wholly absent in animals by using Darwin's theory of evolution. Darwin regards the differences in mind in higher animals to be a matter of degree (qtd. in Francione, *Animals as Persons* 55). He argues that animals possess many emotions and faculties, characteristics, intuitions and senses as humans do but only in an incipient or sometimes not in a well-developed condition (qtd. in Francione, *Animals as Persons* 55). Biologist Donald Griffin argues that "if animals are capable of perceptual awareness, denying them some level of self-awareness would seem to be arbitrary and unjustified restriction" (qtd. in Francione, *Animals as Persons* 142). Hence most animals barring some insects whose sentience is not clear, the overwhelming number of non-human animals are sentient, subjectively aware and have an interest in their continued existence (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 11). The personhood status of animals entails a moral obligation that disallows anyone from using them for food, biomedical experiments, entertainment, clothing or any other uses (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 62). Pro-animal theorists such as Francione who work within a neo-Darwinian framework argue that animals and humans share some identities or similarities that are ethically relevant (qtd. in Calarco 14). In this case, what they both share are similar interests (Calarco 14). The label of identity used by Calarco is an ethical concept indicating beings who are fundamentally similar in ethically relevant ways (14). The personhood status accorded to animals also requires one not to treat animals as things with no interests (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 61). The person status given to non-human animals refutes the property view which treats animals as things with no self-interests. The property status of animals denotes that the owners treat them just like inanimate objects with no interests (Francione,

Animals as Persons 44). It disregards the interests of animals and attributes them to a mere economic cost which may even be ignored to maximise wealth (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 44). As per the property view, animals are treated as human resources who have been deprived of membership in the legal and moral community. The property view treats animals as inanimate things that have no identity. Animals are treated as property owing to their incapacity to possess certain superior mental and cognitive characteristics possessed by humans (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 52). They are relegated to the class of things, as resources because they do not possess human characteristics like self-consciousness, reason, abstract thought, emotions, the ability to communicate and the capacity for moral action (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 52). The property view disregards any equal consideration of human and animal interests (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 46). Human interests are always given precedence over animals in case of a conflict between the two (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 46). Jeremy Bentham opines that animal interests have been ignored because they have been degraded into a class of things (qtd. in Francione, *Animals as Persons* 32). Reflecting on animal rights raises many philosophical questions -ethical, ontological, sociological, cultural and political ones- that intersect with dimensions of utopian pragmatism (Reis 430). Utopian consciousness takes into account the demand for a better life for all including animals which manifests as a call for voluntary and conscious adoption of a nutritional regime that does not violate animal interests in not suffering (Reis 428). Achieving animal rights will lead one to a state mentioned in the Bible that of humanity returning to life it once had where all living beings are reconciled (Reis 430). Recognizing that animals have an identity, as beings with interests just like humans, will put an end to the exploitation of animals and lead to the establishment of a utopian society where there will be no animal

exploitation, which is one of the many measures to be taken for the establishment of a utopian society. Francione's views on animal rights and Matthew Calarco's views on animal identity are used for the analysis of the identity of animals in *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls*. The recognition of the identity of these animals is also connected to the solutions or measures taken to establish a utopia.

3.3 Animals in the Dystopian World of *Escape*

Animals are not regarded as part of the moral community in *Escape*. Animals featured in the dystopian society are made subjects of tests, and experiments. The body parts of animals are used to produce boyz, clones as well as drones. The dystopian society in *Escape* is a society that is defined by its dependence on technology such as cloning technology and drone generation technology as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. Cloning technology and drone generation technology are having a negative impact on society as animals are being endangered by the production of clones and drones. Such technology is enabling the use of animals as resources or property that denies an identity to them. The embryos of drones are tinkered with and they are implanted in sows and then extracted at one month and speed grown in incubators. The use of animals in such technology suggests that animals are regarded as things with no identity by the human community. Animals such as apes are used to produce clones. The animals which are used for such artificial means of reproduction are kept in a state of living death till they are used. They live in silent rooms during this duration and are given purified air to breathe which has been purged of dust and dirt and cooled. Their tails are cut, natural functions diverted, minds disabled and are fed through tubes till the time they are ready to be used for the procedure. Animals have been instrumentalised and used by the regime to artificially produce new male offsprings which have the traits of a male parent alone. The animals which are used

for this procedure can only be used once and thereafter killed or discarded. The regime makes use of animals for their benefit only. Animals only have an instrumental value. They are perceived to belong to a lower order possessing no self-awareness, rationality, or consciousness hence they are used for the regime's benefit and then discarded. The animals used in drone generation technology and cloning technology are regarded as inanimate things or as property with no identity by the human community. The use of animals in drone generation and cloning technology also indicates that it is because of the human community's disregard and non-acceptance of the identity of animals, as beings who share an interest in continuing to live, that they are being treated this way. Sows and apes are beings with a nervous system who can feel sensations and are sentient. A reading using Francione's animal rights theory suggests that these animals such as sows and apes used in drone and clone generation technology are sentient beings with subjective awareness and hence can be called persons that make them share an identity with humans that is an interest in continued existence. Animals who are made test subjects are not regarded on par with humans and are considered a member of the moral community. Middle tests the survival rates of human beings in the zone by sending camels to the Zone by equipping locators in their cervical vertebrae. There is no regard for the life of the camel sent to the Waste as no living creatures could survive in such a highly radioactive poisoned area. Middle is treating the camel as his property, as an inanimate thing when doing so and thereby denying any sort of identity to this being. The use of the camel this way also indicates that it is because of a refusal to acknowledge the identity of animals equally as beings with interests like humans that they are treated this way. Camels are sentient beings that can experience pleasure, pain and other sensations. The sentience of camels indicates that they can be regarded

as persons and they share an identity with humans- like humans they like to continue to live and not be made subjects of experiments. Swan makes use of animals like pigs and goats to experiment and produce new specimens of drones that have advanced features like personality traits. Experimentation on animals harms them and their well-being and indicates that they are being treated as the moral equivalent of a thing or an inanimate object with no identity. Such experimentation also indicates that these animals have been denied an identity, that is not recognized as beings with interests, which is why they are being treated so. Pigs and goats are sentient beings. They can be called persons and have as much right to be in the moral community as humans, like humans they have an interest in continued existence which is the common identity shared by them.

Animals in the dystopian world of the novel are exploited in various ways. They are used in clone and drone generation technology as well as made subjects of experiments too. The human community by using them in these ways is denying an identity to them and treating them as the moral equivalent of a thing or object. Animals in the dystopian world would never have been exploited if their fundamental identity with humans, that is beings part of a moral community that have an interest in continued existence is acknowledged. Thus, it can be also surmised that the refusal to acknowledge the identity of animals as beings with an interest in their continued existence is the reason for their exploitation. The dystopia by resisting or failing to accept the identity of animals is perpetuating and upholding animal exploitation, an ever-pervading condition in this dystopia. An analysis using Francione's philosophy suggests that all animals used in various ways in this dystopian world are sentient beings with a basic self-awareness and can be called persons. Being persons, they share an identity with humans- an interest in continued existence. Such animals need

to be part of the moral community which means their interests have to be regarded. Recognizing and acknowledging this identity of animals will lead to an end to animal exploitation which is one of the steps or measures to be taken that can transform this dystopian society into a utopia.

3.4 Animal Identity in *The Island of Lost Girls*- Introduction

The Island of Lost Girls is a novel that features several animals that are of hybrid varieties. The animals range in size and kind such as giant marine crabs, sharks, turtles, and whales. The majority of the action in the novel is set underwater and features many marine animals. The marine peasants and also underwater communities such as the islanders are dependent on these animals. Marine animals are used by the human community for their benefit and treated as the equivalent of their property. Gary Francione's theory of animal rights and the notion of property and Matthew Calarco's views on animal identity are used to understand and define the property status of animals and their identity. Francione's views on meat and animal identity are used to discuss the identity of animals turned to meat in the dystopian world. Francione's views on the instrumentalization of animals have been used to examine the implications of animal identity and their use as products. Various subsections discuss the use of marine hybrid animals, the use of animals as meat, use of animals as products.

3.4.1 Hybrid Animals as Property

The world order presented in *The Island of Lost Girls* is heavily reliant on hybrid animal species for food, transportation and warfare. These hybrid species are the resources humans exploit to fulfil their various needs. The animals are treated as the property of their owners. They have been bred and raised for human ends without any consideration for the sentience of these beings. Some of the animal species are

domesticated and tamed by their owners to do certain works like attacking enemies, transporting people etc. Domesticating animals is part of treating them as property. The mentors on the island domesticate marine animals for fulfilling various purposes. The island has a farm in the open sea where animals are bred, trained and domesticated for meat as well as engaging in warfare. Domesticated animals within the island whether be it for food or warfare are treated as the possession or property of the islanders. Animals are treated or seen as mere things which fulfil the needs of the dystopian world. These animals are perceived as not possessing any sense of self or identity and are considered inanimate objects by their owners. Treating animals this way also indicates that they have been denied an identity, as beings who have interests like humans, which is the reason they are being treated like. this A marine hybrid turtle species named Goliath Chellion is used for ferrying passengers across the waters. The hybrid turtle species is a giant animal that can carry many passengers on its back to its desired destination. A ramshackle craft was created out of seaweed fibre and tortoise shell which had seats for passengers. This craft was attached with ropes to bolts driven into the shell of the Goliath which helped the craft to travel in water. Goliath was controlled by a bridle attached to its head and front flippers. The reigns connected to the bridle were held by the driver who controlled the animal by pulling the reigns or occasionally kicking its head. The driver of the craft used violent means to control the animal and treated the animal as his thing or property which had to be controlled and taken possession of. The Goliath is defined by the driver with phrases such as “superfine beast”, “beast”, and “very big size and very fine mood” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 77) indicating that it is viewed just as a beast of burden prized only for its physical stature. The driver who controls the Goliath sees it as a mere beast without any individuality or selfhood. The egg of the goliath is

consumed as food by the mariners. Some of the eggs are retained to produce more species which can again be domesticated and used as a vehicle to ferry passengers. Goliath is treated as the property of its owner and the equivalent of an inanimate object without any identity or self. Using this hybrid turtle this way indicates how it has been denied an identity, as a member of the moral community with interests just like humans, which is the reason why it is being treated so.

The mentors on the island make use of marine organisms for their ends. Aquatic species such as crabs have been made hybrid so that the mentors can live within them. The island is made of separate units in which each cell is about the size of a one-person room. The cells are joined together to form large rooms. The island itself is a hybridised crab whose physical dimensions have been altered so that the islanders can live symbiotically within them. The nervous systems of crabs provide them with nervous energy- a form of electricity harnessed by the islanders. Cells of the island are made of giant crustaceans who hold on to each other with their multiple jointed limbs. Each creature has a room-shaped hump on its back, front claws, pipes and tubes and a pair of telescoping feelers which made it possible to assemble and group itself into the cells of the island. The crabs are sentient beings that respond to touch. They can respond to the touch of skin which is manipulated by the mentors on the island to manipulate the crab. The islanders like parasites live within the crab controlling it by manipulating or stimulating the crab's nerves which makes it possible to open or close the doors which are membranes within the crab's body. The rooms on the island were supported by the back of giant crustaceans who lived in linked clusters. The claws of the crab operated as living zippers drawing out or collapsing passages like rectangular tubes. The tubes were formed from the membranes of crabs. The mentors discard the crabs when they want to dismantle the

island facility. The hybrid crab species is used with the only intention of making use of it as a habitat or an underwater facility for the mentors. Youngest has moral apprehensions over his and the mentors' parasitic existence inside the crabs and feels what the mentors are doing is manipulating the crab for their own use. The mentors do not mind using the crab in this way and even justify their parasitic existence. The mentors treat the crab as the equivalent of an inanimate object or thing with no identity or selfhood. Such use of this marine hybrid crab also points to the denial of identity to this crab, as being with interest like humans, which is the reason for its exploitation.

Mentors on the island bred and domesticated a giant hybrid reptile just for warfare. The species was created from the DNA of a tropical lizard belonging to the genus *Draco*. The hybrid lizards were massive, agile and could fly when they spread their membranes between their front and rear limbs. The lizard had two riders who controlled it. The mentors create such a massive hybrid carnivorous species as it serves their purpose of killing their enemies. Specific equipment like helmets and processors were designed and developed just so that the mentors or any of the girls on the island can take control of the creature and use them to execute their commands. The processors in the helmet created an interface through which the riders had control over the brain of the lizard. The rider can experience the sensations felt by the lizard with the help of processors in the helmet which was connected to the lizard. It also helped the rider to get access to the senses in the lizard's eyes, nose and ears. In the battle against the General and his men, the hybrid lizard was employed to kill them as the hybrid lizard only had the desire to eat food. The lizards ate the General and his cohorts as they are only led by the sensation of hunger. The rationale behind creating a hybrid variety of lizards was to use them in any battles against the island. The

mentors do not attribute any intrinsic value to the life of a sentient hybrid lizard other than an instrumental one. The giant hybrid lizard is treated as the equivalent of a thing or property which is of use to the mentors. The lizard is relegated to the class of things that have no personality or identity when used as property by the islanders. The use of the lizard this way also indicates how it has been denied an identity, as a being with interests like humans, which is the root cause for its exploitation.

3.4.2 Hybrid Animals as Persons

Many non-human animals are sentient, self-aware and have interests of their own that make them persons as per Gary Francione's definition. They share a fundamental identity with humans, which is an interest in their continued existence. Even though the human community mistreats these animals they are persons and deserve a place in the moral community. Marine hybrid animals such as marine hybrid crabs, giant hybrid lizards, and hybrid turtles are all persons. The status of a person has to be accorded to them and they need to be made part of the moral community. The hybridised crab used by the mentors on the island is a sentient organism. The mentors manipulate the spherical structures present in the skin of the crab which makes the crab retract or extend any of its features thus closing or opening any doors or passages on the island. The spherical structures present in the crab are highly sensitive receptors that respond to touch. This also indicates that the crab is a sentient being that is perceptually aware as it responds to the touch of the mentors. The hybridized crab qualifies as a person as per Francione's definition as it is perceptually aware and therefore to a level self-aware and has interests of its own. This personhood status of the crab means that it shares a fundamental identity with humans – an interest in its continued existence. The hybrid lizards which mentors use on the island for combat also qualify for Francione's definition of a person. The

carnivorous lizard which is said to belong to the Draco species can experience sensations and is a sentient being. Meiji can know the manifold sensations felt by the lizard through her helmet which had processors connected to the lizard. Meiji can experience sensory information relayed by the lizard: “The sensory information flooded her consciousness, pushing her attention this way and that, from the lizard and from her body. They were like powerful magnetic currents vying for control over the single iron filing of her attention” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 336). She can see the world as Smaug the lizard experiences it: “Now, the world was miraculous with bright colours and fresh experiences. There was no break in the lizard’s responses. She experienced reality in violent sensory streams, each one urgent as the next” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 339). All this indicates that the lizard can experience sensations. The lizard’s overwhelming sensation was that of hunger. The lizard constantly pursues men who to it were live prey which can satiate its hunger. This suggests that the lizard- a sentient being, was aware of its food requirements and is driven by the sensation of hunger. It is to a degree self-aware as it knows that it is hungry and its body requires food. The hybridized lizard can then be called a sentient being who can experience various sensations and is perceptually aware and also to a level self-aware and has interests in its continued existence. This status indicates that the lizard was a person and that it shares an identity with humans, which is an interest in its continued existence. Goliath Chellion, the hybrid turtle used to ferry passengers is said to have a fine mood by its driver indicating it can feel sensations from which it can be interpreted that it is a person, a being with sentience, subjective awareness and has an interest in its continued existence because of which it shares an identity with humans. The marine hybrid animals used in the dystopian world of the novel for various purposes are all persons and they do share an identity

with humans as beings with an interest in continued existence. Recognizing and accepting this identity of animals can stop the use of animals as resources and end their exploitation that is one of the many measures that can be taken to transform this dystopia into a utopia.

3.4.3 The Identity of Noor, the whale

The whales used for transport and warfare on the island are hybrid species bred from a combination of three different species. Whales and other large cold-blooded animals such as the giant hybrid lizard is trained by the islanders to engage in warfare. Girls on the island are taught to mount whales, control them using a harness and breathe underwater using a semi-sentient trak which is connected to the whale's windpipe. The whales were gene sculpted to include a contoured prone saddle on their back and also an apparatus that enabled co-breathing. The whale's inhaled air went into a specialised sac which is connected to the trak. The whole purpose behind creating hybrid whales is to domesticate and train them for transport and warfare. The mentors on the island regard them as mere animals to be trained and discarded for their utility. Mentor Brahi, one of the island's marine mammal specialists says so about the whales: "Much as we are. They are, as you already know, warm-blooded mammals. Some are docile, some are not. Some have powerful temperaments, others are dull or unresponsive. The ones we use are not in any sense wild. They've been bred by us and trained by us" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 187). Even though she calls these creatures partners and refuses to regard them as pets or slaves, the punishment for any creature disobeying the trainers' command is death.

Noor has an individuality of his own. He has sufficient intelligence to respond to his name. He greeted Meiji when she mounted it. Meiji feels that Noor has a personality unlike the other common breed of whales: "Whatever she had known or

read or recently been told about whales, nothing had prepared her for this: that an animal could, with one single glance from its enormous eye, drench her with the full twenty-ton force of its personality” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 187).

Noor is a four-year-old whale trained and domesticated by the mentors on the island. His pupils widen in amazement when Meiji mounts him indicating to her that he liked her. Noor is a self-aware being who responds to his name. He has subtle ways of communicating his pleasures, pains, amazement or any such emotion. He has senses, emotions and intuitions as humans do but not in a well-developed manner. Charles Darwin has postulated that animals possess characteristics like humans even though it is present in them at an incipient level (qtd. in Francione, *Animals as Persons* 55).

Henry Salt refuses to see animals as mere chattel or property but as sentient beings who need to be protected just like human beings (212-13). According to Salt, “It is the denial of personality to animals that is at the root of the evil” (218). He regards the reason behind the ill-treatment of animals to their treatment as things (217). Wild animals are often regarded as brute irrational beings which are not true even animals considered wild possess individuality and character (Salt 218). Henry Salt’s contention that animals have a personality and characteristics of their own holds true in the case of Noor. Noor feels anxious and scared when other whales come to attack him for disobeying the mentors’ orders. Meiji could feel “the trembling terror that overtook Noor” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 203), “heart speeding up” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 203) and the “tremors that ran up and down his spine” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 203). Noor is a being who experiences pain and pleasure along with emotions like worry, excitement, and amusement. Noor the whale is a sentient being who displays signs of self-awareness, emotions and communication. Noor let out cries while being attacked by fellow

whales indicating that he was suffering from pain yet he did not try to defend himself from attack as he did not try to evade the attacks on him. He has enough self-awareness to understand that he was suffering from pain. He also feels joyous when he meets Meiji. Noor is a sentient being who is perceptually aware and also has a minimum degree of self-awareness thus qualifying Noor for Francione's definition of "person". The personhood status indicates that he shares a fundamental identity with humans, that is an interest in his continued existence.

Noor is beaten up to death by the other whales as a punishment for disobeying the mentor. This refutes mentor Vane's claims that whales are partners. The mentors on the island require tamed animals who can follow orders and be exploited for food and other ends. They are treated as the equivalent of property- something produced and owned by the mentors of the island to be used for a human end. The hybrid species Noor was produced using gene sculpting. Gene sculpting or genetic engineering is biotechnology that allows the mentors on the island to fashion hybrid species that are suited to their use and thereby end up utilising them disregarding the animal's interests. The dystopian society of *The Island of Lost Girls* has futuristic technology begetting negative consequences as discussed in 2.4.2 of the thesis. The futuristic technology of this dystopia is providing means to exploit animals which can be regarded as a negative impact or consequence of using this technology. They are used in biotechnology because they are not regarded as beings with any interest or identity. Vane regards Noor as a "mere animal" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 221) who needs to be controlled and taught. She only regards Noor as a draught animal who can be used to pull underwater shuttles. She regards Noor as an animal who is not in the same order as humans. She regarded animals as beings who liked to fulfil their baser functions like playing or eating. The mistreatment of Noor and other

such whales is due to the denial of personality to animals. Noor is treated as the mentors' property. By calling Noor a mere animal Vane is denying individuality and self-hood to Noor and relegating it to property, to a class of things that have no identity. The use of Noor as a resource by the mentors also means his identity as a being with interests like humans have been ignored. The refusal to acknowledge and accept the identity of Noor is also a reason for his use as property. Meiji recognizes the personality of Noor and recognizes it as a being with emotions and feelings. In short, Meiji recognizes that Noor is a sentient being who can feel emotions just like her. She recognizes the identity of Noor as a being with interests and emotions just like her. This attitude evinced by Meiji is contrary to the ones evinced by the mentors who simply view it as an animal made for their own use. The human community in this dystopian world has to recognise the identity of Noor just like Meiji for ending animal exploitation that is one of the measures that can be taken for transforming this dystopia into a utopia.

3.4.4 Animal Identity and the Reductive Category of Meat

The personhood status of animals involves recognizing that the use of animals for food, science, entertainment or clothing is institutionalized exploitation that is inconsistent with the personhood status of animals (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 198). If one recognizes the fundamental interests of animals one has to accept that their life cannot be sacrificed just so that humans can enjoy the taste of meat (Francione, *Animals as Persons* 198). The dystopian world relied on marine animals for their food. Marine animals are consumed and treated as food as they belong to the moral equivalent of things that have no interests, identity or rights even though all these creatures are sentient and possess a minimum degree of self-awareness. Marine organisms like crabs and jellyfish are consumed largely by marine peasants and other

inhabitants who have their dwellings next to the sea. For instance, while out in the sea with the General, Aila made a crab soup for the evening meal thus denying this animal personhood status and reducing it to property. She is denying the identity of this crab as a being with interests just like humans, by reducing it to meat. This also shows indicates how the exploitation and use of these animals as meat is rooted in the denial of identity to these beings. The beings used as meat mentioned by Aila are all sentient beings that have a minimum level of self-awareness, they can be called persons and share an identity with humans, an interest in continued existence. On the island, certain marine animals are bred like sharks, turtles and fish for meat. All these indicate how the island community uses animals for meat and regards them as inanimate things with no identity or feelings even though all these beings are understood as sentient beings that can feel, have a minimum degree of self-awareness and can then be called persons which makes them share a fundamental identity with humans- an interest in their continued existence. The use of animals as meat is rooted in the denial to give an identity to animals. In another instance, the General reduces sharks to meat thereby denying them any self. The General mercilessly kills sharks by tethering them to a boat, by piercing their tails with hooks. He took pleasure in torturing the two whales. The General kills these two whales who had killed his drones “[s]o that when we eat their meat we too will get the benefit of our late members’ proteins and fats without the tedium of being cannibals, I call that efficient” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 253). He sees sharks as just pieces of meat. He denies them individuality or self-hood. He treats them as meat because he views them as the equivalent of things without any identity or self. The torture of sharks also indicates how sharks have been denied an identity as beings with interests like humans. The sharks would never have been tortured if their identity is recognized.

The sharks tortured by the General are sentient beings that can experience sensations as is evident in their agony when the General tortures them. The General tortures the sharks by attaching a hook to their tails which was then attached to the boat. The sharks thrashed and tried to free themselves as they were dragged backwards in the water as the boat moved. He disregards the suffering of the sharks who were “thrashing strenuously” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 253) as they were dragged backwards with little water passing over their open-facing gill slits. This suggests that the sharks were able to experience pain and to a degree self-aware too as they tried to free themselves from the situation. The sharks even though treated by the General as pieces of meat, can be called a person going by Francione’s definition as they are sentient, have a minimum degree of self-awareness and have some self-interests in being alive. Personhood status implies that these sharks share an identity with humans that is an interest in continued existence. These sharks can then be called persons and they share a fundamental identity with humans- an interest in continued existence and deserve a place in the moral community irrespective of the General’s treatment of them.

The island along with other enclaves surrounded by water depends on marine organisms for food. Sentient non-human marine animals are reduced to the category of meat. The sea-dwelling inhabitants as well as the islanders who consume them value them only for their ability to be reduced to meat or food in any form. The marine peasants and other sea-dwelling citizens consume animals such as crabs, turtles and sharks as they are considered lower beings who exist as a mere resource for human beings. They are perceived to have no essence or intrinsic value other than that of being reduced to food. They are regarded as property or as an inanimate thing with no identity by the marine peasants even though all these are sentient beings and

deserve the status of persons. It is because of the refusal to acknowledge the identity of these animals such as crabs, sharks and turtles that they are being eaten as meat. Personhood status implies that they share a fundamental identity with humans that is they do not like to be harmed and would like to continue living.

The dystopian world of the novel uses animals as meat. Such animals are reduced to the category of things and regarded as inanimate objects and denied any identity when they are used as meat. Personhood status is denied to such animals. Such mistreatment of animals also points to the refusal to acknowledge their identity as beings like humans with an interest in their continued existence. The refusal to recognize this identity is what leads the human community to eat them. A reading using Francione's philosophy and Matthew Calarco's views on identity indicates these animals share a similarity or identity with humans as they are sentient beings, with subjective awareness that has an interest in their continued existence. Animals and humans share a similar identity in the sense that they both would not like to be harmed and would like to continue living. Animals like humans would not like to be eaten as meat and be killed for satisfying the food requirements or tastes of certain beings, the eating of which is completely avoidable. Personhood status requires that the human community stop treating animals as meat. Recognizing and accepting this identity of animals eaten as meat can stop animal exploitation and pave the way for a utopia where there is no animal exploitation.

3.4.5 Instrumentalising Animals as Products

Instrumentalism is a reductive concept that involves treating the "other" only as means to some end (Plumwood 297). Humans are excluded from use in contrast to the non-humans who are instrumentalised. The non-human animals are instrumentalised and treated as property, the moral equivalent of things in the

dystopian world presented in the novel. Recognising and treating animals as sentient self-aware beings and not property involves the abolition of animal use as resources in producing animal products (Francione, “Animal Welfare and the Moral Value of Non-Human Animals” 13). The production and facilitation of domestic animals, according to Francione, has to be stopped if one has to abolish treating animals as property (Francione, “Animal Welfare and the Moral Value of Non-Human Animals” 13). Animals are seen as passive subjects exploited for human ends.

The mentors on the island community use marine animals as products for fulfilling their needs. The marine world provides the islanders with an electric eel for their energy requirements. The island has a zoobiotic lab that produces zoobiotic models, these were products based on animals used by the mentors for their various needs. The creature batteries produced in these labs were power-emitting cells based on animals such as the electric eel. The mentors on the island treat the eel as their resource or possession without any regard for the individuality of that being. It is treated as the moral equivalent of an inanimate object which is used for a particular end. The treatment of eel as property indicates that it has been denied an identity, as beings with interest like humans. The refusal to acknowledge the identity of being such as eel leads the mentors on the island to use it this way. An eel is a being that is sentient, hence it can be called a person. The person status indicates that it shares an identity with humans, an interest in continued existence. Other marine creatures are also used as resources for particular ends. There is something called TravelCrab produced on the island. It was an underwater vehicle that could ferry five travellers at a time. This vehicle uses a crab for this purpose. Meiji feels repugnant at the thought of travelling inside the body of a crab. She questions the rationale behind creating and using a hybrid crab species just for human ends: “She wishes she could understand

more about how animals were created and trained. Whether they understood they were being used. Whether they minded that use” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 326). Treating animals such as crabs as resources are equivalent to treating them as objects with no identity. The use of the crab in this way indicates that it has not been given an identity, is not recognized as being with interests like humans. Animals such as crabs would never have been instrumentalised if the island community acknowledged that these share an identity with humans. The crab is a sentient being hence it can be called a person. The person status indicates that the crab shares an identity with humans- an interest in continued existence. Youngest offers pelts made of Siamese cats, spotted hyenas and king cobras to the mentors of the island in exchange for the safe harbour and upkeep of his daughter Meiji on the island. This indicates in the dystopian world it is not inappropriate and not considered morally reprehensible to engage in the sale of goods that make use of animals. This suggests how the dystopian world uses animals as products, as property, and as inanimate objects with no identity. The failure to recognise and accept the identity of the Siamese cat, spotted hyena and king cobra is the reason they are exploited this way. The Siamese cats, spotted hyenas and king cobras are all sentient beings that can experience sensations and can then be called persons which means they do share an identity with humans- an interest in continued existence. The mentors in the animal utilise marine animals for producing animal products. This technologically advanced dystopia as discussed in 2.4.2 of the theses makes it possible to utilise animal species for the utility and benefit of humans. Technological advancements and developments make it possible to produce products that make use of animal parts. Dystopia is characterised by its use of technology which also is creating unintended and harmful consequences on its use. Biotechnology is harnessed to produce useful products for

humans that make use of animal parts. The existence of zoobiotic labs and experimentation on them proves how technology here is providing the means for humans to treat animals as their resources and disregard these animals' identities. Animals are used in technology to produce such products because they are regarded as property, as inanimate things with no identity or interests. All these animals who have been used in products share an identity with humans, as beings with interests, who at least have an interest in their continued existence. Such beings should be regarded as part of the moral community and not harmed in any manner. The use of animals in and as products should be abolished for preventing animal exploitation. Recognizing and acknowledging this fundamental shared by humans and animals can stop animal exploitation which is one of the measures or steps to be taken that will pave the way for a utopia.

3.5 Animal Identity in *The Island of Lost Girls*- Conclusion

Animals are denied a self in the dystopian world of *The Island of Lost Girls*. They are regarded as the property of their human owners. They are regarded as things with no identity to be used for the convenience or utility of humans. Many animals such as marine crabs, hybrid lizards, hybrid turtle and whales have been created and domesticated for specific purposes. The use of these animals as resources shows that identity has been denied to them. An acknowledgement of their identity as beings with interests like humans would never have made them a subject of exploitation. Animals in the dystopian society have an identity as per Francione's animal rights theory and Matthew Calarco's notions on animal identity despite the view of the human community that regards them as property. Sentience is also taken as a precondition for a basic level of self-awareness that all animals possess. Animals such as Noor the whale, hybrid marine crab, hybrid marine turtle, and hybrid lizard are

sentient and to a degree self-aware. Hence, they can be accorded the status of a person and should be considered part of the moral community. Their sentience also indicates they have interests like humans which is the identity they share with humans. Their use by the mentors in the island community indicates that they are treated as property, as the equivalent of things with no identity. It is the denial of an identity to animals as beings with interests that is responsible for such exploitation. Animals in the dystopian world are treated as the property of their human owners when consumed as meat. In the dystopian world, one sees many animals being reduced to meat and food such as crabs, turtles, fish and sharks. All such animals reduced to meat are taken to possess no interests or self-awareness and are reduced to the class of things or property. The use of such animals as meat also shows how animals have been denied an identity, as beings with interests like humans. The use of animals as meat would have been stopped if animals are treated as beings with identities who possess interests like humans. Animals are instrumentalised and used in the production of products. Such animals are regarded as possessing no self-awareness and sentience. Many products such as power cells from electric eels and TravelCrab made from crabs are produced disregarding the sentience of these animals. Biotechnology also is seen as begetting a negative impact which is a common feature of dystopia. The dystopia presented in the novel is also a technologically able society that relies on animals to produce products. Such products essentially lead to the instrumentalization of animals that points to the belief in the human community that animals have no identity or self, to begin with, and hence this use is justified by them. The dystopian society reduces animals to a class of things or property by using animals or animal parts for manufacturing products. Thus, it can be surmised that animals in the dystopian world of the novel have been used as resources, products or meat owing to

the thinking that these animals do not have a sufficient sense of self or any identity even though Gary Francione's animal rights theory and Matthew Calarco's thoughts on animal identity proves to the contrary. Dystopian society by resisting to acknowledge and accept the identity of animals perpetuates and upholds the exploitation of animals. The exploitation of animals is the prevailing condition in this dystopia as opposed to a utopia where there is no such use of animals. Recognizing and accepting this identity of animals, as beings who share interests in continuing to live just like humans can put an end to the exploitation of animals and their use as meat, in products, for warfare and all other uses for which they are subjected in this dystopian world. Recognition of animal identity is one of the measures that can be taken to transform this dystopia into a utopia.

3.6 Feminising Nature in *Escape*

Radical ecofeminists argue that woman's association with nature and the identity politics that conflate the identity of nature with women is not empowering and reduces nature to a feminized domesticated subject that is exploited and also furthers the exploitation of women. According to Karen J Warren, "One account locates the conceptual basis of the twin dominations of nature and women in value dualism" (266). She defines a conceptual framework as "a socially constructed set of beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions that shape and reflect how one views oneself and others" (266). A conceptual framework organises the world in dualisms, in disjunctive pairs (Warren 266). Each disjunct of the pair is seen as opposed to the other disjunct (Warren 266). The disjuncts do not have any connection to each other (Warren 266). The conceptual framework orders the disjuncts in a hierarchal spatial up-down manner so that a higher value is assigned to that which is considered higher in the hierarchy (Warren 266). Some examples of value dualisms are reason/emotion,

mind/body, culture/nature and man/woman (Warren 266). Many dualisms argue that whatever is associated with body, emotion, nature and women is conceived as inferior to that which is associated with men, mind culture, reason and humans (Warren 266). A conceptual framework is regarded as patriarchal when it maintains the domination and subordination of women by men (Warren 266). Such an oppressive structure is characterised by its value dualisms and hierarchies, the relationship of domination and by the logic of domination (Warren 266). A logic of domination is a type of argument that justifies subordination on the assumption that being superior grants one the right to subordinate the other (Warren 266). It is a patriarchal conceptual framework that maintains and perpetuates the dominations of nature and women (Warren 266).

Writers such as Caldecott, Leland, Salleh, Grey and Cheney claim that female bodily experiences such as reproduction and childbearing situate women differently to nature (qtd. in Warren 267). The goal of feminism is to develop gender-sensitive language and theory (Warren 267). The language which naturalises women and feminizes nature perpetuates the domination of both by showing that the twin dominations are culturally and figuratively analogous (Warren 267). Sherry B Ortner regards women as being closer to nature as a woman's body and its functions place her closer to nature (12). She considers men's psychology different which makes them commit to culture (12). A woman's social role is tied to her body and its functions (Ortner 12). These roles are considered as a lower order of culture (Ortner 12). A woman has a different psychic structure than men because of her traditional social roles. The psychic structure that a woman possesses is considered closer to nature (Ortner 12). Simon de says that "the female to a greater extent than the male, is the prey of the species" (qtd. by Ortner 13). Beauvoir is of the view that the many organs in the female body like breasts, uterus, and ovaries do not serve any other purpose other than

reproduction (qtd. by Ortner 13). A man ensures the transcendence of life by creating values that deprive the pure repetition of birth which is the reason why a man's creation is considered more valuable than a woman's act of giving birth (Ortner 14). The human male transcends the species by creating and inventing new instruments which shape the future (Ortner 14). The male creates new objects through the medium of technology and symbols which transcend life (Ortner 14). A man's creation is regarded as possessing more value as he exercises his creative functions whereas a woman is only able to produce perishable human beings (Ortner 14). A woman's psychological functions limit her social movements and confine her to social contexts considered closer to nature (Ortner 28). A woman is confined to her home during lactation (Ortner 16). A mother's role is confined to the domestic social circle because of her roles associated with nursing and caregiving (Ortner 16). The family is considered a lower-order social/ cultural organisation since women are confined to such a domestic sphere (Ortner 12). The women and family both are identified with nature (Ortner 18). Family is considered closer to nature by its biological function (Ortner 18). Women are also considered closer to nature as they have an unmediated psyche (Ortner 22). A woman has a more personal relationship with her children and is involved in the formative years of a child's life than a man (Ortner 16). A woman's psyche is shaped by her mothering functions.

Escape presents a dystopian world that has a dualistic perception of the world in which females and nature are devalued and are considered part of a different order separated from man and culture. The Brotherland has a patriarchal conceptual framework that is nature-culture that maintains the continued subjugation of women and nature. Women and nature are closely associated with each other and defined in relation to the human and culture that is masculine. Women and nature share a

common identity by virtue of their nurturing functions. They are both symbolically associated with each other. The administration of the General instils values in his citizens deemed as masculine. In Brotherland there is an emphasis on science, rationality and technological innovations over what is considered feminine and natural. The General regards science as his religion. He despises emotions and sentiments. The General wants to build a world that is reliant on reason and science alone. He regards reasoning and rationality as masculine traits. The General has a dualistic view of the world. Nature and women are the subordinate groups in Brotherland as they belong to the nature realm which is antithetical to the world envisioned by the General. The identity of women and nature are defined in relation to man and culture. The dystopian world presented in Brotherland is divided into the realm of culture and humans which espouses rationality and masculinity while denigrating those that belong to nature part of dualism. The General despised female sexuality. Nature and females to him stood for the nativity, birth and excess- all these which he condemned and tried to eradicate from Brotherland. He says to Eldest, “The word nation is made ugly on account of its association with the nativity, with birth, with nature and, by association, with excess. Nature is excessive and I abhor it for that reason” (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 77). The words nativity and birth remind him of nature and its nurturing ability which he disregards. Nature is equated with a woman’s mothering function and is feminized. The nurturing ability of nature reminds the General of women and childbirth. The General associates women with childbirth and reproduction. He does not think there is an identity for a woman other than that of a mother. He doesn’t like to be dependent on a female or mother nature. Both to him stand for a man’s dependence on a female or mother figure. He claims to have taken the mother out of nature in one of his instructional manuals to his citizens. This also

means that he has destroyed the nurturing ability of nature by destroying the landscape following the atomic bombing. It also underlines his genocide of women. He wants to cut all ties from mother nature and also the female- which are “others” who belong to the order of nature. He regards reasoning and strength to belong to men alone and not to women and nature which stand for sentiments, excess, nativity and baser desires. The General associates women with excess just like nature. He feels women compete for breeding rights, are individualistic and are only concerned about bringing more children into the world whereas he wants to build a world in which there is no excess population. Nature and women belong to the nature part of dualism whereas men belong to the culture part of dualism. Nature and women have a common identity by virtue of their nurturing functions. The General equates nature’s role as a nurturer with a female’s reproductive role. Nature is associated with women in Brotherland by its nurturing functions. The dystopian society of Brotherland has such a value dualism or notion of identity of nature that helps maintain the continued exploitation of nature- the condition in dystopia. The destruction of nature and the desolate landscape often figure in a dystopia as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis and the disregard and destruction of nature and such dystopian bleak scenarios of the desolate landscape can be attributed to the common identity of nature and women, of their placement in a patriarchal conceptual framework that does not accord them much value. This common identity of women and nature and their inferior place in the patriarchal conceptual framework provides a rationale to exploit nature without consequences and thereby maintain the dystopian bleak scenarios in this country. Such an identity given to nature and the inferior place and value given it to needs to be rejected if the landscape has to be revegetated in this dystopian country which can this dystopia into a utopia.

3.7 Nature as Feminine in *The Island of Lost Girls*

According to Collard and Contrucci, both women and nature have the same identity and destiny (137). The association of women with nature is one sense in which we consider nature as gendered (Radel 332). Cultural ecofeminism is a response to the perception that the devaluation of women and nature is due to their mutual association (Merchant 207). Cultural ecofeminism views the identity of women and nature as merged and sees nature as a feminine subject. Cultural ecofeminists celebrate the prehistoric era when nature was symbolised by pregnant figures, butterflies, trees and snakes (Merchant 202). Women were revered and held in high esteem as bringers forth of life in this era (Merchant 202). Cultural ecofeminism celebrates the relationship between women and nature (Merchant 202). In cultural ecofeminism, ancient rituals centred on Goddess worship, the moon, animals and the female reproductive system are revived (Merchant 202). Cultural ecofeminists view nature in esteem as a mother and goddess as a source of inspiration and empowerment (Merchant 202). Cultural ecofeminists view the association of women with nature as a source of power (Radel 332). Childbirth and the pleasure of suckling an infant already ground women's consciousness as continuous with nature (Salleh 340). Women already flow with the system of nature (Salleh 340). Women can know nature by experiencing themselves (Salleh 340). Women's biology and nature are celebrated as they are regarded as sources of female power (Merchant 203). They view the universe as an engendering reality (Swimme 19). They believe in an ecological consciousness that is the awareness that Earth must be treated with respect (Eisler 23). Reverence for the life-giving and life-sustaining powers of the earth was rooted in a social structure where women and feminine values such as caring, compassion and non-violence were not subordinate to men (Eisler 23). Life-giving

powers incarnated in women's bodies were given the highest social value (Eisler 24). In this strand of ecofeminism, the planet is taken as one's mother, a spiritual, mental emotional being that is physical (Eisler 52).

The women in the island facility celebrate the bond between women and nature. Childbirth, reproduction and nursing are celebrated on the island and regarded as unique to females and nature. Mentor Maia regards the female body as the source of all energy and power as they have the power to give birth. She associates the female body with natural phenomena: "[T]he bodies of female beings, are the source of immense power: the power to give birth. We are the Earth, we are the Universe, we are the sun and all the stars combined, for within our bodies the mystery of life remains coiled and dormant . . ." (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 239). Maia is affirming the nurturing and mothering aspect unique to nature and females by comparing women to the Earth. Birth is described as a special power possessed by women alone. She is celebrating and revering the life-giving mothers of Earth by equating women with Earth. Women's bodies and nature are regarded as sources of power. The Earth itself is revered as a mother figure as just like women it sustains and gives birth to new life. A mentor named Flora grows plants on the island. She says, "...vegetation is the focus of my life. Roots, trunks, photosynthesis: these are what power our planet" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 125). Mentors such as Flora are committed to spreading vegetation as she believes that this is what is essential to sustain all humans. On the island fruits and vegetables are also grown and tended by agricultural workers called floras. This also highlights the island community's commitment to producing vegetation and engaging in agricultural activities that situate them as closer to nature as much of this dystopian landscape in this world is bleak, desolate and barren. Such a conception of nature rooted in

feminine values of caring and compassion and recognition and reverence of life-giving energy of both nature and women is not accepted by the dystopian world of the novel as values like violence, aggression, and destruction are celebrated as evident in the formation of Zone that exploits women and promotes violence. It is the rejection of the life-sustaining feminine identity of nature that leads the dystopian world to not care about nature and that also leads to exploitation and neglect of nature and dystopian scenarios of a destroyed environment. Respecting nature and acknowledging its life-sustaining and nurturing qualities, unique to women and nature, which is necessary for human survival and sustenance, can lead to better treatment of nature and put an end to the endless exploitation of nature. Such a view of nature can lead to a commitment to renew vegetation and revegetate the dystopian desolate barren landscape of both the dystopian societies which are defined by their barren land and scarce vegetation as defined in 2.4.2 of the thesis. The utopian vision of human flourishing includes planetary multispecies flourishing (Melano 447). Utopian hope is in reinhabiting the landscape and reimagining human-environment relations (Melano 448). Such an identity of nature, where its life-giving and sustaining powers are revered and regarded as part of the identity it shares with women as nurturers and life-givers can lead to a commitment to regrow and renew nature that can substantially improve the landscape in these dystopian worlds and lead it to a utopian society where human-environment relations are improved. The acceptance of such an identity of nature can also lead to changes in conditions in this dystopia. The desolate and destroyed environment which defines both dystopias as discussed in 2.2.2 and 2.4.2 of the thesis can be improved with such a conceptualization of an identity of nature that leads one to respect and revere nature and revegetate the landscape.

3.8 The General and his Clone Brothers

Transhuman identity will perpetuate the lives of every human being when they use some sort of enhancement to compete in the technological society (Miah).

Transhuman identity is a new and improved identity that overcomes the limitations of human nature (Serrano, "Transhumanism"). Transhumanists focus on enhancing emotional and physical abilities, human intellectual abilities, elimination of disease, unnecessary suffering and expansion of life span. Enhancement can be defined as an intervention that is used to design or modify a person's traits (Bess 643). It involves adding qualities or capabilities that a person would otherwise not possess (Bess 643). It involves a wide range of modifications from a minute adjustment in a person's biochemistry to a whole new redesign (Bess 643). Enhancement can take different forms such as modifying an existing trait rather than adding a new capability (Bess 643). It can also mean adding a new capability that a person has never possessed before (Bess 643). Enhancements may include improvements in physical characteristics such as speed, and strength; increased cognitive capacities such as various aspects of memory, information processing and reasoning; improvements in emotion, affect, motivation or temperament; improvement in immunity to disease or resistance and increased longevity (Buchanan 25). Different biomedical means can be employed to achieve this (Buchanan 25). The General has many clone brothers who rule different territories of the country radio linked to each other. The General is secretive about his clone brothers and the structure of their ranks. All the General's clones have similar footprints and fingerprints except for minute differences such as a mole or a slight excess of hair. Youngest tells Meiji that General keeps copies of himself complete with attire and his getups such as tattoos, piercings, and boots in his cupboard. The General and his clone brothers think alike because of the radio

embedded in their jaws by which they are connected. The General calls themselves supermen, “the logical endpoint of evolution” (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 356) and “the next horizon of mankind” (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 357). The General has ensured his mortality is prolonged by producing similar copies with the same genetic material and disposition as the original. This means that even if any of the routine rebellions in Brotherland kills off any clone brother there are hundreds of others to take his place. The General tells Youngest that everyone and everything is replaceable including the Generals. He tells them that he and his clone brothers are the same as they think the same thoughts. The General claims to have abolished death with the creation of clone brothers as even if one dies the other takes his place without feeling any loss or bereavement. The Generals are not like ordinary clones they are created to be a group of five hundred men created to be extremely intelligent, physically powerful and highly competitive. The General is a clever person who can outmanoeuvre his enemies whenever he needs to. Youngest and his brothers recognise that they even have to make contingency plans to escape from the General and his administration because the General is extremely intelligent. The General is a transhuman being as through the means of cloning he has transcended his mortality by producing similar copies or clones of him as well as genetically engineered to be competitive and intelligent which all can be viewed as an enhancement. The General can be said to possess a transhuman identity as he has some enhancements that can be viewed as improvements over human nature.

Malaska gives an account of different beings in the future that involves mixtures between machines, animals, humans and cyborgs that are all transhuman identities (qtd. in Bahji 88). Cyborg transhumanism strives for the human body to be augmented or aided by technology (Haan 23). Cyborg is a component of the

transhuman identity. In popular culture, cyborg identity is often represented as negative, deterministic and amalgamations of humans and machines (Ruh 140). Cyborgs are human beings with technical parts attached to them on a semi-permanent or permanent basis to enhance capabilities (Forest 797). In the dystopian text of *Escape* like in popular culture, the General's cyborg identity is presented as a human-machine amalgamation. The General communicates to his clone brothers using the jaw phone embeds which are transceivers permanently embedded in his and his clone brothers' jaw. When the General talks all clone brothers hear making this an integral part of the General's existence. The General and his clone brothers think alike because of their ability to be connected. He says that he has many bodies but one self. The jaw phone embeds are a technological artefact fused to the General and his clone brothers' bodies thus overcoming the communication gap which normal human beings face. The General and his clone brothers can know what each other thinks in real time, this can be viewed as an enhancement since regular humans face such communication gaps. They can be called cyborgs as technology is an essential part of their existence and they are modified by technology.

Transhumanist cyborgs are troubling for their portrayal of superiority over other living beings and ideal bodies. They are employed to promote anthropocentrism and androcentrism (Keeling 133). Cyborg identity is often represented as male or female, just or evil, human or machine, victim or other (Balsamo 156). Male-gendered cyborgs fail to challenge the distinction between human and machine as masculinity is culturally aligned with rationality, technology and science (Balsamo 157). Male cyborgs are endowed with masculine traits (Balsamo 157). Cyborg images produce cultural gender stereotypes (Balsamo 157). Technology recreates and reproduces gendered positions, practices and identities (Landström 8,9). The General is male-

gendered. The General regards the laboratory as his creator. It is in the lab that he and his clone brothers were created. Technology here is considered androcentric and masculine. The General believes in gendered roles. He believes in the traditional gender roles that regard men as breadwinners and women as nurturers. This is evident in his conversation with Aila when he told her that “[m]en went out hunting, fought off other men and brought life-sustaining meat to the community hearth” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 91). He also equates masculinity with rationality as is evident in his comments to Aila when he asks her whether she has any of her masculine reasoning left to understand his points. The General is a male-gendered cyborg that promotes androcentrism.

Technology and person have merged in an era in which media has become ubiquitous and personalised (Mcquire 7). Man in using technology is modified by it and also finds new ways of modifying technology. Technology affects your whole being including the very core of identity and personality, mental powers of memory, understanding and will (Cole-Turner 7). It transforms those who use it (Cole-Turner 7). It affects the organism indirectly (Cole-Turner 7). The dystopian society in *Escape* is reliant on technology as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. Technologies such as cloning have led to the creation of transhuman beings such as the General and his clones. Technology has also led to the creation of cyborg identities and transhuman identities such as that of the General and his clones. It can be surmised that the dystopian society’s reliance on and investment in technology have produced new identities such as that of the General and his clones. The creation of such beings with a transhuman identity has led to the continuance of authoritarian regime. The dystopian society in *Escape* is defined by its presence of an authoritarian regime as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. The presence of General and his clones who can

communicate with each other swiftly, can think intelligently and transcend their mortality by employing fellow clones indicates how possession of cyborg and transhuman identity has led to the perpetuation of this despotic regime and upholding of conditions in dystopia. Elimination of cloning technology can lead to the eventual destruction of General's clones. If the General's clones die due to any reason there will no longer be more clones to take their place on eliminating the cloning technology. Reproductive cloning is illegal in the contemporary world. Such elimination of cloning technology can lead to the eventual demise of General and his clones. Jaw phone embeds are what help the clones to communicate and coordinate with each other and maintain the regime. An elimination of technology that leads to the cyborgisation of General can lead to gaps in communication and failure in coordination eventually leading to the fall of the dystopian regime. If such technology is destroyed or eliminated then new clones cannot communicate with each other using jaw phone embeds which makes the possibility of communication and coordination difficult. In short, the elimination of transhuman identity and cyborg identity can lead to the end of the authoritarian government and change this dystopia to a utopia.

3.9 Conclusion

The identities in the dystopian world of the novels that are not strictly human are animals, nature and transhuman. Animals in the dystopian world are treated as property of the human community. In the dystopian world of *Escape*, animals are used in technology and made subjects of tests and experiments as they are non-human beings whose life doesn't have as much value as they are treated as inanimate things or property of their human owners. They are treated as property and denied identity. The exploitation of such animals is due to a failure to acknowledge and accept their identity. A reading using Francione's philosophy and Matthew Calarco's views on the

identity of animals indicates that they are sentient beings, persons with interests, that share an identity with humans- at least an interest in continued existence. A recognition of the identity of animals can end animal exploitation in *Escape* and transform this dystopia into a utopia. In the dystopian world of *The Island of Lost Girls*, marine animals are used as products, consumed as meat and trained and domesticated. The use of animals as property indicates that they have been denied an identity. The refusal to acknowledge and accept the identity of animals is the reason for this exploitation. Animals that are sentient and perceptually aware like Noor the whale, the hybridized crab, the hybrid lizard, hybrid turtle, fish, eel, Siamese cats, spotted hyenas and king cobra and sharks can be described as persons who possess a minimum level of self-awareness and have interests. The person status indicates that all these animals have an interest just like humans which is the identity they share with humans. Dystopian society by resisting to acknowledge and accept the identity of animals maintains and perpetuates their exploitation. The exploitation of animals is the prevailing condition in this dystopia which is antithetical to a utopia where animals are not exploited. Accepting and acknowledging the identity of animals can transform the dystopia of *The Island of Lost Girls* into a utopia as accepting such an identity will put an end to animal exploitation. Nature is equated with females in the dystopian world. In *Escape*, nature is equated with a female in a negative sense. Equating nature with women ties women down to the reproductive role or social role which is considered less worthy than the male-identified culture all of which is a part of nature-culture dualism. Such a conceptualization of the identity of nature and women as merged is responsible for the deplorable treatment of nature in this dystopian world. Such a conceptualization of the identity of nature in the dystopian world helps maintain the continued subjugation, and exploitation of nature and

dystopian scenarios of bleak and barren landscapes. Such an identity imparted to nature has to be rejected if the landscape in this dystopia needs to be repaired and revegetated which can transform this dystopia into a utopia. In *The Island of Lost Girls*, the bond between women and nature is celebrated and valued instead of being used as a means to oppress them. Such an identity based on the shared values of caring, compassion and feminine nurturing abilities is rejected by the dystopian world as this dystopian world supports values deemed masculine such as aggression and violence. The bleak landscape in the dystopian world of *The Island of Last Girls* can be said to be a failure to recognize the identity of nature as a life-giving feminine force like women that would have led one to respect, revere nature and revegetate it. Such a respect and reverence of nature as a nurturing figure and the conceptualization of the identity of nature as a feminine life-giving force can change the conditions in dystopia, revegetate it and transform it into a utopia. The General and clones are enhanced humans or transhumans that are produced as a result of new technologies such as cloning technology. They possess a transhuman identity. The Generals even when being cyborgs do not question human supremacy as the General is a male-gendered cyborg that promotes androcentrism. The dystopian society with its dependence and investment in futuristic technologies also creates such cyborg identity and transhuman identities. Transhuman and cyborg identities such as that of the General and his clone help to maintain authoritarianism- the defining social condition of a dystopian society. Abolishment of cloning technology can eliminate many of General's clones that can transform this dystopia into a utopia. Control of technology that leads to the cyborgisation of General can lead to the inability of new clones of Generals to communicate with each other leading to the eventual downfall of the dystopian regime that will eliminate authoritarianism and transform this into a utopia.

Identities such as transhuman identity, cyborg identity and the shared identity of women and nature in the nature-culture framework are responsible for maintaining the deplorable condition in this dystopia. Identities such as animal identity and the identity of nature as a feminine life-giving nurturing force can change the conditions in this dystopia. The dystopian society by refusing to acknowledge the identity of animals and that of nature as feminine life-sustaining force is maintaining and perpetuating the same conditions or features that define this dystopian society. Recognition of the identity of animals, acknowledgement and acceptance of the identity of nature as a feminine life-giving and nurturing force, and elimination of transhuman and cyborg identities, the identity of nature and woman and their inferior position or part in the patriarchal conceptual framework are some of the many measures that can be taken to transform this dystopia into a utopia.

Chapter Four

Heterosexual, Gay and Lesbian Identities

4.1 Introduction

The study defines heterosexual identity, gay identity and lesbian identity and the dystopian society's treatment of them, the reasons for such treatment and argues for the acceptance of all sexual orientations that can turn dystopia into a utopia. The study defines and probes heterosexual identity and examines the dystopian society's treatment of individuals who identify as heterosexual. The chapter argues that factors such as the degeneracy theory spread by the dystopian regime, gendercide, the emergence of new reproductive technologies and family setups, and the control over life or biopower exercised by the regime using the technology of biopolitics, control of heterosexual relations make it difficult for individuals who identify as heterosexual to express their sexuality. The chapter defines and probes the treatment of individuals with gay identities in the dystopian society of Brotherland. The chapter contends that individuals with gay identities are treated well in Brotherland and attribute it to the dystopian administration's support and tolerance of gay individuals, and lack of rules controlling gay people. Lesbian identity is also discussed in this chapter as per Adrienne Rich's concept of the lesbian continuum. The chapter argues that the community of women on the island and the bond shared by them can be defined in terms of Rich's notion of lesbian identity.

4.2 Heterosexual Identity in *Escape* - Introduction

Heterosexual identity is the understanding that individuals have of their sexual orientation (Mohr 536). Heterosexual identity is the perception that individuals have of themselves as people with attractions, fantasies and behaviour directed towards the members of the opposite sex (Mohr 536). There is considerable ease for individuals

with heterosexual identities to form a traditional family and engage in relations with members of the opposite sex before the advent of the Generals. The General says that the country was overpopulated implying a spurt in childbirth as a result of heterosexual unions. Youngest talks about women in his family in the past indicating how it was normal to have wives. Eldest acknowledges that it was common to feel desires for the opposite sex and libraries of books were devoted to the struggles of men who strived to gain their lady love's favours. The dystopian administration came to power and tried to ban all heterosexual relationships. Certain factors made it difficult for people with heterosexual identities to pursue their romantic or sexual interests; the notion of degeneracy, the changed concept of family endorsed by the dystopian regime, gendercide, and control of heterosexual relations make it difficult for people with heterosexual identities to pursue the sexual activities associated with such an identity.

4.2.1 Notion of Degeneracy

The General regards women as physically and mentally weaker than men. To avoid the threat of dual parentage and degeneration, cloning technology is invented. The dystopian administration is more concerned with the degenerate children produced by heterosexual couples. The threat of degeneration and race annihilation was used to justify the mass killing of women. Women were considered a biological threat. The process of human reproduction was seen as flawed and problematic because it involves a woman's genes. A woman's gene is considered degenerate and inferior which leads to degenerate offspring. Heterosexuality is an anathema to the dystopian administration. Sexuality was an area of concern for the dystopian administration as it does not permit offspring which is created as a result of heterosexual unions. Biopolitics is defined as bioregulation by the state (Foucault,

Security, Territory, Population 494). It treats the population as living beings with particular biological and pathological features (Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* 474). Sexuality is a point of concern in biopolitics (Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*” 252). An undisciplined body with perverted desires contracts diseases (Foucault, “*Society*” 252). These diseases may also be carried to the next generation and create an effect on the level of the population (Foucault, “*Society*” 252). Sexuality is the point where the body and population meet (Foucault, “*Society*” 252). Women’s sexuality was seen as something to be controlled, suppressed and eliminated because it correlates with degeneracy and inferiority. The General viewed female sexuality as something creating destruction in society because of this he removed them altogether from the country. Suppression of female desire is a feature of feminist dystopias as discussed in 2.2.4 of the thesis. Such suppression of female sexual desires, a biopolitical intervention, leads to the elimination of heterosexual couples in Brotherland. Heterosexuality is concomitant with degeneracy as such unions involve women and the presence of female degenerate genes which is also the reason the General does not permit it. The General feels women are prized only insofar as their ability to reproduce. The invention of cloning technology is exhorted as a technological advancement that produces offspring consisting of male genes only and devoid of female genes. The dystopian administration wanted their citizens to produce new offspring- new citizens by using clone technology to produce a breed of men untainted and free from degeneration. Sex between men and women was not regarded as essential to produce offspring by the dystopian regime as the General and his administration have found a new way to surpass degeneracy that is by cloning.

4.2.2 New Conception of Family

The importance given to heterosexual families is due to their procreative role which is responsible for creating a new generation of individuals. Family in Brotherland in the Time Before was heterosexually constituted. There is an indication of heterosexual couples in the Time Before. In the Time Before it was acceptable to have heterosexual relationships. It was an accepted and common practice as is evident from Youngest's reminiscence about the female members of his family. He reminisces about the time when he had his mother and his teenage sister before a crazed mob killed them following the Change. The procreative nature of families is indicated by Blackson who says a female's primary duty is to reproduce. The onus on women in families to reproduce and the procreative nature of heterosexual families are replaced with the advent of cloning technology. The General says that a woman's sole purpose is to reproduce and that there was nothing other than this which justified their existence. The General, whatever little value he gave to heterosexual unions, is because he knows that reproduction can only be done by women which changes following the invention of cloning technology. The General's views are sexist and even though this is not held by many citizens he initiates the process of killing women once his ancestors invented the cloning technology. The dystopian administration wanted to change the idea of the traditional family and replace it with a brotherhood, consisting of only men. The General's forefathers as well as the Generals thought that it was no longer necessary to have a traditional family set up with heterosexual couples to produce children and heirs. The only reason the General did not try to eliminate women and thereby heterosexual families are because of the biological function of reproduction fulfilled by women as well as the heterosexual family unit. Such a need has been eliminated with cloning. Cloning can produce offspring with

just the blood sample of a male parent. The new reproductive technology offers an alternative to producing children without the mother. Here the use of technology which defines the dystopian society as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis has wide-reaching implications on society as it leads to the demise of women and heterosexually constituted families. Bio politics seeks to control processes such as the ratio of birth to death, fertility of population, reproduction rate, birth rate, mortality rate, longevity etc (Foucault, "*Society*" 243). It deals with the population as "a biological problem and as power's problem" (Foucault, "*Society*" 245). It seeks to control the biological control of man as species (Foucault, "*Society*" 246-247). The ability to create living matter, build monsters, and viruses of all kinds are examples of instances of an excess of biopower in which it becomes technologically and politically possible to control and manage life (Foucault, "*Society*" 254). An excess of biopower is the ability to control life and perpetuate it (Foucault, "*Society*" 254). The General has an excess of biopower as his ancestors were the ones to invent cloning technology. He also maintains a database that keeps a record of all sentient beings in the country. He wants all the citizens to apply for cloning so that a new generation of citizens is produced. He has a monopoly over cloning technology. He has a record of all the citizens who have applied for cloning. He also does not support heterosexual families because he cannot control biological phenomena or human reproduction. The General says that the country was overpopulated before the advent of the Generals and that women competed for breeding rights and did not breed cooperatively which was against the collective ethic because of this he needed to control human reproduction and also eliminate women thereby heterosexual families. The need for controlling human reproduction, population growth and abolishing degeneracy means putting an end to heterosexual families which can be taken as an instance of biopower

exercised by the General and his administration. A family in Brotherland is constituted without female members. The name Brotherland suggests a union or a brotherhood of men. The family, if any, exists in Brotherland, consists of only men. The dystopian regime undermines the procreative role of heterosexual families and wanted citizens to embrace new family setups which only consist of men who can still produce children. The biopower exercised by the dystopian regime leads to the control of biological phenomena such as human reproduction and sex associated with heterosexual families. The dystopian regime's monopoly and endorsement of cloning technology, and banning of heterosexual families are all policies that are an example of biopolitics. Such an exercise of biopower, policies, decisions and viewpoints upheld and endorsed by the dystopian administration makes it difficult for individuals with heterosexual identities to pursue romantic interests and form a traditional family. Pursuing romantic or sexual interests for men in this country with heterosexual identities is very difficult as the dystopian administration did not regard it as important for its citizens to form a traditional family.

4.2.3 Gendercide

The killing of women is responsible for the destruction of heterosexual unions in Brotherland. The General believes that the threat of eventual degeneration and race annihilation associated with children born from heterosexual unions can be avoided by killing women. The act of killing is interpreted by Foucault as an exercise of biopower. In the biopower system, the act of killing is accepted if it results in improving species and eliminating biological threats (Foucault, "*Society*" 256). In biopolitics, it is regarded that the death of the other that is degenerate or abnormal makes life healthier and purer (Foucault, "*Society*" 255). The power of the sovereign to take life or let live is an example of biopower (Foucault, "*Society*" 241). The

killing of women is a policy that reflects the dictatorial nature of the regime as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. The dystopian society in *Escape* is characterized by its totalitarian rule and dictatorial policies such as killing women, which have led to the elimination of heterosexual unions. The General reigns in Brotherland as an undisputed ruler and dictator and kills women because he considers them biological threats. The act of killing women is seen as an exercise of biopower because the General sees it as necessary for the survival of men. A woman's gene is associated with racial annihilation and degeneracy by the General. He regards the children born out of heterosexual unions as being weak and prone to degeneracy. He eliminates women to avoid the "contamination of dual parentage" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 73). The General feels he has strengthened his citizens consisting of men alone by killing all women. He wants to keep Brotherland a pristine country free of women. The existence of females was considered a threat because of this they were eliminated. Many instances in the novel prove that even years after the Change the dystopian administration followed an active policy of killing women when found without any exceptions. For instance, Bamboo talks of an incident when two females who were discovered in an estate were found and then killed by skewering in bayonets in public view. The protagonist Meiji herself is hidden and harboured by her three uncles. She will be executed if her existence is known. Individuals with heterosexual identities might want to marry women or pursue a romantic relationship with them but the absence of women makes it not possible to exercise this desire. The views of the oppressive dictatorial dystopian regime and the killing of women made individuals with heterosexual identities difficult and almost impossible to pursue their sexual and romantic desires.

4.2.4 Control of Heterosexual Relationships

In the dystopian country of Brotherland heterosexual relations are controlled by the dystopian administration through its surveillance and punitive mechanisms and its policy of banning heterosexual relationships. In *Escape*, it is the people who identify as heterosexual who are closeted. Such individuals have to express it with due discretion for fear of being punished as the General and his dystopian regime curtails all individual differences and dissent by using punitive measures, especially for those who have relations with women or harbour women that are against his dictates as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. There is a heavy price for those who harbour women in their homes thus discouraging citizens and instilling fear in them which makes people with heterosexual identity difficult to pursue their romantic interests. A dystopian society is defined by its surveillance mechanisms as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. The dystopian regime makes use of surveillance mechanisms like dynamic surveillance orbs, security personnel boys, and satellites to spy on citizens as well as look for any existence of women. The General randomly visits and inspects the estates for the presence of females. In one instance the General kills a little girl found on the estate. The General feels that the girl would have given birth to many kids on maturity. There are punishments for rebels and those who flout the rules in a dystopian society. Even the owners of the estate who have access to resources and means to hide women may be discouraged from doing so because if females are found in the estate, they will be made to pay a stringent fine by the General and their land given to other estates. Punishment and intolerance of the rebels and rule flouters, have contributed to the elimination of women altogether as the penalty for harbouring them is immense, this has also contributed to the elimination of woman-man relationships in Brotherland. The dystopian administration prevents any heterosexual unions by

killing women. Indirectly killing those considered a threat to the population is also an example of biopower (Foucault, "*Society*" 256). Political death, expulsion, rejection, exposing someone to death, and increasing the risk of someone to death are all inherent ways of killing (Foucault, "*Society*" 256). Any men who support heterosexual unions are punished by depriving them of their livelihood or at worst by killing them. The individuals or families harbouring women are considered a threat to the population as the General wanted to avoid degeneracy and maintain the purity of lineage by not having any women at all. The punishment meted out to such individuals can be seen as an example of biopolitics. This makes the possibility of heterosexual unions difficult in Brotherland. Dystopian societies are defined by their despotic regimes that impose their policies and decisions on the population as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. The banning of heterosexual unions and relations is part of the dictatorial regime's policy that has been imposed on the population without their consent and opinion. In this way, the totalitarian dystopia of *Escape* makes it difficult for people with heterosexual identities to pursue their romantic or sexual interests. The control of sexuality is also a marker of dystopian societies as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. In *Escape* the control of sexuality manifests as the banning of heterosexual relations. There are men in this dystopian land who are still in search of women even though they express their desires in covert ways. Meiji's uncles search for a prospective suitor for her who will protect her and give her a better life. Meiji has six suitors in sixteen years of her hidden existence in Brotherland. The rumours and hopes of finding females make these suitors approach the estates like Youngest's which has the potential of harbouring women. Secret interviews are conducted between Meiji and her uncles with potential suitors. This shows how heterosexual people express their desires covertly in Brotherland even when the dystopian

administration sets up disciplinary and surveillance mechanisms and punitive measures to ward off women. Heterosexual individuals express their sexual desires or romantic interest covertly in the confines of the home or to trusted individuals. Youngest admits to Eldest that he feels sexually attracted to women even though an open declaration of the same would invite punitive measures. Swan, an estate worker wants to see Meiji naked when it is revealed that Meiji is a girl. His desire and longing for Meiji indicate that sexual desire still exists but they do not have a way to be expressed openly. The pornographic magazine owned by Swan is again proof of covert sexual desires existing in Brotherland. Meiji is given a pornographic magazine by drones. The pornographic magazine is probably owned by Swan who might have hidden it as it's illegal to own such items. The magazine is probably the only way to see women to anyone who owned this. Individuals with heterosexual identities become closeted for fear of persecution as heterosexual unions are not allowed. Individuals with heterosexual identities by pursuing their romantic or sexual interests even covertly are thereby in a way trying to dismantle or resist the status quo or prevailing conditions in this dystopia that prohibits heterosexuality. Having sex with a woman is a punishable crime in this dystopian country. It can result in loss of property or invite harsher punishment. Control of sexuality, specifically heterosexuality and punishments for opposite-sex relationships and liaisons and surveillance mechanisms for monitoring the presence of women, both defining features of dystopian society as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis, also serve to make the exercise of sexual interests difficult for people with a heterosexual identity. By not accepting individuals with heterosexual identities the dystopian regime is perpetuating or maintaining the control of sexuality, a defining trait and condition of a dystopian society. In utopia, there are free and equal sexual relationships that allow all participants to freely choose (Sargent

and Sargisson 316). There is no control of sexual relations like in dystopia in utopia. The freedom to exercise one's sexuality is one of the aspects of a utopian society and Brotherland needs to offer the same freedom to individuals with heterosexual identities to transform it into a utopia. At the end of the novel *The Island of Lost Girls*, Vane asks Youngest about all information he possesses on the General indicating that the island community is strategizing against the General and his dystopian regime, the downfall of which will herald sexual freedom for individuals with heterosexual identities and acceptance of heterosexual identities.

4.3 Heterosexual identities in *Escape* – Conclusion

People who identify as heterosexual have a hard time leading a life in sync with their sexuality because of the specific conditions prevailing within the dystopia. The dystopian society wants to eliminate or prevent those identifying as heterosexual to pursue sexual activities with women and thereby wants to put an end to such an identity category itself. The dystopian regime believes in the notion of degeneracy; women's genes are considered inferior and are regarded as responsible for producing degenerate offspring. The threat of dual parentage as the General calls it will lead to annihilation and degeneracy in future generations which is a reason the dystopian administration does not permit heterosexual unions. Sexuality is an area of concern in biopolitics. The control of women's sexuality is a biopolitical intervention undertaken by the regime to prevent what it claims as degeneracy and racial annihilation. The killing of women is taken as a necessary step to stop the passing of women's genes and lineage which is equated with degeneracy. The concept of family endorsed by the dystopian administration is also different. The traditional notion of family is valued for its procreative role. This notion of the traditional family is not supported by the General as cloning technology makes it possible to produce children without the

involvement of women. The dystopian administration supports an alliance of brothers or Brotherland as the country is named. The dystopian administration also did not support heterosexual families because women according to the General competed for breeding rights and did not breed cooperatively destroying the collective ethic. The country was also overpopulated before the rise of the Generals. The dystopian regime could not control the growing birth rate associated with heterosexual families. The notion of degeneracy believed by the dystopian regime also causes them not to support heterosexual families. The control and monopoly over cloning technology and the attempt to control and abolish degeneracy and human reproduction are all biopolitical interventions that impact the treatment and perception of individuals with heterosexual identities. The dystopian regime by not accepting individuals with heterosexual identities is trying to maintain the lack of sexual freedom that defines this dystopia. There are those with heterosexual identities who pursue their romantic or sexual desires covertly which can be read as resistance to the status quo in the dystopia that prohibits heterosexuality. The freedom to exercise their sexuality for individuals with heterosexual identities and an acceptance of such heterosexual identities can transform this dystopia into a utopia. There is a possibility for such freedom and acceptance as it is hinted that the mentors on the island are planning a strategy against the General that might lead to the dismantlement of the dystopian regime.

4.4 Gay Identity

A gay man is someone whose primary sexual interest is towards other men (“Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Identity” 1378). People often identify themselves internally and publicly as gay (“Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Identity” 1378). All these identity descriptors are based on factors such as social

context, personal beliefs and culture (“Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Identity” 1378). Phases like being closeted, and coming out which are a regular occurrence in any gay person’s life don’t have the same meaning and implication in this dystopia. Individuals who identify as gay are accepted by the dystopian regime. Sodomy is a law that criminalizes lesbian and gay individuals (Bernstein 310). Opposition to gay individuals is due to opposition to non-procreative sex (Bernstein 310). Same-sex relations are illegal in many countries of the world with some punishing individuals with death or prison sentence (Bernstein 311). Sodomy laws indicate disapproval of sexual conduct considered sinful, sick, and morally repugnant (Bernstein 312). It is a law that supports heterosexual behaviour and norm (Bernstein 312). In contemporary times laws against gay individuals are regarded as homophobic (Bernstein 310). There are no sodomy laws or laws which criminalize same-sex relationships in Brotherland. The acceptance and tolerance of gay people can be understood by the lack of rules and regulations which control the sexuality of gay couples. Public displays of same-sex desires are not censured or morally policed. This is evident from the sexual relations of certain characters in the text. The dystopian regime is tolerant of sexual relations between men. The only rule is to avoid liaisons with women. Sexual relations with fellow men are tolerated in Brotherland by the dystopian regime as is evident from Budget’s interaction with Meiji and the incident at Budget’s palace. Budget the administrator of the place known as City has a sexual interest in Meiji who is dressed as a teenage boy. Budget glances at Meiji throughout his conversation with Youngest thereby indicating his sexual attraction to Meiji who is dressed as a boy. Budget presents see-through flimsy clothes to Meiji which further indicates his sexual attraction to Meiji. Budget even arranges erotic dance for the General performed by male dancers indicating that the General is gay and also the

acceptability of such same-sex desires by the General. All this indicates that neither the administrators nor the authority figures such as Budget and General cared about the appropriateness of such sexual relations as long as it was between individuals of the same sex. Budget also has a social gathering at his palace where men socialise and also look for potential romantic or sexual partners. In a dystopian world where sexual relations are heavily policed the public display of same-sex desires between men indicates the extent to which the dystopian regime tolerates it. The dystopian regime's tolerance of same-sex relations and affairs between men indicates the comfort and freedom with which gay individuals can express themselves.

In the real world, the closet is a contemporary metaphor that signifies the hidden secret of one's minority sexual status (Pickett 44). It is formed as a result of social and legal restrictions on sexuality (Pickett 44). For gay people coming out is a disclosure of one's sexual identity, relationships and attraction (Pickett 44). A closeted person is aware of his/her minority sexuality and does so to hide it from certain individuals such as family, work colleagues etc (Pickett 44). Keeping one's sexuality secret is necessary for societies that punish same-sex love (Pickett 44). It is the modern idea of seeing sexuality as part of the personal identity and the presence of an intruding state that made the closet a constant part of closeted individuals' lives (Pickett 44-45). The closet protects the closeted individual from dismissal from a job or persecution from the authorities (Pickett 46). Being closeted threatens one's sense of self and the integrity of core personal relationships (Pickett 46). The closet is a feature of the life of a gay person (Sedgwick 68). A gay person who wants to shield himself from stereotypes and scrutiny remains within the closet (Sedgwick 68). The fear of loss of important opportunities like a job, insurance, insults and protection from violence may make the person not disclose his identity (Sedgwick 68). There are

only a few gay people whose lives are not shaped by the closet (Sedgwick 68). The closet is the structure that defines gay oppression (Sedgwick 68). The closet is a feature of the gay person's life in the contemporary world which is not true in the case of the dystopian country of Brotherland. In the dystopian world, the treatment towards gay individuals is different. Individuals with gay identities do not have to hide in this dystopian country because there are no sanctions against them by the authorities. They do not have to be closeted. There is no loss of opportunities on disclosing if one is gay. There is no punishment involved in disclosing one is gay. There are no legal sanctions as is evident in the display and expression of same-sex desires of authority figures such as the General and Budget. In a dystopian land, the government heavily controls the sexuality of its people, in the case of Brotherland, it is controlling heterosexuality. The same rules do not apply to individuals with gay identities. The dystopian regime tolerates gay individuals because the General is gay which meant that the dystopian regime does not consider gay people as an anomaly. The text has an instance in which the public display of same-sex desires by a gathering of gay men is not policed. The public display of same-sex desires such as the event at Budget's Continuum Palace where men also socialised to look for romantic or sexual partners meant there is no disapprobation against it by the citizens assembled there. Meiji who is dressed as a teenage boy is ogled by some assembled onlookers there. It is revealed that Youngest is Meiji's brother in the palace which renews and ignites the interest of those assembled in the gathering who were interested to pursue Meiji for a romantic or sexual relationship. Meiji is described as a debutant to the assembled individuals there. Budget appreciates Meiji's looks and says most boys of Meiji's age would be happy on receiving the attention of so many men. The dystopian government does not police gay men as the General himself engages in sexual relations with his clone

brothers. Queer readings can be done for the figure of the cyborg. For instance, according to Greven, the terminator, a cyborg in the movie *The Terminator* stands for closeted homosexuality (63). Instances in the text such as the erotic dance performed by male dancers viewed by the General and his sexual relations with his clone brothers indicate that the General is gay. The tolerance of individuals with gay identity can be also read as support and endorsement of them by the dystopian regime headed by the General who himself is gay.

The tolerance of individuals with gay identity can be understood by the lack of rules restricting their sexuality and the dystopian regime's support and tolerance of gay people. There are instances in the dystopian society when authority figures indulge in same-sex relations and there is also mention of social circles where gay individuals come to socialise with each other from which it can be deduced that there are no sanctions against individuals who identify as gay. The dystopian regime by only accepting the identity of gay people is also negating procreative sex in Brotherland. Heterosexual families and relationships would have led to the birth of girl children which is not accepted by the dystopian regime. The tolerance and acceptance of individuals with gay identity only, in a way, helps to maintain the dystopian condition of Brotherland as a society where there are no women. Individuals with gay identity, in a way, also help to maintain this condition as there is no risk of begetting girls from such relations. The acceptance of gay identity does not make a society dystopian; it is rather the lack of freedom given to other sexualities that make it dystopian. Even though the dystopian administration tolerates gay people the acceptance or tolerance of gay people alone does not make it a utopia either, all sexual identities need to be accepted for it to be a utopia.

4.5 Lesbian Identity in *The Island of Lost Girls*

Lesbian continuum is a term described by Adrienne Rich to describe sexual identity along a gradient (“Lesbian Continuum” 440). This conception of lesbian identity was an attempt to unite and find similarities between heterosexual feminists and lesbian feminists to build a woman-centred community (“Lesbian Continuum” 440). This conception deviates from the binary classification of sexual identity (“Lesbian Continuum” 440). Lesbian identity is redefined to include intimate relationships not just sexual intimacies (“Lesbian Continuum” 440). The word lesbian has a clinical and patriarchal definition that defines it only in terms of the erotic thereby excluding female friendship and comradeship from the scope of the definition (Rich 650). According to Rich the meaning of lesbian existence has to be broadened to give rise to a lesbian continuum (Rich 650). Adrienne Rich defines the lesbian continuum as a range in each woman’s life and history of woman-identified experience (648). This applies to all women irrespective of whether they are sexually attracted to other women or not (Rich 648). This includes many forms of intense bonding between women like the sharing of an intense inner rich life, the resistance against male tyranny and the political and practical support received and given (Rich 648-49). Lesbianism in her conception was an affective attachment, resistance to male domination and a cooperative sociality (Jagose 33). Rich intends to give voice to lesbians and women activists through such a definition. Examples of such lesbian relationships to Rich were the friendship between little girls, the women-only communities known as Beguines in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, Chinese marriage resistance sisterhoods, and secret networks between African women (Rich 651). Lesbian existence is the historical process of lesbians and the creation of the meaning of their existence (Rich 648). Lesbian existence is a breaking of taboo and

rejection of forced heterosexuality (Rich 648). It is a direct or indirect attack against men's right to access women (Rich 648). Lesbianism has to be redefined in feminist terms and not confined to any part of the body (Rich 650). Audre Lourde has described it as ever-present in the sharing of joy and work (qtd. in Rich 650). Lorde calls it an empowering joy that makes women less willing to accept self-denial, self-effacement, despair and resignation (qtd. in Rich 650). Rich says that all women inhabit this lesbian continuum whether they identify themselves as lesbian or not (651). Diverse aspects of women's identification constitute the lesbian continuum (Rich 651). Lesbian existence is not just a refuge from male abuse (Rich 658). It is an empowering charge between women (Rich 658). In Rich's conception of lesbianism, women are placed at the centre and independent of their relationships with men (440). It is conceived as a political, purposeful and personal commitment ("Lesbian Continuum" 440). Female bonds, relationships and connections are used to define lesbianism ("Lesbian Continuum" 440). Rich's conception extends beyond the narrow definition conception of a phallic-centred sexual relationship ("Lesbian Continuum" 440).

Rich's concept of the lesbian continuum is helpful to understand lesbianism in the context of women in the female-only island community. The girls on the island come from Zone a masculine sphere comprised of warriors where brutal games are played out. These girls are prostituted to the winning team of warriors. The girls in the Zone are a victim of predatory male sexual desires. Lesbian existence is wasted under the institution of heterosexuality. Compulsory female heterosexuality makes women psychologically trapped. It makes women fit body, mind and spirit to fit the parameters of acceptance (Rich 657). It is forced heterosexuality; the girls have to cater to male sexual needs. The girls are viewed as necessary resources for the

warriors. Forced prostitution for satisfying male heterosexual desires is considered normative. There is no women's bonding and communality in the Zone. In the Zone sexual relations between women and men are considered necessary for satisfying the male ego and pleasure. The island community itself is formed on the assurance given by the mentors that they won't interfere in the activities carried out in the Zone and will not engage in active politics. This shows how the patriarchal dystopian world sees and treats such a women's community and intimate relationships between women which are viewed as a threat to its unjust social systems that objectify women and support predatory male heterosexual desires. The dystopian world thus tries to resist or not recognize the lesbian identity so as to maintain the same conditions in dystopia. The mentors on the island have a plan to destroy the Zone which indicates hope for the acceptance of this lesbian identity in the future. The mentors on the island teach girls to give up patriarchal society's notions of females, embrace their feminine side without shame, offer them advice, teach them useful skills, heal their physical and mental wounds and empower them. The bonds shared by these women and their shared trauma due to being female in a patriarchal order qualify them to be lesbians. Lesbianism is vital because it is women who share, advise and stick with each other, give physical affection and make life endurable (Rich 656). This is true for the community on the island. The island's mentors and healers help girls scarred by the physical abuses they received from men in the Zone. One of the examining officers tells Youngest at the collectory about the healing process required for the girls as "they all need psychological and social rehabilitation before they are released into the world which is what the islands are for" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 53-54). It is not only the treatment of physical wounds but mental trauma also without which the girls will not be able to realize their true potential. The girls on the

island are taught useful skills like riding and controlling a whale and hybrid lizard. The mentors and caretakers on the island train girls to attack and defend themselves. They offer their support to the girls and share advice which is a feature of Rich's lesbianism. The community of women who have a real understanding of being a woman in such a patriarchal order and are the ultimate victims of this order can alone change this order. The bonding and the communality between these women, the support given in the form of guidance, advice as well activism against male tyranny make them lesbians as per Rich's definition. The bond shared by all these women constitutes a lesbian relationship. The island community is made up of women and it's a place of refuge for women and girls who are the victims of the sexual and physical violence in the Zone. Girls are prostituted, used as sex slaves and given as rewards to the winning teams in the war games of the Zone. In the patriarchal society of *The Island of Lost Girls*, it is only the island community that can heal girls and rehabilitate them. Some of the mentors on the island have also been victims of male violence. They can empathize with the girls who are the victims of sexual violence. These woman-identified experiences constitute the foundational principles of the woman-only island community. It is a place that only allows access to women, girls and trans women. The exclusion of men signifies that the mentors on the island are catering to the needs of women only because of the experiences undergone by women that unite them. It is a community of women which seeks to empower girls. The island community's final mission is to dismantle the patriarchal order in Brotherland and in the Zone which has victimized women and young girls for ages. Lesbianism is understood in Rich's understanding of the term as activism that offers hope or a solution to the issues of the dystopian society. The community of women have the potential to ameliorate the conditions of the dystopian society and replace it with a

better society for the benefit of all, in this way it fulfils the definition of *The Island of Lost Girls* as a critical dystopia discussed in 2.4.4 of the thesis as a dystopian society with a potential for change. The prospect and possibility of thinking outside gender connect it with the definition of a utopia as a place that is beyond reach (Beauregard 695). Such an imagining pervades depictions of same-sex communities where lesbianism becomes the norm (Beauregard 695). Lesbians escape the heterosexist gaze and patriarchal objectification (Beauregard 695). The prospect and possibility of transforming this dystopia into a utopia are heralded by the formation and presence of this women-only community of lesbians who are against all sexual objectification. It is due to the traumatic experiences that these girls and women have undergone at the hands of a patriarchal order which has made them come together to form a women's only community. The experiences undergone by these women in a patriarchal order and their communality makes them lesbians when viewed in the context of Rich's definition. Rich says that it's necessary to allow woman's choice of women as allies, a women's community, and life companions without which it will not be possible to liberate women and change the social relations between the sexes (Rich 657). The woman's only community on the island are the only ones that can dismantle the patriarchal order and amend the existing unequal relations between the sexes. This identity category- lesbian identity conceived as per Rich's notions, try to dismantle or change the conditions in the dystopian society that exploits women and oppresses them.

Mentor Vane tells the newly inducted girls that the women on the island are now their family which underscores the bond that the mentors want to build among the girls. The newly inducted girls are asked to disrobe, be naked and own their bodies and embrace all their physical scars, wounds, infirmities and weaknesses.

Mentor Vane is the first to disrobe providing an example for the girls to follow. Vane asks girls to do so as the bodies of females were used as a reason to subjugate and oppress them. She wants girls to give up such patriarchal notions of the female body. Rahmato'u a candidate was born in a travelling sex circus where she was sold as a slave. Asma says that it is for such candidates that the women's only community of mentors, caretakers and healers was formed. This attests to an important feature of the lesbian continuum –it is a place of refuge from male abuses and resistance against male tyranny. All of these point to the communality of the women who identified and bonded with the experiences of fellow women. All women who have come to this island have faced some sort of abuse from a patriarchal order and the women's only community is a haven for them. Mentor Vane guides the girls and wants them to give up patriarchal notions of femininity which demand them to be obedient, patient and proud of their stupidity. Vane tells Meiji and Youngest towards the end of the novel that the island community will offer hospitality, training and freedom to Youngest and Meiji in exchange for information about the General and Brotherland which is the site of future conflicts. This indicates that the women in the island community through their shared women-identified experiences are seeking active social intervention to resist and dismantle all-male tyranny. The girls who are trained to ride and communicate with the hybrid lizard defeat General and his drones. This shows that the community of women through their guidance and training is set to overthrow the patriarchal order which is responsible for the current sufferings of women. This attests to Rich's view of lesbianism as that it is only through women's communes and bonding that one can change unequal relations between sexes and male tyranny. Maia wants the girls to celebrate the female body and its biological function of reproduction and she does this by making girls witness her childbirth. This is an experience specific

and unique to females which the women on the island can understand and identify with. She tells them that the mystical energy possessed by females was trapped and controlled by men. She tells them that it is men who made childbirth a horrifying order of pain and bloodshed for women. Maia wants the girls to own their bodies and not see them as “our adversaries, seething with uncontrollable forces” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 239). She wants the girls to give up the fear of their female bodies and take pride and joy in childbirth- aspects of a woman’s life and experiences whose meanings and implications have been distorted by men. Maia wants the girls to be rid of patriarchal and misogynistic notions of childbirth. Disproving patriarchal notions of the female is an aspect of Rich’s lesbianism. The possibility of lesbianism in the woman’s only community is indicated when the mentors provide a female companion- Anita to Youngest who now goes by the name of Yasmine- a trans woman. Anita is put in the room to interest Youngest in a sexual encounter. Youngest thinks that Anita was there because “[m]aybe it was just routine for an attractive young woman to offer pleasure to a woman guest in this all-female establishment” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 192). Vane tells Youngest that sexual pleasure for a man is transitory whereas being a woman now he can attain great pleasure by wiring himself for such pleasure and by becoming part of the covenant they share on the island. The discussion about woman’s pleasure and the encounter with Anita arranged by the mentors indicates the presence and acceptability of same-sex desires amongst the women in the island community.

The goal and process of being a lesbian entail realizing self-actualization, joy and empowerment by being a female and by being in solidarity with other females to fight against patriarchal notions of females (“Lesbian Continuum” 440). The mentors on the island help girls realize some patriarchal notions of females which have led to

their constant victimization. Their bonding, support networks, guidance and advice help girls realize their true potential and be empowered. It is only the lesbian relationship such as the one existing between the women on the island which can demolish the patriarchal order. The island is a community in which women are placed at the centre of relationships and not defined in relation to men. The mentors' placement of Anita with Yasmine for a sexual encounter shows their acceptability and practice of same-sex relations. It also holds Rich's stance that every woman has same-sex desires and is a lesbian even if she does not necessarily identify as one. The relationship between women on the island can be described and defined as lesbian identity going by Rich's definition of lesbianism as a woman's bonding and communality.

4.6 Conclusion

There are different sexual orientations in dystopias such as heterosexual, gay and lesbian. Individuals with heterosexual identities are policed and are not allowed to express their sexuality. Such identities are not allowed in dystopias. The notion of degeneracy believed by the dystopian regime, a new concept of family bereft of women, cloning technology that initiated a new way to beget offspring, mass murder of women, banning of heterosexual relations, surveillance and punitive mechanisms that oversee and try to eliminate women, the biopower exercised by the dystopian regime all makes it difficult for individuals with heterosexual identities to exercise their sexuality. The search and need to fulfil romantic or sexual desires by people with heterosexual identities indicate how such individuals are covertly trying to resist or change the status quo or the conditions in dystopian society that prohibits heterosexuality. The non-acceptance of individuals with heterosexual identities leads to the maintenance and continuance of deplorable conditions in dystopias, as a society

that regulates sexuality and affords no sexual freedom. Individuals with gay identities are accepted in Brotherland by the dystopian regime. They are tolerated by the dystopian administration headed by the General who is gay. There is considerable ease for individuals who identify as gay to express their sexuality as there are no rules regulating their sexuality as is evident in the public expression of sexuality by authority figures as well as other gay men. The acceptance of gay identity in a way leads to the negation of procreative sex and negation of procreative sex meant there would be no longer any girls or women in Brotherland. The dystopian society in Brotherland is defined by its lack of women or girls. The support and acceptance of only individuals with gay identity indirectly lead to the maintenance of the same deplorable conditions in this dystopia. The individuals with gay identity, because of their inability to engage in procreative sex are unknowingly contributing to maintaining the deplorable conditions in dystopia. Lesbian identity defined in terms of Rich's notion of the lesbian continuum is bonding and sociality amongst women as existing amongst the women on the island community. Such a women-only community is allowed to exist only on the assurance that they do not involve in politics. This indicates how this lesbian identity conceptualised as bonding and activism against male tyranny is not accepted in the dystopian society. There needs to be an acceptance of all sexual identities for transforming this dystopia into a utopia. Towards the end of the novel *The Island of Lost Girls*, mentor Vane is seen as gathering information on the General indicating the hope that the General and his dystopian administration can be dismantled leading to the freedom for individuals with heterosexual identities to express their sexuality and acceptance of heterosexual identities. Lesbian identity conceived as affective sociality and bonding can dismantle the unjust patriarchal institutions in this dystopia and lead it to a utopia. The

dismantlement of the Zone in the future also indicates that lesbian identity such as the emotional bonds and relationships existing amongst women will be more readily accepted in the future. This identity category can change the prevailing dystopian conditions. The acceptance of heterosexual and gay identity can transform this dystopia into a utopia as a utopian society accepts all sexual identities.

Chapter Five

Gender Identities

5.1 Introduction

Sex is the anatomical and biological difference between males and females, it may be also related to social and behavioural differences (Best and Foster 57). Gender is a social construction based mostly on traits, behaviours and interests ascribed to each sex by society (Denmark 71). Various gender differences are ascribed based on individuals' traits, behaviours and interests. Gender identity is a person's deeply held sense of their gender ("Gender Identity" 10). It is a self-identification of one's gender ("Gender Identity" 10). Gender relations define how people interact with each other and how others relate to them, depending on their attributed gender (Sánchez-López and Limiñana-Gras 8). Gender roles are forms in which a person's gender identity is expressed (Sánchez-López and Limiñana-Gras 8). These are standards of behaviours that are defined as appropriate for men and women and how they influence people's daily lives (Sánchez-López and Limiñana-Gras 8). The chapter discusses gender identities found in the novels- that of men, women, and transgender people and contends that dystopias perpetuate and support harmful notions attached to masculinity, femininity, and transgender identities that are responsible for the deplorable conditions in this dystopia and the possible solutions such as the recovery of memory, history, knowledge, education and literacy that challenges the androcentric hegemonic discourses that perpetuates harmful gender notions; and the undoing of harmful gendered notions and destruction and dismantlement of institutions and practices advocating masculinist values that can potentially transform this dystopia to a utopia. The study contends that certain identities, by virtue of not possessing certain harmful gender notions such as the identities of characters such as

Youngest, Eldest and Middle, Vane, Meiji, Aila, and Rahmato'u, can change or try to resist the conditions in this dystopia and also examines how certain gender identities with harmful gender notions such as Blackson, warriors, Amir uphold the conditions in this dystopia. The chapter argues how dystopias resist or reject certain identities such as those that of Youngest, Eldest and Middle, Meiji, Vane, Aila and Rahmato'u that it views as a threat because of their potential to change or resist the conditions in this dystopian society. The male characters found in the dystopian novels are Youngest, Blackson, Eldest and Middle, warriors in the Zone, and Amir. The female characters in the dystopian novels are Rahmato'u, Meiji and Vane. The transsexual character found in the novel is Aila. The chapter discusses the masculine gender identification of each male character and the idea of masculinity internalised by them. Every male character has a different idea of masculinity. Men's and masculinity studies are used to study the masculinity of characters. The relation of gender identities to the dystopian society is discussed. Each female character has a different idea of the feminine based on the way they are socialised. The chapter discusses the gender identification of these characters by using pertinent feminist theories. Some characters, both male and female, have been socialised to believe in certain gender roles, norms and stereotypes. The study of these gender roles, stereotypes, and gender socialisation is also a part of this analysis. The chapter defines the trans identities found in the dystopian world and contends that trans identities have been discriminated against and explains the reasons for their ill-treatment which are transphobia, genderism, gender bashing, femmephobia, transmisogyny, transsexualization, and cissexism all various forms of discriminatory behaviour and attitudes that have the commonality of the failure to acknowledge and accept trans identities.

5.2 Men in the Dystopias - Introduction

Man is a socially contracted category informing a gender arrangement (Whitehead 401). Men usually perform masculinities but non-male bodies can perform masculinities too including women and lesbians (Reeser 17). Masculinities refer to “the social roles, behaviours and meaning prescribed for men in any given society at any one time” (Kimmel, “Masculinities” 503). The use of plural masculinities refers to variations in masculinity within a society as well as individual differences (Kimmel, “Masculinities” 503). Meanings of masculinity vary across four dimensions (Kimmel, “Masculinities” 503). Masculinities vary across cultures, vary across a single country, throughout a person’s life and change in any given society at any time (Kimmel, “Masculinities” 503). Masculinity is not a universal given (Kimmel, “Masculinities” 504). It is a fluid assemblage of meanings that changes over time (Kimmel, “Masculinities” 504). Masculinity does not even have a single meaning but it differs according to external factors (Reeser 42). Men in the novel whose gender identities are discussed are Youngest, Blackson, Eldest and Middle, warriors in the Zone, and Amir. Masculinity and men’s studies are used to analyse the gender identities of the male characters in dystopias. Traits or markers of masculinity are analysed as part of this study. Each character has a different notion of masculinity depending on the environs they were raised in and socialised. The masculinity of the character also differs and we find plural masculinities in the dystopian texts. This section makes a comprehensive study of such different notions of masculinity.

5.2.1 Youngest’s Gender Identity- Introduction

Youngest as his name itself suggests is the youngest of the three brothers. He is an estate owner and a citizen of the country known as Brotherland. He is a man with considerable money in a country that is a wasteland due to the atomic bomb

explosion. His family is given estate and resources such as the machinery to produce drones due to his and his brothers pledging allegiance to the Generals. His family consists of his two brothers who are simply named Eldest and Middle. It is also known through his revelations that he has had a mother, sisters and other female family members who were killed during the onslaught against all women in the years before the institution of the General's regime. Youngest is the guardian of Meiji and it is hinted that he is possibly her father. Youngest is a man and has a masculine gender identification. He undergoes many changes such as undergoing a sex reassignment surgery even though his gender identification remains the same. He is forced to infiltrate a female-only island. Youngest's masculinity is analysed and how money, status, strength and physicality contribute to the making of his masculinity is studied. His life as a man with a female body is also studied, and the reasons for the gender change and the battle between his female body and masculine identity are discussed. He is not brainwashed or believes in the harmful gendered notions prevailing in his country and his reasons for the rejection of destructive gendered notions are part of this analysis.

5.2.1.1 Manhood as Power, Success, Status, Wealth

Manhood is defined by power, success, status, and wealth (Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia" 125). Manhood is seen as the drive for conquest, domination, and power (Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia" 136). Youngest is a man who lives on an estate with his brothers and drones. He is a propertied man who has drone servants under his disposal as well as nutritious food and amenities which most of the citizens in his country do not have since the Brotherland is a wasteland following the atomic bomb explosion. This wealth is regarded by him as a marker of his masculinity. Youngest still identifies himself as a man despite his bodily

transformations that led him to gain a female body. The true identity that he strongly self-identifies with is that of a man with considerable wealth, status, and success that is worthy of respect which is why he was offended when Vane treated him like a social inferior whom he feels is undeserving of because he identifies himself as a powerful man in society. He feels so about his status in society despite his humiliations: “He had once been a man of property, with lands and factories to his name. Even the General’s worst humiliations were played out against the backdrop of Youngest’s true identity, which the General knew” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 299). He is different from the rest of the populace who are suffering from a lack of basic amenities like clean and hygienic food, water and even a house. He saw himself as a successful person with many assets to his name. Youngest’s wealth and success are attached to his gender identity. He lives a comparatively luxurious lifestyle compared to the other common citizens who have to struggle for food in a land where there are high levels of radioactivity. He also holds power compared to the rest of the citizens as his family is favoured by the General. It is due to this that his family has been given a dronery and an estate something which very few people possess.

5.2.1.2 Physicality as an Index of Masculinity

The physical sense of maleness involves size shape, habits of posture and movement, physical skills, the image of one’s body and how it is presented to others, how they respond to it and how the body operates at work and in sexual relations (Connell, *Gender and Power* 94). The definition of men as holders of power is translated into the feel and texture of the body, muscle tension, and posture (Connell, *Gender and Power* 95). Youngest values his physical body, built and conducts his body in a particular fashion that could be deemed masculine. Even though he has

some bodily changes following the surgery he still retained the “full-featured good looks he’d enjoyed as a man” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 13) which had survived his transition. At the outset of his journey to the island, he wore a blue hijab which was the uniform or dress code for a trans woman but because he is tall and broad, he felt like a deserting warrior than a prostitute which is a trans woman’s designation in the dystopian world. He still values his physical features which he enjoyed as a man and his manly voice. He is chosen to escape from Brotherland along with Meiji as he is the youngest of all three of Meiji’s guardians and is physically stronger than the rest. Amir’s categorisation of Youngest as a man shows the significance of physical movements, and deportment in the construction of masculinity and how Youngest has internalised it. Amir uses some physical cues to attribute Youngest as a man. He does not believe Youngest’s reasons for the transition. He believes Youngest is a man despite his transition. Amir remarks that Youngest has the mind of a man discernible from the way he talks, moves, stands and holds himself with pride and dignity and uses his masculine voice. Amir says to Youngest, “The way you move, the way you talk- using the masculine voice- the way you stand and hold yourself: it is with pride, with dignity. A man’s dignity” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 33). According to Amir, all this bespeaks masculine dignity. All this suggests physicality, built and deportment are all traits that are used as an index of masculinity and Youngest’s physical stature is considered manly or that of a man. The particular ways that Youngest moves, stands and talks are familiar to Amir as that is considered manly and all this suggests that Youngest being a member of the same gender as Amir has internalised some of these notions about physicality and deportment which is regarded as manly.

5.2.1.3 Youngest as Yasmine

Youngest is forced to undergo a sex reassignment surgery to get access to an all-female facility. He is blackmailed by the General in return for the safety of him and his daughter Meiji. He undergoes surgery to attain female body parts. But he is in no way a transsexual person as his so-called transition is not due to different gender identification, it was rather an act of blackmail and coercion. He is asked by the General to go by the name of Yasmine, a transsexual woman to get access to the island. The use of the term “transie” or transsexual person by the author Padmanabhan here is problematic and complicated. Youngest is not a transsexual person going by the definition and understanding of the identity category of transsexual but only pretends or calls himself to be a transsexual person in front of outsiders who are not privy to his secret so that he is believable and he can gain access to an all-female facility. The General calls Youngest a “reverse”; a man who is forced to change his body despite his opposition to it. The General still attributes Youngest as a man. The dystopia in *The Island of Lost Girls* is also defined by its surveillance mechanisms as discussed in 2.4.2 of the thesis. Youngest is forced to pursue surgery not only because he is blackmailed by the General but also because the General actively keeps track of him using these surveillance mechanisms and devices that are attached to Youngest’s body. These mechanisms ensure that Youngest never divulges his identity as a man to the islanders. He is asked to go by the name of Yasmine by the General in the presence of the mentors in the island community and these surveillance mechanisms ensure that he goes by the General’s plans. He pretends to be Yasmine and follows through with the General’s plans until he realizes the inefficiency of the satellite locators to locate him and Meiji while on the island. He also lets mentor Vane disable the radio on his mouth once he realizes this. Youngest’s pretence of Yasmine only

remains till he is blackmailed by the General, he reverts to his former self as a man gradually when he is freed from these surveillance mechanisms.

The General feels that Youngest was perfect as a man as he was “gorgeously muscled, tall, dense, powerful” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 82) and had a masculine nature. The General is also aware that Youngest does not identify himself as a trans woman. He still sees Youngest as an equal to him in physique, performance and intellect as both of them are men compared to women whom he claims are inferior. He has imbibed a concept of masculinity which can be accounted for his rejection or non-identification with his body as a woman. His new body is at odds with his gender identity as a man. He only made a pretence to act and look the part of a trans woman to convince others. He made a conscious effort to look like a trans woman, he wore only the minimum enough to establish that he now was a trans woman. He wore an indigo variety of kajal on his upper and lower lids, mascara on his lashes, and gloss on his lips. His transformation also required him to dye his grey hair black. He dressed and applied makeup the way trans women did their getup to convince others. His physical body is alien to him. The clothes and get-ups of Youngest do not correspond to his gender identity as a man. Performing gender is not voluntary nor a choice according to Butler which is how she distinguishes between stylised and voluntary performances of gender and ones that are done involuntarily and is a repetition of gender norms. Youngest is not performing any gender identity when he appears in the clothes of a trans woman rather he is disguising himself. To Youngest they are simply a disguise to get to his ultimate aim of infiltrating the island. He cannot glance at his naked self without feeling embarrassed every time. He feels he is leering at a stranger’s body every time he stares at his naked self. He feels like he is outraging the modesty of a woman when he is staring at his chest. He also

misses the narrow strip of hair that ran down the middle and over his navel. He had never considered it as a sexual feature until it was no longer there and he felt its absence. He felt like a stranger to his body and feels saddened by this new body. He does not relate to nor can accept his new body post the transition as he is only used to his male body. He is unwilling to embrace his new body and identity. His identification does not correspond to his sexual organs. He is unaware of the typical attitudes, and behaviour of a woman. He considers it odd when Aila compares her naked body to his. He wonders whether this practice is prevalent among women as he does not understand the practices prevalent among women. His natural male voice comes out in a crisis such as when he asks the attendant Bella to open the port or when he talks to mentors on the island who had bound him. He attains a feminine register by manipulating his translator, a device attached to the vocal cords that helped him to translate the many languages spoken in the city. He regrets the use of this device as is evidenced by his remark, "One more nail in the coffin of his identity" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 48). This indicates his non-identification with his female body and feminine register. These are attributes that he still sees in himself and uses to self-identify as a man. In various instances in the novel, he tackles situations identifying himself as a man despite his outward appearance. For instance, he feels surprised when he is given a room on the island with a woman in it because he still thinks he is a man and that sharing a room with a woman is inappropriate for him. Later on, he realizes that the mentors on the island see him as a trans woman because of this he understands that it is not odd to share a room with a woman. He feels embarrassed at being in the same room with a naked Vane. He expresses his sense of discomfort by suggesting that he still sees himself as a man because of which he is uncomfortable at the sight of the naked female body. He admits to mentor Vane

that his name is Youngest not Yasmine thus dissociating himself from the mentors' perception of him as a transsexual woman.

5.2.1.4 Youngest and the Gendered Notions in Brotherland

Many citizens in Brotherland have harmful and stereotypical notions about gender that can be attributed to the hegemonic discourse of the dystopia that shapes the narrative about history, memories and information. Youngest is a literate person who knows to read and write. He educates Meiji and is one of her tutors along with his brothers Eldest and Middle. The dystopian regime in Brotherland has destroyed all the existing literature. Youngest has access to education and is not influenced by the propaganda or gendered ideas propagated in the instructional manuals or propaganda. The education he possesses makes him realize the faults and falsehoods in the hegemonic discourse. The rest of the population does not have access to books and their ignorance is exploited by the regime to propagate harmful gendered notions. Youngest also has a cultural understanding of women which the other male citizens are not aware of. The education, knowledge and literacy possessed by Youngest are no longer present or prevalent in the current dystopian society he inhabits which makes him reject the harmful gendered notions prevailing in his country which is one of the reasons he is uninfluenced by them. A dystopian society is defined by its control of memory and information and history as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. Youngest is not brainwashed by official records or the construction of history and memory like the rest of the population. The majority of the citizens are influenced by these hegemonic discourses and unquestioningly accept them barring citizens such as Youngest who was born and lived years before the institution of the dystopian regime and knows the truth. The regime makes the rest of the citizens believe in harmful stereotypical gender roles which Youngest does not follow. Youngest protects Meiji

despite the penalty for harbouring a woman. It is hinted that Meiji is maybe Youngest's daughter which is one of the reasons he protects her. Another reason is that he does not believe in the harmful gendered notions about women spread by the regime through manipulation of the records of the past and propaganda. History and memory in Brotherland are all shaped by the hegemonic discourse and depict women in an unfavourable light along with projecting many harmful gendered notions about both men and women. He corrects Blackson when Blackson tells him that women were frail, were only meant to procreate and needed the constant supervision and care of men. Youngest tells Blackson that women were not subordinates like Blackson believes. He also tells Blackson about his sisters and about the drone generation technology that signalled the end of women. Recovery of memory and history is essential for forming a counter-movement and realizing the faults in the regime and dystopian society as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. History and memory untainted by hegemonic discourse challenge the singleness of hegemonic discourse that shapes the official or regime's version of history and past and reveal the fissures in dominant discourse. The memory of the past is fresh in Youngest's mind and he refuses to be brainwashed by the regime's propaganda. The possession of knowledge, education and literacy such as the one possessed by Youngest makes one challenge the authenticity of the hegemonic discourse that perpetuates many harmful gender notions. In a utopian society, gender norms are not regarded as important. Possession of memory and history uninformed by hegemonic discourses, literacy, knowledge and education can dismantle destructive gendered notions as well as lead to the acceptance and support of healthy masculinity such as that of Youngest which can transform this dystopia into a utopia. He knows the faults or fissures in the hegemonic discourse and joins the mentors of the island community at the end of *The Island of Lost Girls* to

defeat the General and his regime. It is only because he has not internalised harmful gender notions that he is able to understand the marginalization and exploitation of women and join the island community in their upcoming conflict against the patriarchal dystopian unjust systems represented by the Zone, the Whole World Union and the General and his dystopian setup. Youngest is hence different from the other identity categories- men in Brotherland who believe in harmful gender notions and have internalised them. His masculine identity is free of such harmful notions and he is not brainwashed by the regime nor supports it. His participation in the upcoming conflict against the Zone, the Whole World Union and the General indicate how being a man, evincing healthy masculinity free of harmful gender notions, he is trying to dismantle the harmful practices and conditions, that is the endless exploitation and marginalization of women prevailing in these dystopian societies. The dystopian society does not support identities such as that of Youngest, who evinces healthy masculinity, as the dystopian society in Brotherland is maintained by the presence of citizens who believe in harmful gender notions which help in maintaining and perpetuating this dystopian country without women.

5.2.2 Youngest's Gender Identity- Conclusion

Youngest is rooted in his masculinity despite the alterations in his body. He values his manly voice, built and other bodily features which mark him as a man. He has a peculiar deportment which is considered manly. He is also a man of considerable property and wealth which he regards as a part of his masculinity as success and wealth are also one of the indices of masculinity. He unwillingly has to undergo a bodily transformation to gain access to the all-female facility. His masculine identity and self are at odds with his female body. He cannot relate to his female body and misses and wants his old self back. He feels like his body is alien to

him. His gender identification remains the same despite his bodily changes. His identity as a man prevails despite all the bodily changes. He does not believe in the stereotypical gender notions attached to women and men spread by the regime. He views women as his equals and the knowledge of memory and history untainted by the regime's control and manipulation, his education, knowledge and literacy aid him in disassociating himself from such harmful stereotypical notions. He evinces a healthy masculinity because of which he understands gender inequality and joins the island community in their fight against the General and the Zone, those that maintain gender inequality in this dystopian society. Youngest evinces a healthy masculinity because he is not influenced by the harmful gender notions in Brotherland as he has a knowledge of the past, history, literacy, education, and memory that allows him to realize how harmful and wrong these notions are. The acceptance and support of such healthy masculinity free of harmful gender notions can transform this dystopia into a utopia. The dystopian society rejects this gender identity of Youngest because the dystopian society wants citizens to believe in harmful gender notions that can lead to the continuance of this dystopia without women.

5.2.3 Masculinity of Blackson

Blackson is an estate worker in Swan's estate. He is a citizen of Brotherland born after the "Change" and believes in the propaganda of the regime. The dominant discourse constructs femininity as an "other" to masculinity in Brotherland.

Masculinity is associated with rationality, intellect and strength while femininity is associated with weakness, passivity and irrationality. A binary hierarchy is constructed in which characteristics deemed superior is attached to masculinity while that deemed inferior is attached to femininity. Stereotypical gender roles are also attached to masculinity and femininity which disallows females to achieve full

autonomy. Traditionally courage, independence, ambition, initiative, assertiveness, strong will, emotional control, and rationality is taken as masculine traits while gentleness, modesty, agility, sacrifice, empathy, nurturance, and intuitiveness are taken as feminine traits (Thomas 248). Blackson defines men as the ones with rationality, and physical strength whose support is sought after by weak women. His understanding and internalisation of masculinity are based on duality or hierarchy in which qualities deemed manly are superior. The sexual division of labour arose as a result of bodily differences between men and women (Bem 31). Women would be pregnant or breastfeeding during most years from menarche to menopause (Bem 31). In the sociohistorical context men everywhere were responsible for the defence of the group and hunting and gathering because they were bigger and stronger and the women were primarily responsible for the care of infants and children (Bem 31). Such a sexual division of labour is generated and upheld through many cultural beliefs and social practices (Bem 32). Blackson's views on male and female gender are based on the sexual division of labour. He believes women cannot survive outside their homes as they are not physically strong as men. He viewed the public sphere to be inhabited by men alone. He believes in such stereotypical gender roles which is a result of the propaganda and also his isolation from the rest of the world which has women. The discursive control of information and history by the regime is a defining trait of the dystopian society as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. Propaganda is an example of such control and manipulation of information. The propaganda of the regime serves to build an image of women as housekeepers and mothers and men as breadwinners. Citizens are routinely exposed to the propaganda spread by the regime thus cementing their biased views on women and men. The negative perception of the female sex can be also attributed to the lack of women in Brotherland. The totalitarian regime kills all

women in Brotherland, a unilateral decision taken by the regime, a defining trait of a dystopian society is totalitarianism as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. The dictatorial policies of the regime also are a contributory factor to the negative and stereotypical views about gender as with the existence of women such wrong perceptions could be contested and challenged. Feminist dystopias are defined by an order that is gender inflected and oppressive as discussed in 2.2.4 of the thesis. Blackson's notion of women and masculinity and gendered roles are the results of androcentric totalitarian discourses in dystopia, a trait of the feminist dystopia in *Escape*. There is also a control of language, a defining trait of dystopia as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. Most of the citizens in Brotherland can only speak but not read or write the language. The new generation of citizens born after the institution of the General's regime does not have access to education and is not literate. The past literature which is a source of great knowledge about their way of life has been destroyed following the institution of the General's regime. There are no literature or study materials to study or learn about the world. Books have also been destroyed rendering citizens such as Blackson ignorant and unable to change their views on gender. What is left in the Brotherland is the propaganda material of the new regime which are manuscripts meant to instil good conduct in citizens. Manuscripts provide a very limited understanding of the world and perpetuate many stereotypical and biased views both about males and females. The manuscripts equate the female with drones; they are servile, dumb and meant to do domestic chores. The society of Brotherland is based on brotherhood, an alliance of brothers without any women. The citizens such as Blackson born after the period known as change exemplify this sort of masculinity dominant in Brotherland. Blackson tells Youngest that women were "small and dim-witted, incapable of caring for their needs outside the home and obliged to seek the constant protection and

supervision of men” (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 243). The dystopian society in *Escape* is also a surveillance society as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. The surveillance mechanisms set by the regime ensure that citizens such as Blackson do not harbour women. There are set rules that discourage any association with women or talk of women and the fear of being monitored ensures that the citizens such as Blackson do not breach these dictums which makes it difficult to challenge such harmful views on gender as by negating women the remaining men cannot know who women are. In the dystopian society of Brotherland, there is the official memory, which is the regime’s version of the past that has shaped the psyche of citizens too as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. The official memory or regime’s version of it posits stark gender differences and outdated and stereotypical gender roles for men and women that shape the gender identity of characters such as Blackson who has no idea about the past other than what has been fed to him by the regime. They have a limited understanding of the world and their masculinity is based on a repudiation of the feminine.

Masculinity is defined in relation to femininity in Brotherland; the irrational, weak, and passive are the feminine. Masculinity is physical strength, rationality, and intellect to them. All these supposedly superior traits attached to masculinity make it superior to femininity. The masculine role is also attached to the public sphere and the breadwinner role. He believes a woman’s worth is tied to their reproductive role and nurturing of children. All these notions about masculinity are exemplified by Blackson. Blackson believes in harmful gender notions spread by the regime. He does not see anything wrong with the confinement of men and women to outdated gender roles. His belief in such harmful notions attached to masculinity makes it easier for him to support the patriarchal dystopian regime. He does not see any harm in the dystopian regime’s stance on women as the weaker sex who are not needed by men in

the dystopian society of Brotherland. It can be surmised that the notions of masculinity internalised by Blackson make him uphold the conditions prevailing in dystopia- that is a society that is governed by the male gender alone and where women are not treated equally.

5.2.4 The Masculinity of Eldest and Middle

Middle and Eldest are the brothers of Youngest. Both are different from the citizens of Brotherland born after the event known as “Change”. Their idea of masculine gender identity is not dependent on the repudiation of femininity and anything feminine. They both were young men when the event known as Change occurred. It is probably due to this that they are not brainwashed as the other citizens. They believe in the equality of male and female sex, unlike the other brainwashed citizens. They evince healthier masculinity that is not based on stereotypical and traditional gender roles and identities. The citizens of the Brotherland born after the Change believe that women are only needed for reproduction. They do not respect or accept women as persons and believe in the traditional gender roles and separation of public and private spheres and the role of men as breadwinners. This is in contrast to the masculinity of the two brothers Eldest and Middle who harbour a young girl Meiji in their house. Recovery of history and memory is essential to know the fissures in hegemonic discourse that shape the knowledge of history and memory as discussed in 2.2.2 of the thesis. Eldest and Middle are not brainwashed by the dystopian regime’s version of history and memory as they have a clear and pristine memory of the past and knowledge of history untainted by the regime’s manipulation. The dystopian regime’s version of history is shaped by hegemonic discourse that shows women as weak, and irrational and men as the superior sex. The brothers who were born before the Change was raised in a household where men and women are believed to be equal.

They do not believe in the propaganda and gendered discourse in their country which is based on the rejection of the feminine. This is also because they are literate, educated and have knowledge that is not constituted by the hegemonic discourses. Eldest and Middle were men when the event known as the Change or the extermination of women and the rise of the Generals began and they had access to education and knowledge of a time before the advent of the Generals. They teach Meiji indicating that they are sufficiently educated unlike the rest of the population, the majority of whom do not have access to books and are not educated enough. The rest of the population is uneducated and not literate or knowledgeable enough and is easily influenced by the hegemonic discourse and the gendered and biased notions and all other falsehoods propagated by the dystopian regime. Eldest and Middle remain uninfluenced by this as the knowledge, literacy and education they possess are sufficient to realize the fissures in the dominant discourse. The recovery of memory and history uninformed by the hegemonic discourse and knowledge, literacy and education are enough to know the limitations and falsehoods about the destructive gendered notions about men and women propagated by the regime. In a utopian society, there is no insistence on normative gender roles and norms like in dystopia. Eldest and Middle possess all these that the rest of the population do not, that is knowledge, education, literacy, memory and history untainted by hegemonic discourses, that can dismantle the destructive gendered notions that are the foundation of this dystopia and transform this into a utopia. The acceptance of healthy masculinity such as those of Eldest and Middle, bereft of harmful gender notions, can transform this dystopia into a utopia. The dystopian society is unaccepting of such healthy masculinities as possessed by Middle and Eldest as dystopia needs citizens

with harmful notions attached to masculinity for the maintenance of the dystopian society.

They are intent on nurturing, raising Meiji and ensuring her survival despite the great treason they are indulging in. Middle and Eldest are also concerned about the future of Meiji in a country that has outlawed the existence of women. Middle along with Youngest is responsible for Meiji's education. It is he who makes an elaborate plan for the escape of Meiji with Youngest from Brotherland to ensure her safety. Eldest regards it as heartbreaking that he has to send away Meiji. All this suggests that Eldest and Middle act as guardians to Meiji and parent her and respect her and her autonomy despite the notion of masculinity which involves a repudiation of the feminine held by many citizens born after the Change. Eldest and Middle do not have such destructive and harmful aspects of masculinity which believes masculinity is superior to femininity and is the negation of the feminine. In Brotherland gendered discourses construct masculinity as associated with strength, intellect and rationality and femininity as weakness and supposedly qualities regarded as inferior. Traits like strength, courage, daring, rationality and sexual desire are all positive traits associated with masculinity but the problem arises when they are distorted and used to exclude traits supposedly associated with femininity which can make masculinity oppressive and destructive (Kaufman, "The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence" 2). Middle and Eldest do not believe in stereotypical gender roles as is evident in their attitude towards Meiji. They even impart her education within the confines of their home despite the prevalent norm of rationality and intellect associated with masculine identity. It can be surmised that Eldest and Middle do not have any of the destructive aspects of masculinity prevalent in Brotherland. Rather, they evince a healthier kind of masculinity that is based on

egalitarianism. Even though Eldest and Middle do not rebel against the regime, they commit an act of sedition by harbouring Meiji, a woman. This indicates how Eldest and Middle, are knowingly going against the dystopian regime's dictates and in a small way, trying to dismantle or resist the conditions prevailing in this dystopia because of both evincing healthy masculinity.

5.2.5 The Masculine Gender Identity of Warriors -- Introduction

In the dystopian world of the novel battles takes place in a special arena known as the Zone. Each player nation and alliance are represented by teams of warriors. Each team fights with the other team till they defeat all members of the opposite team. The wins of the team are translated as gains or losses in the stock exchanges of every nation. It is a system based on entertainment, warfare and commerce. The warriors have a specific kind of masculinity- one which is most suited for such battles. The zone requires men who can engage in warfare. These men need to be able to engage in combat, violence and aggression. The patriarchal dystopian world views women as rewards and resources to these warriors. The battles held in the zone are similar to wars. They are rather contrived wars. These battles are something that is reserved for men only just like how most modern-day warfare and combat roles are reserved for male soldiers. Different traits of masculinity such as aggression and violence, money, success, status, and combat roles are analysed as markers of these warriors' manhood. *The Island of Lost Girls* is a dystopia that has unequal gender relations between men and women as discussed in 2.4.2 of the thesis which is due to the privileging of masculinity and the destructive and harmful notions attached to masculinity such as gendered divisions in combat roles and accumulation of sexual partners that is linked to manhood.

5.2.5.1 Aggression and Violence as Masculine Traits

Male gender codes reinforce the socialization of men and boys in their own set of social roles and codes of honour (Gilligan 553). This makes the boys and men prone to greater physical injuries, pain, mutilation, disability and premature death (Gilligan 553). The code of honour makes men inflict injuries on others of both sexes (Gilligan 553). Men are honoured for activity (violent activity) and shamed for passivity (pacifism) (Gilligan 554). Violence has been understood as a way to ensure others recognize one's manhood (Kimmel, "Violence" 811). According to the code of masculinity, boys must learn to be tough and aggressive (Levant 101). In the competitive arena of war games held in the Zone competitiveness, aggression and violence are conceived as masculine traits which are honoured. The exclusion of women and transgender persons from the teams is due to a lack of sponsorship and funding. It also implies the gendered attitude and assumptions in this patriarchal dystopian world in which traits such as violence and aggressiveness are equated with masculinity and that too a specific form of masculinity- that of male warriors. The warriors from each team battle with each other leading to a point where a team wins by killing its competitors. Each team are cheered by their supporters as they engage in aggressive killing and maiming. Such aggression and violence are necessary to ensure the success of the blocks or alliances the warriors represent. The selection of only men for such battles and their engagement in such aggression and violence indicates that the warriors consider this as an essential part of their masculinity, an activity reserved for masculine men carried out in space and spheres earmarked for men.

5.2.5.2 Masculine Identity and Combat Roles

War and soldiering have a gendered division (Morgan 166). In most societies, it is men who are expected to fight and enlist for military service and undergo training

(Morgan 166). Women are barred from such activities (Morgan 166). Combat and military experience separate men from women (Morgan 166). It is also tied to men's identity and self (Morgan 166). These are tied to the construction of femininity and masculinity (Morgan 166). The war games held in the zone are a sort of highly contrived war. Even though it cannot be termed a war the competing enclaves and blocks lose their points in the stock exchange when their team loses. The dystopian society in *The Island of Lost Girls* is defined by its unequal gender relations as discussed in 2.4.2 of the thesis, which is evident in the relationship of dominance between women in the Zone and the warriors as these women are exploited for satiating the warriors' sexual needs. The sexual exploitation of these women and the resultant imbalance of power it creates in the relationship between men and women are due to the notion of combat roles attached to masculinity. There is no female participation in war games. Only men are allowed to participate as warriors in these war games. The sexual exploitation of women and sexual slavery began with these war games and it has to do with the lack of women's participation in such competition. The war games held in the zone are a male preserve in which male warriors are celebrated for their physicality, aggression, and violence. These war games not only are reserved for males but also reproduce gendered divisions and inequality as Vane tells Youngest, "Once it was clear that there would only ever be all men's teams, the whole shameful exploitation of women who live in the zone – as booty, as trophies, as entertainment, whatever- became the established norm" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 312). The lack of sponsorship for women's teams hints at a perception that views men as more apt for battle and combat duties. Warriors regard participation in these war games as part of their masculinity. An instance of this is evident when Amir makes clone sons just so that he can enlist them

to participate in these war games. Amir raises clone sons and imparts a notion of masculinity in them that is tied to their life as warriors and the combat roles they engage in.

5.2.5.3 Masculinity as Money, Power and Status

Remaining emotionally distant, aggressive risk-taking, preoccupation with money, power, status, and accumulating sexual partners are all taken as badges of manhood (Kimmel and Kaufman, “Weekend Warrior” 262). The warriors earn much for their owners and themselves. Their masculinity is linked to violence, risk-taking, power and status. The war games in the zone are a way of boosting the status and power of the warriors, their owners and the alliances and nations they represent. It requires being emotionally distant and violent. All these become the traits associated with the masculinity of warriors. The battles in the zone are a male preserve. These battles are described as “[a] gory spectacle on which money and power depended, contained within the Zone” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 72). The weapons given to warriors, the quality of food supplements given to them and the women prostituted to them all depend on their success or failure in these battles. The Zone is a masculine sphere where men engage in combat and the success and power upheld by these warriors are regarded as part of their manhood. Women are regarded as the warriors’ resources. The dystopian society presented in *The Island of Lost Girls* is defined by its unequal gender relations between men and women as discussed in 2.4.2 of the thesis as women born in the Zone are prostituted and made sexual slaves to fulfil the sexual needs of the warriors. The power exercised over women in the Zone by warriors is due to a privileging of masculinity as well as the notions attached to masculinity. Warriors hold considerable power and their masculinity is linked to power and status. The war games in the Zone and the complex system that is created

are meant to ensure the perpetuation of a specific model of masculinity- particularly those of the warriors. The masculinity of warriors, in turn, helps to perpetuate or uphold such gender inequality, the conditions prevailing in a dystopian society.

Women do not hold power in the Zone and their rights are curtailed when they are forcefully prostituted. The women prostituted in the Zone are considered the resources of the warriors. Accumulating sexual partners is here linked to the masculinity of the warriors. Warriors persevere and struggle to win each combat as they can buy more sexual slaves and accumulate money which they regard as part of their masculinity.

5.2.6 The Masculine Gender Identity of Warriors - Conclusion

The warriors represent a distinct masculine gender identity that has traits such as aggression, violence, drive for power, success, status and acquisition of sexual partners. Warriors represent militaristic forms of masculinity found in modern-day societies. Even though battles in the zone are not comparable to modern-day wars, they are a sort of contrived war. Such war games held in the zone require warriors who have masculine traits most suited to battles. The exclusion of women from the teams has led to the reproduction of gender divisions, making women end up as sexual objects for the needs of warriors. The harmful gender notions attached to the masculinity of warriors are responsible for the gender inequality prevailing in this dystopian world. The novel is a critical dystopia. The girls and mentors on the island have a plan in action to dismantle the barbarous activities in the Zone and put an end to the battle there. This could also lead to a reconceptualization of masculine traits attached to warriors and even the abolishment of the very category. A utopian society does not adhere to gendered norms. The mentors plan to dismantle the Zone and thereby the very category of warriors that can lead to the dismantlement of gender notions attached to the masculinity of warriors paving way for gender equality that

can transform the dystopia into a utopia. The rejection or dismantlement of the identity of warriors can transform this dystopia into a utopia.

5.2.7 Amir's Masculinity- Introduction

Amir is the father of Aila. He is introduced in the novel *The Island of Lost Girls*. His presence in the novel is short as after his encounter with Youngest, he is eventually killed. Amir is introduced as a bossy parent who orders his daughter Aila to do his bidding. He has some scheme in mind to take Youngest's belongings in the suitcase which is thwarted by Youngest. Youngest kills Amir when the latter comes to know that Youngest belongs to the Forbidden Country as he calls it or Brotherland and also his insistence on knowing the contents of Youngest's suitcase which hosts his daughter Meiji. Amir associates masculinity with power, success, violence, strength and anti-femininity. He has internalised some specific notions of masculinity which he also uses to judge other men. This section discusses markers and traits of Amir's masculinity such as the repudiation of femininity, performativity, physicality, strength, violence, power and control.

5.2.7.1 Masculinity as Repudiation of Femininity

The notion of anti-femininity is what defines manhood in its contemporary and historical conceptions (Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia" 126). Masculinity for ages has been defined as the repudiation of femininity (Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia" 126). Amir regards the masculine as anti-femininity. This is evident in the manner he raises his son Aila. Amir has a gendered idea of the world. It is revealed by Aila that he was happy when he came to know that his firstborn was a son. He was well aware of the power of masculinity and the advantage of begetting a son. It is all about securing a family's social position and prestige. Amir was interested in inculcating a notion of masculinity internalised by him. He wanted his

son to be aggressive, brave and if necessary violent. His happiness in getting a son soon came to an end when Aila refused to behave like a boy or do gender roles assigned to boys. This was an affront to masculinity envisioned by Amir. Aila is presumably more feminine in her mannerisms and masculinity involves the repudiation of femininity. Parents accomplish gender in their sons by disassociating it with femininity (Kane 60). Amir being the patriarch of the family does not tolerate the feminine in his son. Amir wanted to enforce a masculine gender code on his son but was unable to do so. He has a very gendered idea of the world. He has internalised many sexist notions which makes him difficult to view men and women equally. He does not like features or traits deemed feminine in his son, which is why he is displeased when Aila starts to have different inclinations and interests, eventually leading to her becoming a trans woman. He came from a world in which women are subservient to men and he refuses to change his views even though the world has changed since then. He made his clone sons when Aila was fourteen so that he could send them to Zone. The dystopian society of *The Island of Lost Girls* is defined by unequal gender relations as discussed in 2.4.2 of the thesis. The masculinity of the warrior in the Zone is celebrated and is responsible for the domination and sexual objectification of women. Amir is complicit in perpetuating this male hegemony as he sends his clone sons to participate in the competition in the Zone. This is in tune with Amir's character as he wants a world in which men and masculinity are privileged and the social system and the resultant Zone and competition privilege men and masculinities. The dystopian society upholds and supports gender identities with harmful notions attached to them such as that of Amir because he believes in the unequal status of the genders and power and control over women, the same

masculinist values that Zone and WWU endorse and support, that helps maintain gender inequality in this dystopia.

5.2.7.2 Masculinity as Performativity and Corporeality

Performativity is the reality of performing masculinities or femininities (Carver 114). Such performances are stylized repetitions of dress, deportment, speech and behaviour that lets one and others identify whether they are a man or woman (Carver 114). Such social practices are culturally, historically and individually variable (Carver 114). Cultural practises also construct the male body in specific ways (Reeser 93). Gesturing is an important way in which a male body is built (Reeser 93). It is through repeated practices that a male or boy is taught to move in a certain way (Reeser 93). To Amir, there are certain indices of masculinity that he uses to judge Youngest as a man. He tells Youngest that he has a masculine voice and his deportment- the way he moves, talks, stands and holds himself reminds him of a man's dignity. He uses body movement and deportment to characterise Youngest as a man despite the incongruity of his physical appearance. This suggests Amir's idea of masculinity – he identifies a deportment and body movements specific to men which bespeaks a manly dignity.

5.2.7.3 Amir's Notion of Masculinity as Physicality, Strength, Success

Men often are persuaded to live up to a certain muscular archetype based on muscularity, body shape and size (Drummond 11). Strength is associated with masculinity (Drummond 11). Amir also associates physicality with manliness. He tells Youngest, "A man in full possession of his senses and in the prime of his life, tall, well built, handsome, a man who might be whatever he chooses- a warrior, a leader, prince, a prince- why does such a man change his body to that of a weak, inferior being such as a transie?" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 33).

Physicality, strength, and musculature are all considered manly by Amir. According to Amir, a well-built tall man is physically stronger than a trans woman who is much weaker. He regards the strength and built endowed in Youngest as a specific manly trait that a trans woman's body does not have. He says that Youngest is a big man who has hidden in a woman's body. He refuses to see Youngest as a naive lost woman new to the city as is told to him by Youngest and Aila. He thinks Youngest is in essence a physically intimidating man who is capable of defending himself and outmanoeuvring them. He describes Youngest as a physically intimidating man impersonating a woman. Amir's view of masculinity consists of physical strength and stature which is evident in his assessment of Youngest's gender identity. Manhood is equated with power, control, success, and capability (Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia" 120). This definition of manhood helps to maintain power over men and women by men (Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia" 120). A man also holds considerable social power and prestige by his gender as opposed to other genders such as transgender people and women according to Amir. He regards masculinity as attached to power, dignity and prestige. He feels Youngest could have been in positions of power and authority such as being a prince, leader or warrior considering his masculinity. His assessment of Youngest's gender identity throws light on the idea of masculine gender identity he has internalised. He regards men as the gender which holds greater power and this is one of the reasons, he ends up hating his child Aila who becomes a trans woman.

5.2.7.4 Amir's Notion of Masculinity as Power, Control and Violence

The equation of masculinity with power is developed over centuries (Kaufman, "Men, Feminism and Men's Contradictory Experiences of Power" 146). It is used to justify the domination of men over women (Kaufman, "Men, Feminism and

Men's Contradictory Experiences of Power" 146). Individual men learn power as the capacity to control (Kaufman, "Men, Feminism and Men's Contradictory Experiences of Power" 146). It gives men privileges and advantages that women and children do not enjoy (Kaufman, "Men, Feminism and Men's Contradictory Experiences of Power" 146). Masculinity is the experience of entitlement to power (Kimmel, *The Gender of Desire* 229). Men become violent when they experience the loss of their entitlement, and patriarchal power (Kimmel, *The Gender of Desire* 230). Inscribed in the male body is the potential for unleashing physical power (Ferguson 116). Men are violent towards women because of thwarted entitlement (Kimmel, *The Gender of Desire* 234). Manhood is equated with the power men have over other men and women (Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia" 136). Violence against women is an affirmation of masculinity (Kaufman, "The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence" 9). The ultimate acknowledgement of a man's masculinity is having power over women (Kaufman, "The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence" 12). Violence is one of the ways how this power is expressed (Kaufman, "The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence" 12). As a patriarch and a man, Amir regards himself as entitled to power and control over the life of his daughter Aila. He wants her to obey his bidding without question. He does not want Aila to interfere in his dealings with Youngest and calls her abusive words when she tries to reason with him. He tells her, "How often must I tell you to not interfere when men are talking?" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 35) implying that men are entitled to power, control and decision-making and that women such as Aila have no power or authority in the scheme of things. He resorts to physical abuse when he feels Aila does not obey what he says. To him, masculinity is

equated with power and control over women. Violence is justified in the maintenance of this power.

5.2.8 Amir's Gender Identity- Conclusion

Amir has specific notions of masculinity that he has imbibed. It is based on the repudiation of masculinity as is evident when he admonishes his child Aila's conduct when he starts showing different interests and inclinations which are not masculine. He also regards the male body as constructed in specific ways. He identifies a specific way in which a person moves, and walks which he regards as manly and uses this to identify Youngest's gender. He has internalised some conceptions about the male body and its conduct. He equates masculinity with power, success, violence and stature. Masculinity holds a very privileged position socially compared to other genders according to Amir. He envisions men in positions of power holding power over the rest. He regards masculinity as the inherent capacity to inflict harm on others. Violence or the threat of violence is used as a demonstration of the power of his masculine self. He wields his power over his daughter to put her in a subservient state and obey his orders. Masculinity to Amir is physical strength and muscular body. He recognizes the same in Youngest and refuses to believe that Youngest is a trans woman. He values masculinity and is complicit in perpetuating unequal gender relations as he sends his clone sons to the Zone so they can participate in the war games. The dystopian society also supports harmful notions attached to masculinity such as that of Amir which helps in maintaining gender inequality.

5.3 Men in the Dystopias - Conclusion

The men in the novel have differing notions of masculinity. Each of their circumstances and life situations is different. Even though their life experiences are different many male characters have the common traits of pursuing success, wealth

and status which are markers of masculinity. Even though they belong to different worlds they either want to pursue or attach importance to wealth, status and success which they regard as part of their gender identity too. The dystopian world presented in both texts favours men and masculinities as compared to women and femininity. The power centres in both the dystopian societies of the novels are inhabited by men. Masculinity is favoured and celebrated. *Escape* is set in Brotherland, a country made for men alone and the WWU in *The Island of Lost Girls* has set up a system where girls and women are always the victims at the hands of warriors. Brotherland has more destructive or harmful aspects of masculinity as the masculine gender ideals are about the repudiation of the feminine and a dualistic framework that regards certain traits deemed masculine as superior. This can be discerned from the way Blackson has internalised such gender norms. The citizens born before the Change like Eldest, Middle and Youngest are comparatively free from the stereotypical and destructive notions attached to masculinity. Their freedom from harmful gender notions leads them to support Meiji which also indicates that they are in a way going against the prevailing social conditions in dystopia by harbouring a woman secretly. The men in the dystopian worlds have harmful notions about masculinity such as accumulating sexual partners, the ability to use violence, stereotypical male breadwinner gender roles, being abusive to the women around them and poor notions about women. Amir, warriors, and Blackson are examples of men who evince harmful and destructive notions attached to masculinity which is the reason they support and uphold deplorable gender inequality, the marker of a dystopian society. The dystopian society also supports and upholds the masculinity of such characters who evince harmful notions of masculinity. The dystopias have women who are at the receiving end of abuse like Aila, girls in the Zone, and the women killed during the periods of change.

The destructive and harmful notions attached to masculinity have contributed to such dystopian scenarios in which women suffer. Dismantling harmful notions attached to masculinity can improve the conditions in this dystopia and lead to a utopian society as in utopian imagination the relevancy of gender norms is abolished (Beauregard 695). In *Escape* dismantling the harmful notions attached to masculinity involves realizing the fissures in hegemonic discourse that shapes the memory of the past and all information and history. The dissemination of knowledge, literacy, education and recovery of memory and history that is unaffected by the hegemonic discourse can also help realize the limitations of androcentric totalitarian discourses that shape and perpetuate harmful notions attached to masculinities. In *The Island of Lost Girls*, the island is a community that aims to abolish the inhumane practices carried out in the Zone that can lead to a reconceptualization of the category of warriors itself and their masculinity. By abolishing the power centres such as the Zone and WWU, one can also end the harmful notions of masculinity endorsed by them such as the ones possessed by warriors.

5.4 Women in the Dystopias - Introduction

Women characters whose gender identities are studied are Meiji, Rahmato'u and Vane. There are no women characters in the patriarchal dystopian text *Escape* except Meiji. *The Island of Lost Girls* has two substantial female characters whose gender identities are studied, Rahmato'u a girl on the island and companion to Meiji, and Vane, a mentor on the island. The women characters in the novel have their notions of gender identity. They are also substantially influenced by the environment they were raised. All women characters in the texts live in patriarchal societies where women do not hold power. The study analyses the relations between female characters and the dystopian patriarchal society they live in. The extent to which

dystopian society inhibits their freedom and the harmful gendered notions inculcated by them is subjected to analysis. The novel *Escape* is a feminist dystopia. The situation of Meiji in such a society where women are outlawed is precarious. The analysis focuses on Meiji's notions of gender identity, which she acquires as she travels through a country with no women. The harmful gendered notions internalised by Rahmato'u and the way she undoes them are studied. The zone is a space where women are prostituted. The notions of gender internalised by women prostituted in the zone help to continue this practice and keep them in a state of subservience. The harmful gender notions internalised by women and their role in continuing practices such as prostitution are part of this analysis. Vane and her notions of gender identity are studied. Vane's actions can be said to undo gender as it dismantles many harmful notions about female gender identity prevalent in the zone. Notions and interactions which contribute to undoing gender are studied as this also contributes to a way in which the dystopian society is improved and the patriarchal system is dismantled. The efforts of the island community to undo harmful gendered notions are also seen in the light of the critical aspect of critical dystopian societies.

5.4.1 Meiji's Gender Identity - Introduction

Meiji is the protagonist of the novel and the daughter of Youngest. She is the daughter of an unnamed female character who was Youngest's lover and his cousin. She lives in a country named Brotherland which has no women barring her. She lives in an estate hidden from the rest of the world with her three guardians or uncles around. She is kept in a state of arrested growth by giving hormone suppressants. Meiji is a woman who is unaware of gender differences and the notion of gender. In the course of her journey or escape from Brotherland, she is initiated into the social construct of gender by her guardian Youngest. Her life further changes when she is

left on the island by Youngest. She came from a society where she had to hide her identity to a place where it is celebrated. This section analyses various phases in Meiji's life and growth, such as her time in the estate, her initiation to the world of gender differences and her time on the island.

5.4.1.1 Meiji's Life in the Estate

Meiji's life till the sixteen years of her existence is very sheltered. She spends her time on the estate along with her three uncles. Meiji is made to memorise and learn portions of text that constitute her education. She is not taught about the differences between males and females or introduced to gendered discourses which will make her aware of her identity. Parents transmit their gender-laden assumptions and values to their children (Coltrane 271). Parents use gender stereotypes to assess a baby's behaviour, and personality and interact with them based on this perception (Coltrane 271). Gender-differentiated treatment continues through reinforcement through toys and rewards for gender-appropriate behaviour and punishment for inappropriate behaviour (Coltrane 271). Family constitutes the major arena of socialisation for children (Maccoby 1006). Parents select and design the setting where the children spend their time (Maccoby 1015). They sometimes even select the identity of those who interact with their child (Maccoby 1015). Parents have a greater corpus of knowledge compared to children and children have to rely on their knowledge in unfamiliar situations (Maccoby 1015). Meiji is raised in an environment where she is made unaware of gender differences and sex roles. In normal circumstances, the family would have provided Meiji with an arena for socialisation and initiation to the world of gender. But her guardians have been carefully keeping her away from these notions. She lives in an estate protected from the rest of the world and did not have much interaction with anyone other than her guardians. Her

guardians have deliberately kept her away from the rest of the people for her safety. Meiji is not imparted with the knowledge of gender differences nor given any punishment for gender-inappropriate behaviour or rewards for behaviour deemed gender appropriate. She is simply raised in environs where she does not have to grapple with the notion of gender. This is a deliberate decision taken by the mentors for her safety. Her family in no way contributes to her socialisation and gender sensitisation. She is sixteen years old when the novel begins and is kept in a state of arrested growth. Her education consists of arcane languages, verb conjugations and numerical calculations with lists of names and quantities with formulae and rhyming mnemonics. She is taught subjects and topics but not made to question the world around her or her place in it. She is not made to develop physically because the world she is in has outlawed women's existence, and this fact has been kept from her. Her guardians have kept her in a state of deliberate ignorance regarding human reproduction, biology and men and women because they do not know how Meiji will react to it and also it is not possible to raise her in Brotherland. She does not know anything about self-preening or self-consciousness. She wears whatever is given to her. She does not care nor try to understand the differences between her and her uncles. She regards herself as one of the drones which do not grow broader or taller. She had seen her guardians naked in their bath and had known that their body is different from theirs but never bothered to know the reasons for their differences. She is unaware of the circumstances around her birth, the changes that will happen to her in puberty and the reason for her sheltered life. The society described in the novel is a feminist dystopia that has no women as discussed in 2.2.4 of the thesis. Her guardians are hesitant in introducing her to gender differences as she has a faint hope of surviving in a dystopian landscape that has outlawed the very existence of women.

Meiji's sheltered existence and lack of knowledge about gender differences can be attributed to the particular state of the society she is residing in that does not allow her the opportunity to experience a normal life like other women. Youngest says so about her: "She has no idea what a woman is- she has never seen one- never read any novels or even any myths or fairy stories, never known or heard anything of that entire world of experiences that we take for granted" (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 20). The dystopian society refuses to accept women and all individuals like Meiji who identify as women as the presence of such women cannot help to maintain the male-only dystopian society of Brotherland. Her guardians also do not know how or whether to explain the bodily changes and differences to her as they decide to stop giving her hormone suppressants. Youngest feels that he will know intuitively how to lead her to womanhood.

5.4.1.2 Meiji's Journey of Escape and Initiation to a Gendered World

The guardians decide to save Meiji by helping her escape from the country with the aid of Youngest. This is based on their belief that the neighbouring nations will accept Meiji, the sole surviving girl on humanitarian grounds. The journey of escape from Brotherland is significant as it is in the course of this journey that she is introduced to gender differences and the construct of gender by Youngest which shapes her gender identification. She is made to wear a prosthetic penis as Youngest and Meiji make a journey to escape from Brotherland. She is not aware of sex differences and when she is made to wear a prosthetic penis, she asks Youngest whether this is the way everyone gets their genitalia or not. Meiji is slowly initiated into the world of gender and sex differences and gendered discourses by Youngest. He tells her about the changes in her body and her growth but without much detail or explanation. She is made to wear goggles and distorts her appearance so that no one

suspects her. She is asked to change her name as they embark on the journey as Meiji is a girl's name. She regards her guardians as her generators and has not seen any other people other than her guardians. She is also not aware of the pronouns used for men and women. When Youngest tells her that it was her mother who named her, she addresses her mother by the pronoun "him" which is corrected by Youngest. What complicates Meiji's realization of her gender identity and sex is the added fact that she is asked to dress and act like a boy, as a younger brother to Youngest in their journey of escape from Brotherland even though she knows that she is not one.

Youngest admonishes her on one occasion when she cries telling her that boys do not cry. He also addresses her as a "smart little boy" (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 188) even within the privacy of their room so that no one suspects Meiji of being a girl. She is perplexed as she does not have much of a cultural understanding of what being a woman or a girl is like despite being told that it is her identity, yet she has to identify as a boy publicly for her safety. At once Youngest lets his guard down and calls her little girl. He tells her that she is certainly a girl no matter what name he calls her to assure her of her real identity. Youngest tries to pique her interest in the hope that Meiji will ask more questions about being a female when he tells her that her pup is a female, but Meiji disregards his comments and regards the pup as male as it feels more natural to her. After journeying with Youngest and being told about her identity Meiji knows that she is a girl and being a girl entails some bodily differences which mark her as different from other males. But she never realises or understands the whole cultural understanding and anatomical changes that come with it. She simply chooses to dismiss the term even when Youngest tells her that she is a girl. She is not bothered to understand it as she feels there is no use in understanding what a girl is when she has to hide her identity. At Swan's estate, she is startled and shocked when

a pornographic magazine is slipped into her room by one of the drones. It is in this situation that Youngest explains to her the true predicament in this dystopian land. The concept of women is so alien to her that she calls women monsters. She tells Youngest, "It sounds make-believe. I prefer monster" (Padmanabhan, *Escape* 308). She is unsure of her body's changes during puberty and asks Youngest whether she was a woman or not. This indicates her interest and inclination in embracing her female self and body. Meiji itself senses she is becoming a woman or monster as she calls it as she feels Youngest couldn't bear looking at her naked body whereas earlier, he used to be never like that. She starts exploring her body to understand her anatomy. Meiji feels it is cruel to bring her to a world that outlaws her existence. She starts taking up and using gendered codes as she now uses the correct pronoun for her mother. In the course of the journey, she is given mauve-tinted oval lenses to hide her appearance. She is forced to hide her body in men's clothing and also disfigure herself to hide her beauty. She feels sad at her plight when she sees male transvestites dressed in feminine clothes and heels as she feels they are pretending to be something they are not whereas she a woman cannot wear such clothes in the open as women are outlawed in the country. This incident is significant as she realizes the gendered dress or attire worn by these male transvestites is feminine. This shows her effect of initiation into gendered discourses. She regards makeup, heels, and braided hair as part of a feminine appearance. Meiji's inclination for wearing such types of women's wear or dresses shows that she has somewhat imbibed some of these gendered discourses which distinguish between men's and women's clothing. When Meiji is introduced in the novel she is described as wearing a frock and accepting whatever is given to her. At that time, she did not have any understanding of how dress and appearance can be gendered. Her inclination to wear the transvestite men's dress

indicates that she has imbibed some notions of gender which did not exist earlier.

Meiji's desire to present oneself to be a woman or girl through women's wear can be interpreted as a result of her gender identity as a woman.

5.4.1.3 Meiji's Gender Identity and Life on the Island

Meiji is led to the island which is a woman-only zone by Youngest and her memories are erased as most of the girls who come to the island have painful memories. She is given a new identity on the island, one that she is unwilling to accept. She is uneasy when she is given a new name- "Juli" on the island. Her memory is erased and she has a vague recollection of the past. She felt that "[o]ne reason she knew men's bodies were the norm was that she herself was not normal. She was not a man. She had a dangler and a pouch too, but they were fake. It was part of some very important secret that for the life of her she could not remember just now" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 98). She knew that she was wearing prosthetics and had female genitalia. She knew that she did have a different name other than the one assigned to her. Her gender identification as a woman on the island would have been easier if she had access to her memories which were all gone. The island provides the girls opportunity to share and bond over their shared experiences as women in a male-dominated world. Her fellow candidates find it difficult to accept her as she has a penis and they view her as an anomaly. She is different from the rest of the girls. She is surprised when Rahmato'u calls her a woman. She says, "I'm not a woman. I'm a...a...person!" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 150). She knows that she is not a man and has some recollection of what a man looks like. At the same time, because her memories are being erased, she does not know the cultural meaning of being a woman which she had somewhat known and understood during

the time spent with Youngest. The word woman invokes in her a faint memory or recollection of gender concepts and notions that she has known while with Youngest:

It was not an unfamiliar word, yet the associations she felt with it went beyond any verbal definition. It meant something much more than a particular collection of body parts, distinct and separate from those that defined a man. It included social and psychological dimensions that were profoundly distressing to her. When she heard that word it was as if a very powerful force, acting invisibly, caused her thoughts to scatter like iron filings in the presence of a magnetic field. Why should that be so? (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 168)

The mentors' attempts to impart their notion of femininity are also rejected by her. Accepting the naked female body in its imperfections are seen as a way to embrace the female self by the mentors and the girls on the island. Meiji's rejection to partake in the practice of being naked is seen as a rejection of her feminine self which was not the case. She was raised in a country where women's bodies and existence are outlawed, so she has difficulty seeing and accepting naked female bodies. Her realization after her restoration of memories is significant: "With great amazement, she realized that for her that was familiar: being surrounded only by men. It was the all-women environment of the Island that was strange. But only for her. There were her memories. Where she had come from there were only men" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 280). She realizes with the restoration of her memories that she is not comfortable with the women-only community on the island only because of being surrounded by men in Brotherland and having been forced to hide her body and identity. It was not the non-acceptance of her female self but rather anguish caused due to the displacement from a country exclusively for men to a society where being a

woman is openly celebrated and accepted. Meiji is at ease after this realization and she fully participates in the activities of the island. Her realization helps her to be comfortable in her body and gender identity. She joins the other girls on their plan to dismantle the Zone. Her participation in the island community's activities suggests her ease and comfort in owning her gender identity as she realizes she is in a safe place and no longer needs to hide it like when she was in Brotherland. Her participation in the island community's plan to dismantle the Zone indicates that she wants to dismantle gender inequality- the prevailing social condition in this dystopia and help change society. It is her acceptance of her identity as a woman that leads her to such an enterprise.

5.4.2 Meiji's Gender Identity- Conclusion

Meiji was born in an isolated environment where she did not have much interaction with members of the opposite sex other than her guardians. She has been raised without any social and cultural understanding of gender and gendered notions. She has been kept in a state of deliberate ignorance by the guardians to protect her. Her understanding of gender begins when she has to undertake a journey along with Youngest to escape from Brotherland. The realization and understanding of male and female anatomy, gender differences and the plight of women in Brotherland are known by Meiji in the course of this journey. She has imbibed some social understanding of female gender identity in the course of this journey which is lost altogether when she reaches the island. She still has fragments of memory intact but they are too disconnected and sparse for her to recollect. The change in the environment from a society that has no men to a society that has only women makes her agitated and confused. She fully realizes the reasons for her presence on the island after she gets her memories back. She is freed from all anxieties resulting from her

displacement and feels at ease with her gender identity as a woman. Her participation in the island community's upcoming conflict against the Zone indicates her acceptance of her gender identity as a woman which leads her to change the prevailing gender inequality in dystopia. The dystopian society rejects women and people like Meiji who identify as women as only the rejection of women can lead to maintaining the same conditions in this male-only dystopia.

5.4.3 Rahmato'u's Gender Identity - Introduction

Rahmato'u was seventeen years old when she arrived on the island. She was part of a travelling sex circus in the Zone. She was born into slavery and has never known or experienced a normal life. She was sold by her mother to a circus. She is a companion to Meiji while on the island and is supportive of Meiji and becomes her friend. She has internalised a harmful and damaging notion of gender identity as a woman which contributes to her sexual objectification and subservient status. Her lack of autonomy and sexual objectification is also discussed. Sexual objectification depersonalizes her and reduces her to a commodity. Life in the zone also does not allow her to develop an autonomous self. The island and its environs have a transformative effect on her. She regains a sense of self-worth and dignity while on the island. Her autonomous self and her life on the island are discussed as part of the analysis.

5.4.3.1 Sex as Gender

Femaleness means femininity which means attractiveness to men which in turn means being sexually available (Mackinnon 530). Gender socialisation is the process through which women identify themselves as sexual beings that exist for men (Mackinnon 531). Mackinnon describes it as "the process through which women internalise (make their own) a male image of their sexuality as their own identity as

women” (Mackinnon 531). One becomes a woman through the experience of sexuality, through unity of identity, physicality, emotionality and status affirmation (Mackinnon 531). It is sexuality that is regarded as determining gender (Mackinnon 531). Sex as gender and sex as sexuality is defined in terms of each other (Mackinnon 531). A woman is identified as someone whose sexuality exists for someone else, who is a male (Mackinnon 533). Femininity or being feminine is reduced to being passive, being a potential object of violence, sexualisation and subordination (Dahl 174).

Rahmato’u’s gender is connected to her sexuality as a woman. She was raised by her mother and taught to prostitute herself. She along with her mother and sister has imbibed a notion of womanhood which is tied to their sexuality. The girls or women prostituted to the warriors are regarded as the resources needed for warriors for satiating their sexual needs. The whole gender identity of these girls is defined as their ability to satisfy male sexual needs. Women born in the zone have been socialised to think this way. This is why she feels comfortable with nudity. When the girls are asked to disrobe, she easily does it without any hesitation. This is because she was forced to have sex with the warriors. She has been raised in the zone and her identity was defined in relation to her sexuality. She, like the other girls in the Zone, believes that being a woman involved being subordinate and an object of violence. The unequal gender relations that characterise the dystopian society as discussed in 2.4.2 of the thesis are due to the sexist notions attached to femininity. Women in the Zone such as Rahmato’u are raised and socialised in a patriarchal society that believes that their identity and existence as a woman are meant to satisfy the needs of warriors.

5.4.3.2 Sexual Objectification, Autonomy and Self

Sexually objectifying another person means treating the other person’s body as a thing for one’s own subjective sexual stimulation (Stoltenberg 39). The person

whom he objectifies is not a real person like himself once he does this (Stoltenberg 39). A man performs an act of sexual objectification before he commits a sexual assault or a forced act (Stoltenberg 43). He makes the person an object, a thing which is less real than himself (Stoltenberg 39). A person is depersonalised and made into an object which makes sexual violence possible (Stoltenberg 39). Objectification happens when a human being is turned into a thing or commodity, bought and sold (Dworkin 96). Such a person is depersonalised (Dworkin 96). A person who is depersonalised is deprived of their individuality (Dworkin 96). Sexual objectification happens when there is a focus on only the body parts of a person which leads to their sexual objectification (Bartky 26). Identification of a person with her sexuality is oppressive (Bartky 26). It gets extended to every aspect of her life and experience (Bartky 26). These sexual parts are regarded as representative of that person (Bartky 26). Sexual objectification is a form of fragmentation and impoverishment of the objectified individual (Bartky 36). The girls like Rahmato'u are depersonalised and valued only for their bodies. Women like her are reduced to prostitutes, and sex slaves, and bought and sold off in the zone. They are sexually objectified and they are not considered persons. Her mother sells her daughter to a travelling sex circus that performs for the warriors. These girls and women are prostituted and sold like commodities valued for their sexuality alone. These women are given to warriors once they win a competition. She is depersonalised, stripped of any identity when sexually objectified and is used for fulfilling the warriors' sexual needs.

Sexual objectification contributes to mental health issues (Szymanski et. al 8). The mentors on the island help girls heal from their mental and physical wounds.

Rahmato'u had her memories wiped when she came to the island. Sexual abuse, prostitution, sexual violence, and rape all come under sexual objectification which can

cause great mental trauma. She tells Meiji that she has never been happy living in the zone. She was trained by her mother and made to prostitute herself. She is relieved that her memories are erased. All this points to the mental trauma which the women have to endure as a result of such harmful gendered notions which reduces a woman's identity to their body.

Autonomy has little value in patriarchal structures where women are constantly marginalised, objectified and stripped of power (Pelzer 45). They are deprived of the power to exercise their will and pursue their needs and desires (Pelzer 45). They are kept in a subordinate position which limits their potential for agency and self-determination (Pelzer 45). Women like Rahmato'u who are born and brought up in the zone are not even considered autonomous individuals with their life plans, goals, dreams and desires. She has no autonomy in her life. They are regarded simply as the resources of the warriors without which the warriors cannot find their courage. She is not able to develop an autonomous self, free from harmful patriarchal notions and constraints, while in the zone. The prostitution of girls and women leaves them with no opportunity to do anything they want.

5.4.3.3 Autonomy and Self

A person cannot be autonomous without a fully articulated set of objectives, preferences, and principles that allows their life plans to be their own (Oshana 84). For a person to be autonomous, he or she needs to know which of her relationships, desires, and beliefs are essential to his or her self-conception (Oshana 84). An agent has autonomy if one takes control of one's own life for their betterment (Oshana 85). Autonomous people can choose and live their life in a self-directed fashion (Oshana 91). Women have internalised the cultural norm of inferiority because of women's subordinate position (Pelzer 46). They strive for the assertion of a separate identity,

autonomous selfhood (Pelzer 46). Rahmato'u wants to salvage her life by being a mentor on the island and giving up her past life. Vane wants to inculcate some dignity in girls and return them to a state of normalcy. She develops a sense of self after she comes to the island. She works for her dreams and is free to make her own decisions unlike when she was in the zone where she had to prostitute herself. She has enough dignity to not want to pursue her previous lifestyle as she now wants to become a mentor. Vane and other mentors are successful in imparting this dignity to Rahmato'u. Providing a space to marginalised subjects is a trait of critical dystopias as discussed in 2.4.4 of the thesis. The island community dismantles some of the harmful notions attached to gender and provides a space and voice for marginalised subjects like her as well as helps her to attain a subject status. On the island, she learns that her worth and identity as a woman are not tied to her body and sexuality alone and lead a life not governed by the dictates of men. Undoing harmful gendered notions has helped Rahmato'u to gain a new perspective and lead a life on her terms. She wants to do all the tasks and activities on the island and acquire the necessary credit scores to be a mentor on the island. She acquires an autonomous self free from the patriarchal notions of femininity which reduced her to a victim. Such an undoing of harmful gendered notions can instil self-respect in women who have been victims of the war games in the Zone and motivate and persuade them to not be a part of the inhumane practice of prostitution and sexual slavery. Dismantlement of practices such as prostitution and sexual slavery carried out in this patriarchal dystopian society can be established with the undoing of harmful gender notions that can transform this dystopia into a utopia. She participates in challenges like the whale riding challenge and follows the instructions and training of the mentor to fulfil her goal. Rahmato'u knows that she needs to complete the training to gain enough credit scores to become

a mentor. She knows that a high score is required to become a mentor and she is willing to work for that. She becomes the chosen few to get selected for the creature challenge which is to learn and control a giant hybrid lizard. Even though she is hesitant and scared to do this and finally drops out, her determination to become a mentor remains the same. She develops an autonomous self and pursues her life goals which were not possible while in the zone. Her autonomous identity and her freedom from the destructive and sexist notions of femininity lead her to realize that the patriarchal society is unjust and exploits women in the Zone. This leads her to want to lead a new life with a new goal, of being a mentor on the island. Being a mentor, she can also transform the lives of girls and young women like her who are victims of the Zone and dismantle some damaging notions of femininity internalised by them. The WWU does not want mentors to engage in any politics or activities in the Zone. It is suspicious of radical notions that are disseminated by the mentors on the island that can dismantle the harmful practices carried in Zone and which make women independent. This is why WWU does not want to accept individuals such as Rahmato'u as the notions attached to her identity is antithetical to the ones WWU believes in. The WWU tries to curtail such women by limiting their sphere of influence. Dismantlement of such harmful gender notions attached to female gender identity can transform this dystopia into a utopia as a utopian society does not insist on following gender norms. It can be surmised that the autonomous identity possessed by Rahmato'u leads her to change the conditions prevailing in dystopia.

5.4.4 Rahmato'u's Gender Identity - Conclusion

Rahmato'u had many harmful patriarchal notions of gender identity as a woman which reduces her self to her body and sexuality which is oppressive. The patriarchal society in the zone leaves women with no opportunities to develop

themselves and pursue their goals in life. They have been socialised to lead a life that caters to the warriors' sexual needs. The island is a place of refuge for such women where they are not only healed of mental and physical wounds but inculcated with the dignity and self-worth needed to lead their lives. Rahmato'u is changed by the environs of the island and its teachings. She wants to become a mentor and wants to lead a life according to her wishes. She no longer wants to go back to her old self as a prostitute for the zone warriors. She has developed an autonomous self free from the damaging gendered notion that reduced her identity and self-worth to her body parts. The autonomous identity possessed by Rahmato'u makes her question the unjust patriarchal system followed in the Zone that exploits women and reduces their worth to their bodies. Her determination to be a mentor and also influence fellow young women like her to better their lives can lead to amelioration of the conditions in the dystopian society, that is an abolishment of gender inequality and dismantlement of harmful gender notions that can transform this dystopia into a utopia.

5.4.5 Gender Identity of Vane

Vane is a mentor on the island. She along with other mentors sets up the island to help girls fleeing from the zone by healing their mental and physical wounds and restoring them to a state of normalcy. She does not believe in many harmful gendered notions related to womanhood which dictate that women's bodies are meant to satiate male sexual needs; a very harmful notion of gender inculcated in the girls on the zone. She believes that women's bodies are perfect, it is rather the discriminatory and sexist attitudes that reduce women to their sexuality and body parts that are harmful. Vane evinces a notion of gender which is about celebrating and accepting the female body. This notion is in contrast to the notion of gender identity about women in the Zone which reduces them to their body parts. The act of disrobing and being naked, which

Vane and other mentors on the island urged to do is for accepting their bodies. She considers bodies the instruments of social change. To her being a woman is to accept female bodies which alone can bring a change in the dystopian world where female bodies are seen as concomitant with sexuality. She along with the other mentors on the island who were the original mentors of the island wanted a place of refuge where people with alternative thinking like them could get away from a toxic world. She is a woman who believes that like her women need to have an autonomous self, celebrate and accept the female body and not follow the harmful gendered notions that equate femininity with sexuality. She tries to inculcate her notions about gender identity in these girls which is all about accepting the female body devoid of the patriarchal and sexist notions attached to it that equates it with sexuality, having an autonomous self free from all patriarchal constraints. Barbara J Risman says that research should also focus on not only activities and identities which are all about doing gender but also those which undo gender (82). Vane's notions of gender identity are about all such notions that undo the prevailing harmful gendered notions in the patriarchal dystopian world. Vane and the other mentors on the island provide a space for the marginalised subjects such as the women in the Zone in their island community. The novel *The Island of Lost Girls* is a critical dystopia as discussed in 2.4.4 of the thesis.

Dismantling harmful gendered notions can be connected to the categorisation of the novel as a critical dystopia. By spreading and inculcating her notions of gender identity she is undoing prevailing harmful notions about gender in women from the Zone. Vane empowers these women by dismantling the harmful gendered notion that their identity and worth as women are tied to their sexuality and makes them realize that their life in the Zone as prostitutes is degrading which will put an end to the inhumane practice of prostitution and sexual slavery thus providing a possible

solution or hope that conditions in this dystopia can be remedied thus attesting to the categorisation of text as a critical dystopia. Her notions about gender that undo the prevailing sexist gendered notions about women also lead her to plan strategies to defeat and destroy the Zone and the General. WWU allows Vane to form the island only on the assurance that Vane along with other mentors will not engage in activities that disturb the system followed in the Zone. The WWU and the dystopian society is suspicious of Vane and is not readily accepting of identities such as that of Vane who is bereft of many harmful gender notions attached to femininity propagated in this dystopia. The hesitancy to accept such an identity of Vane is because the dystopian society views such notions propagated by Vane and the identity she evinces a threat to the maintenance of conditions in dystopia. She wants to dismantle the Zone and the masculinist values it endorses which are responsible for the exploitation of women and degrading notions attached to femininity. It is revealed that Vane wants information about the General and it is hinted that the island community wants to defeat him as the General and his dystopian regime endorse masculinist values and many sexist notions about womanhood. The undoing of harmful gendered notions and dismantlement of the Zone, the destruction of the Generals and the masculinist values and sexist notions attached to femininity they all endorse can transform this dystopia into a utopia. Vane's notions of gender are what lead her to establish the island in a patriarchal dystopian world that endorses masculinist values and sexist notions attached to femininity. Most of the utopian imaginations of women-only communities and societies feature revised gender norms and notions of femininity. Many gynocentric utopias of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century writers are influenced by the second-wave feminists' new definitions of gender and revised expectations of sexual freedom (Beauregard 689). Fictional matrilinear societies

relied on the revaluation of feminine values and virtues that has been erased by phallogocentric writing of history (Beauregard 696). The island offers a place of refuge for physically and emotionally battered women and even though the island, run by mentor Vane's ideas on gender, is not strictly a utopia her notions of undoing gender internalised by her and which she tries to inculcate in other girls is reminiscent of the revised gender norms in women only utopian communities. Her notions can dismantle or undo harmful gendered notions and can have a transformative and positive impact on the dystopian world and turn it into a utopia.

5.5 Women in Dystopias – Conclusion

Women in the dystopian novels whose gender identities are discussed are Meiji, Rahmato'u and Vane. In *Escape* Meiji is the only girl in a society that has no women. Meiji is not free to express her gender identity and has to be kept in secrecy without which she will be killed. For the first sixteen years of her life, she has also been kept in a state of ignorance regarding gender differences. The society presented in *Escape* is patriarchal and it is a feminist dystopia. Women do not exist in this society at all. The nature of this society disallows Meiji from experiencing a normal life and doing things that girls of her age do. Even when she is let out of her estate, she has to disguise herself as a boy for her protection. She denies her authentic self for saving her life. Nonetheless, Youngest imparts notions of gender and gender differences to her and she is initiated into the world of women in circumstances that are unfavourable to women. On the island, she experiences anxiety as she is now surrounded by strangers such as women whom she has never seen in her life coming from a male-only society. The novel *The Island of Lost Girls* is a critical dystopia. The island is a place of refuge for the abused girls of the zone. Meiji is initially unwilling to obey orders and is uncooperative but later on, she participates in the tasks

assigned to her after she gets her memories back. The island provides her training and resources to dismantle the oppressive system in the zone as well as in Brotherland. Meiji is at ease with her gender identity after she gets her memories back and is no longer in a state of confusion. She along with other girls try to attack the Zone. Since the text is a critical dystopia, it can be said that Meiji's attack is a larger attempt to dismantle the patriarchal dystopian society which disallows girls like Meiji from leading a comfortable and happy life and expressing their gender identity. Freedom from such a patriarchal society allows women like Meiji to express and embrace their gender identity as women. Rahmato'u is a girl in the zone who comes to the island wanting to change her life. She has internalised some harmful and sexist notions about womanhood which ties it to a woman's sexuality and keeps women in a state of subservience. All such harmful notions are undone while she is on the island. The island provides her with an opportunity to determine her life and pursue her goals and develop an autonomous self. The island community contributes greatly to her growth. Rahmato'u benefits from her time spent on the island and the harmful notions she has internalised have been undone after her training. Her decision to be a mentor and lead a new life and thereby influence and shape similar young women exploited in the Zone indicates that she is rid of harmful notions of femininity and her identity as a woman devoid of its negative connotations led her to change the conditions in the dystopian society. Mentor Vane undoes many harmful notions attached to women and inculcates notions of gender identity which she has internalised in these girls. To her it is about celebrating and accepting the female body rather than seeing it as a reason for one's subjugation, developing an autonomous self that is free from patriarchal constraints. The island is a place that allows her to propagate those ideas and bring about social changes in the dystopian world. The text *The Island of Lost Girls* is a

critical dystopia. The mentors on the island analyse the conditions responsible for the present state of the dystopian world and dismantle harmful notions inculcated in these girls. The island is a place of refuge and offers a possible solution to the problems of this dystopian society which is why the text is a critical dystopia. The critical aspect of critical dystopia is fulfilled by the girls and mentors of the island as they undo harmful notions attached to the female gender and try to dismantle a patriarchal dystopia that erodes all human values. Meiji, Rahmato'u and Vane, all three female characters accept their gender identity as women and try to change the gender inequality, the ever-pervading social reality in this dystopia. Both novels feature dystopian patriarchal societies that have sexist and harmful notions about women that disallows women from leading and pursuing a life according to their terms. In *Brotherland* this figures as the total absence of women that does not allow Meiji to experience her life as a woman and her womanhood. In *The Island of Lost Girls*, the harmful gender notions equating "feems" or women in the Zone with their sexuality are responsible for the sexual objectification of women. The island community can provide a solution to all these problems, mentors such as Vane try to undo harmful gendered notions attached to women and is on a quest to dismantle the Zone and defeat the General. Vane also wants to destroy the Zone, the Generals and the masculinist values it endorses which is also responsible for perpetuating many harmful and destructive gendered notions. Such an undoing of sexist and damaging gendered notions and dismantlement and destruction of practices and systems that endorse masculinist values can ameliorate the social conditions prevailing in this patriarchal dystopian society and lead it into a utopia.

5.6 Aila's Identity as a Transsexual Person- Introduction

A transgender person can be used to refer to any person whose gender does not match the sex assigned at birth (“Transgender”). Transgender persons may have different sexual orientations like gay, bisexual, or straight. Transsexual people are people who undergo or seek means of medical intervention to change their bodies (“Transsexual” 10). This may include using hormone replacement therapy or surgical procedures but is not limited to these (“Transsexual” 10). Sometimes transgender persons undergo a process known as transitioning. Transition is a process that a person undertakes to bring their body or gender expression in alignment with their gender identity (“Transition”). Transition can include medical, legal and social transition. Social transition involves telling one’s family, co-workers, and friends and using a different name or pronoun etc (“Transition”). Legal transition involves changing one’s name on all legal documents (“Transition”). Medical transition includes pursuing hormone replacement therapy or surgical procedures (“Transition”). Some transgender people may not pursue transition steps while others might not do it due to the cost of pursuing surgical means, the fear of adverse reactions from society or any underlying medical condition (“Transition”). One does not have to depend strictly on medical procedures or physical appearance to be called a transgender person (“Transition”). A person can be called transgender when they realize that their gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth (“Transition”).

“Transie” is the dystopian world’s equivalent of the word transsexual. The author Manjula Padmanabhan uses the word “transie” to denote transsexual persons in the novel. The word is introduced in the novel *The Island of Lost Girls*. Aila, a character, introduced in *The Island of Lost Girls*, initially helps the protagonist Youngest to reach the Collectory and thereafter decides to accompany Youngest following the

death of her father Amir. Aila is born as a boy and experiences a disjunction between her sex assigned at birth as a boy and her different identification. Aila's transition happened because of her different gender identification. She was uncomfortable with her identity as a boy in her childhood. She talks about gradual changes taking place which cemented her different gender identification. She became a "transie" or transsexual person owing to her different gender identification as she says, "I was a transie deep in my heart. In my blood, in my soul" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 64). She undergoes sex reassignment surgery to get a body as suited to her gender identification. She identifies herself as a "transie" or transsexual person. Thus, Aila is a transsexual person or a "transie". She is a transsexual woman. Sex reassignment surgery does aid Aila in constructing a body suited to her identity. She also undergoes some important milestones in her life leading up to her transition. She also does not try to pass as a woman and openly embraces her identity as a transsexual woman. Each subsection discusses important aspects of Aila's identity as a transsexual woman such as her dependence on sex reassignment surgery, the milestones in her life and her acceptance of her trans identity.

5.6.1 Sex Reassignment Surgery and Transsexual identity

Transsexual persons' demand for sex reassignment surgery indicates the extent to which gender is dependent on the body. In transsexual peoples' autobiographies, a repeated insistence on something physical motivates them to undergo a sex change (Hausman 352). The body attained through sex reassignment surgery is seen as the real body, the one which he or she is meant to have (Hausman 352). Bernice L Hausman in the article "Body, Technology and Gender in Transsexual Autobiographies" says so about the significance of the body in determining gender identity: "[t]he idea of a gender identity fully divorced from the

body and its signification of sex is only rarely accepted by transsexual subjects” (352). To some transsexual people, the desire to change sex was compelling and too authentic for them to eradicate (Meyerowitz 368). Transsexual people have an organic, strong and intense desire to change their gender (Meyerowitz 368). Trans people who have undergone sex reassignment surgery are aware that their bodies are a result of reconstruction (Cromwell 513-14). Jason Cromwell a trans man credits surgery for reconstructing a body better suited to his self-image as a man (514). The surgical means pursued by Aila are not only a cosmetic procedure but a necessary procedure needed to attain a body more in sync with her identity. Aila changed her body because of her desire in her to get a body that is more suited to her self-identity. She says that she has sensitive breasts just like real women and that she selected her nipples from a catalogue. The desire to change her body is certainly an overwhelming feeling in Aila which led to her pursuing surgical procedures. Aila is happy with her change as is evident in her conversation with Youngest. While in the bath with Youngest she tells him that she received breasts like real “womanses” or real women which are touch-sensitive as well as aesthetically pleasing. Her gender identity is not divorced from her body. She uses breast reconstruction surgery and other surgeries to get a feminine appearance and body parts. Her identity as a trans woman is complete only by transitioning bodily. Her pride and happiness in possessing her newly constructed breasts indicate that not only gender identification but the body also plays a role in determining gender identity for transsexual people. Transsexual people like Aila are aware of the role of sex reassignment surgery in constructing a body suited to their self-identity.

5.6.2 Milestones in a Transsexual Person's Life

Transgender youth may have an awareness that their gender identity does not match their sex which is a milestone (Vaccaro et al. 36). Aila's realization of her gender identity seems to have taken place at a young age, a significant milestone in her life as a transgender person. Another milestone is the transgender youths sharing of their identity with others (Vaccaro et al. 37). Aila tells Youngest that her father hated her more so because he knew that she became a "transie" or transsexual person owing to her gender identification, therefore, suggesting that Aila at some point might have disclosed her different gender identification with her father, a significant milestone in the life of a transgender person. A milestone is living a lifestyle in sync with their gender identity (Vaccaro et al. 37). Family members may respond negatively to this (Vaccaro et al. 37). A transgender person usually changes their name and pronouns after coming out (Hill 116). These changes are necessary for the transgender person for validating their identity even though it may be met with initial resistance and mistakes by their family members (Hill 117). Aila starts leading a lifestyle in sync with her identity post her realization of her gender identity. She wears clothes more suited to her identity and changes her pronoun too. For instance, Amir calls Aila his daughter. The gender pronoun is important to a transsexual person who has transitioned fully. Even though Amir hated Aila's transition calling Aila his daughter is an affirmation of Aila of her identity. Amir has grudgingly accepted Aila's gender from his firstborn son to a "worthless daughter" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 29). The change in her status from being described as a son to a daughter indicates that she has altogether changed her identity and is now living a life suited to her self-identity. She seems to have embraced her feminine side in her dressing, and makeup. In the novel, Aila dresses in supposedly feminine or female clothing and is

seen as wearing makeup to suit her identity. The visible appearance of a transgender person like Aila was necessary for her for validating her identity. She is introduced as wearing a flowery print silk dress. She has rouge on her face and eye shadow on her eyelids. In another instance in the novel, while on the yacht with the General, she is seen as wearing a black lace caftan over a pink satin sheath, braided hair and drop pearls in her ears. She no longer has the same appearance that she had as a young boy before the surgery.

5.6.3 Passing and Transsexual Identity

Some transgender or transsexual people choose the gender with which he or she identifies to gain acceptance in society as most people believe there are only two genders- male and female (Namaste 590). Transgender and transsexual people pass themselves as cis man or cis woman for this reason (Namaste 590). Passing means hiding the fact that you are a transgender person (Namaste 590) and leading a life in a gender of your choice that leads others to identify you as a natural member of that gender (Stone 231). This is done to avoid physical and verbal harassment (Namaste 590). A transsexual person does this by constructing a plausible history to hide one's past identity (Stone 230). A transsexual person loses the ability to be authentic and the opportunity to represent the complexities of their life experience by passing (Stone 230). Transsexual people hide their previous gender roles to pass (Stone 231). This may result in the erasure of their substantial personal experience (Stone 230).

Transsexual people create monistic identities by passing (Stone 232). They forego authentic relationships and physical and subjective intertextuality (Stone 230). Trans people are increasingly choosing not to pass and identify themselves as a transgender person –a unique identity outside of the gender binary. Transgender and transsexual are subversive identities that exist outside the gender binary (Cromwell 512). Jason

Cromwell a male transsexual says that he never felt like a man as he has never undergone experiences associated with a boy (512). Even though he presents to the world as a man, he does not identify as one and neither does he see himself as a woman as he never identified with his female identity before surgery too (Cromwell 513). He calls himself a trans man as an “other” (Cromwell 513). The conviction that he is not an ordinary man and can never be one makes him different and a trans man (Cromwell 513). Trans people are aware of their transness whether they identify it as so or not (Cromwell 513). Cromwell explains why trans identities are disruptive: “Disruption occurs because an individual is capable of articulating an identity founded upon both/and as all as neither/nor and either/or” (513). Aila at no point has tried to “pass” either to her father or to society. She has embraced her identity as a transsexual person. She calls herself a trans woman. She knows that as a trans woman her experiences are different from those of other cisgender women. She corrects the General when he calls her a “feem” or female indicating that she identifies as a trans woman than a cisgender woman. She calls herself a genuine “transie” or transsexual person. Her experiences cannot be reduced to that of a woman even after transitioning. She knew that she is neither a man nor a woman. Her acceptance of her identity as a transsexual person shows the disruptive nature of her identity. Her refusal to pass as a woman and her identification as a trans woman meant that she was relegated to prostitution which is what trans women were only allowed to do in this dystopian society. Towards the end of the novel, Aila is provided shelter and safety by the mentors on the island and taken as an ally in the fight against the Zone, WWU and the General. The upcoming conflict against the WWU and the Zone indicates that the women in the island community are committed to ending all exploitative practices such as prostitution forced on transsexual people which gives hope for people such as

Aila to embrace their identity openly without the stigma of prostitution attached to it. Aila's support of the island community indicates her larger scheme of attempting to free transsexual people from prostitution. All stages of Aila's identity development show that she is a proud trans woman who believes that someone transitions and becomes a trans woman due to a different gender identity and not for inviting male objectification. It is her acceptance and acknowledgement of her own trans identity as well as the identity category of transsexual that leads her to join the island community and thereby change gender inequality, the prevailing social reality of this dystopia that reduces transsexual people to prostitutes.

5.7 Aila's Identity as a Transsexual Person - Conclusion

Aila is a transsexual character in the dystopian world who has fully accepted and owned her identity. She is not embarrassed or afraid of being labelled a "transie" or transsexual person in a world where transsexual people are relegated to prostitution and not respected. She does not pass as a woman just to gain social approval. She has suffered a lot owing to her identity as a transsexual person. Her abuse starts in childhood when her father didn't approve of her feminine side and progressed to adulthood. She undergoes some milestones in a trans person's life such as the realization of her different gender identity, sharing this identity with others and living a lifestyle in tune with this identity. She is very comfortable with her female body post-surgery something which is needed for her self-identity. She was born and raised in a patriarchal set-up and has no means or know-how to free herself from her abusive father or her line of work. Towards the end of the novel, mentor Vane offers Aila a safe place, hospitality and food after all the trials and tribulations faced by her. The mentors on the island offer her a safe place to heal as well as see her as an ally in their upcoming battle against the General and the Zone. This also gives the hope that trans

women like Aila can be uplifted and treated better in a better world as envisioned by the mentors and the women in the island community. Her acceptance of her identity as a transsexual woman devoid of harmful notions attached to her gender that only views them as only apt for prostitution and her need to change the harmful notions attached to transsexual people lead her to join the island community in their conflict against the Zone and the Whole Word Union and other power centres in this dystopian world that disregards the identity of transsexual people and objectifies them.

5.8 Treatment of Trans identities in Dystopia - Introduction

Transsexual people are ill-treated in Padmanabhan's dystopian society. They are discriminated against due to their identities. They remain a marginalized gender identity and are subjected to rape, physical and mental abuse and prostitution. They are a disempowered group that has no say in the power structures or functioning of the dystopian world. The dislike and disapprobation towards transsexual people are due to diverse reasons, each emphasizing the staunch belief in a gender binary. The reasons for ill-treatment and abuse are mainly due to genderism, cissexism and femmephobia. The violent physical abuse which is gender bashing and the dislike, and prejudice which is transphobia are also rampant among cisgender people in this dystopia. The specific humiliating treatment and sexual abuse of trans women can be termed a case of transmisogyny. Transgender people are also considered less authentic because of cissexism. Trans women are also sexualized and objectified which is called trans-sexualization. Even though various forms of discrimination are carried out against trans people there is still hope offered to them in this dystopian world in the form of the island community. Each subsection discusses various aspects of discrimination carried out against individuals with transgender identity such as

transphobia, genderism, gender bashing, femmephobia, transmisogyny, cissexism, and trans-sexualization. All these forms of discriminatory attitudes and behaviours are due to the refusal to accept the identities of transgender people. The refusal to accept the identities of trans people is responsible for the gender inequality in the dystopias as transsexual people are considered apt for prostitution alone. The possibility of hope and redemption for people with transgender identities is also explored. Discrimination carried out against trans people shows the unwillingness of the dystopian society to accept the identity of trans people. They do not accept the identity of trans people as recognizing them equally as gender identities worthy of respect can lead to the abolishment of gender inequality in this dystopian world that the dystopian society maintains.

5.8.1 Trans identity, Transphobia, Genderism, Gender Bashing, Femmephobia

The instances that show the hatred, dislike and negativity towards trans identities in the dystopian world are due to genderism and femmephobia. Transphobia is used to refer to any negative attitude toward trans people such as fear, loathing, hatred, rage, and moral indignation based on their enactments of gender (Bettcher 46). A person who transitions from one gender to another may face transphobia. A transgender person faces anti-transgender behaviour and violence after coming out. Genderism is a “system of beliefs that reinforces a negative evaluation based on gender non-conformity or an incongruence between sex and gender” (Hill 119). This belief system subordinates transgender people and regards non-binary genders as anomalies (Hill 119). Genderism is manifest in policies and cultural beliefs (Hill 119). Transphobia manifests itself in interpersonal relations with transgender people when one’s revulsion or hatred towards the transgender person is revealed (Hill 119). Gender bashing is behaviour and genderism and transphobia are the attitudes (Hill

120). Genderist and transphobic values lead to gender bashing (Hill 121). The disclosure of being a transgender person is enough to evoke transphobia (Hill 130). Femmephobia is the “devaluation and regulation of femininity and suggests a separate, perhaps overlapping, phenomenon specific to gender (e.g., femininity), rather than gender/sex (e.g., woman) or sex (e.g., female)” (Hoskin). In patriarchal culture wanting to be female by a body assigned male at birth is actively discouraged and punished as femininity is regarded as a demotion (Hoskin). Femininity is seen as inferior to masculinity and wanting to be feminine by a cisgender male is met with social ridicule and dehumanization (Hoskin). Those assigned males at birth are policed and medical intervention is sought when they express a desire to be feminine (Hoskin). The same policing is not carried out for those assigned females wanting to be masculine or male as masculinity is seen as social promotion (Hoskin). Masculinity is seen as being physically strong, protective, authentic, and natural while femininity is seen as a target, inauthentic, deceptive and subject to dehumanization and objectification (Hoskin).

There are two instances of transphobia in the novel, which are shown by Amir and the General towards Aila. The attitude of Amir towards Aila can be taken as an instance of transphobia resulting from genderist views and femmephobia. Amir cannot understand the need for Aila to embrace the identity of a trans woman. He feels intense hatred for Aila because she decides to transition due to her gender identification. The possibility of a man wanting to be a woman is not accepted by Amir. Amir was happy when he had Aila his firstborn son. He was gradually disappointed when Aila began to change and no longer evinced any qualities which he deemed masculine and necessary. His dislike towards Aila can be termed transphobia as Aila began to act contrary to what was expected of him as a boy. He believed in a

world order where masculinity is celebrated and where women are subservient to men. He believed that men should possess certain traits considered manly or masculine and he devalued femininity. He believes in many gendered notions and his values and beliefs reflect genderism. Aila's transition was hated by Amir. He believed in a world order where men are superior to women and he refused to change his views even when the world changed. He hated the transition of Aila more so because she was now a trans woman and Amir considered femininity as a demotion and hated it. He knew that Aila wanted to transition right from childhood and he was disappointed and angry at Aila for transitioning to a woman as he always considered them inferior and subordinate. Amir's transphobia is thus also due to femmephobia. He starts physically harassing Aila even before the sex-change surgery. His physical violence was directed towards Aila because she did not have the qualities deemed masculine by him. She was subjected to physical harassment following her surgery. The physical violence directed toward Aila can certainly be categorized as gender-bashing. Transphobic and genderist views of Amir have led to gender bashing.

The General has detested trans women because he never understood the need for a fully functional man to become a "vermin" or woman. His transphobic attitude stems from femmephobia and genderist beliefs. His transphobic attitude is evident in his treatment of Aila. He has contempt for Aila who transitioned for purely emotional reasons. He didn't like that Aila whom he claims was born perfectly as a man decided to transition to a woman whom he hated and regarded unworthy of life. He tells Aila that she should have been melted and reconstituted at birth. The General's dislike of Aila stems from the fact that she decided to become a "feem" or female who is worthless in his estimation. He regards her as "non-men. Those who are born in nature yet are unfit to belong to the ranks of men" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost*

Girls 82). He ridicules her mental abilities and abuses her verbally. The General's dislike for trans women arises from his hatred of women. He regards Aila's transition to a woman as a social demotion worthy of social ridicule and contempt. The General cannot understand how Aila chooses to change gender from a man whom he describes as a "lord-like being" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 82) to becoming a trans woman. His patriarchal mindset disallows him from understanding the unique experiences and status of trans women. While he regards his fellow men as his equals in physique, intelligence and performance women are seen as inferior and subordinate to men. Trans women such as Aila are disliked by the General precisely because he devalued femininity known as femmephobia. He emphasizes the traditional social roles meant for women and laments how women were successful to wean themselves from their traditional social roles which kept them in servitude and subjection. The General believes in the social roles assigned to each gender traditionally and it is because of the women's emancipation from such roles and pursuit of equality that he decides to kill women. The General believes in social and cultural expectations about gendered behaviours and roles. This indicates his genderist beliefs. The General even asks Aila whether she has anything left of her masculine reasoning to understand his argument thereby equating rationality and intellect as masculine. He knew that Aila was born a man and her attitudes and behaviour are regarded as feminine by him which he detests. He tells her that he wants her to behave more like a man. This indicates how the General wants Aila to behave more in tune with sociocultural expectations of the male gender. He even punished her for what he termed as "verminous impulses", behaviours that were weaknesses he associated with the Other gender" (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 162). All this reflects his

transphobia. His physical abuse of Aila, resulting from his transphobic attitude and genderist beliefs, can be called gender bashing.

5.8.2 Transmisogyny

Transmisogyny is a form of discrimination in which trans people are ridiculed for their failure to uphold binary gender norms as well as for their expressions of femininity or femaleness (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Trans women are considered a threat to the male-centred hierarchy (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). In such a hierarchy men and masculinity are considered superior to females and femininity (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Trans women undermine the supremacy of males as they hold the possibility of a cisgender man becoming a woman and embracing femininity (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Binary gender norms are responsible for all anti-trans discrimination (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). The belief that women and men are opposite sexes becomes the rationale for subjugating women (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Trans women are ridiculed not only for their transgression of gender norms but also for the fact that they decided to be women when they could have lived as men and inherited male privilege (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Trans women are a challenge to those who glorify masculinity (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Transphobia and cissexism are rooted in oppositional sexism (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Oppositional sexism holds that males and females are rigid non-overlapping categories with different attributes (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). The people believing in oppositional sexism are dismissive of non-binary genders and non-heterosexist sexual orientations (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). They also punish the non-conforming genders and sexual orientations (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Gender hierarchy is upheld and enforced by traditional sexism (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Traditional sexism upholds that masculinity is superior to femininity (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). It gives rise to many assumptions about transsexual women (Serano,

Whipping Girl). It is also the reason behind society's perception of trans women as a threat (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Traditional sexism not only discriminates against females but anyone who expresses femininity (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Traditional and oppositional sexism ensures that only masculinity is seen as authentic (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). These notions give men power over women and anyone feminine (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Those wanting to become feminine or female are sensationalized, trivialized and sexualized by others (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Anti-trans discrimination can be avoided by abolishing or by challenging traditional and oppositional sexism (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). There are transmisogynistic undertones to the sexual victimization undergone by trans women (Matsuzaka and Koch 40-41). Trans women are at an increased risk of sexual victimization (Matsuzaka and Koch 28) and sexual violence (Matsuzaka and Koch 30). Transmisogynistic sexual victimization includes fetishization, objectification, physical battery, catcalling, misogyny, devaluation, rape, sexual coercion, domestic violence, silencing and transphobic violence.

The sexual victimization and domestic abuse of Aila took place in her home itself as her father Amir has a transphobic and misogynistic view- the intersection of which is transmisogyny. He practices traditional sexism which views women as inferior to men as is evident in Aila's mention of Amir's beliefs and oppositional sexism which makes him scorn the category of the transsexual person whom he disrespects. He believes in a world order where there are men and women with set attributes for each, an order in which men are superior to women. He values masculinity. He equates masculinity with power and success and femininity with domesticity and passivity as is evident in his interactions with Youngest and Aila. A transsexual person is considered by him a universal figure of ridicule. All this

suggests his belief in traditional and oppositional sexism that is responsible for the transmisogyny that he embodies. His transphobia coupled with his misogyny leads him to sexually abuse and physically him Aila. Amir rapes Aila at a young age post her transition. He verbally abuses her and asks her not to interfere in his conversation with Youngest. He reprimands her and asks her not to interfere when men are talking. All this suggests that Amir considers himself at the helm of the family and that being a patriarch he didn't allow his daughter to speak or voice out her opinion however sensible it seems. This points to deep-rooted misogynistic notions in Amir that lead him to devalue trans women. He misbehaves with Aila and is a controlling presence in her life. He beats her and calls her “[w]itless . . . spineless . . . less than filth . . .” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 29) and many other abusive words when she deviates from her commands. Amir uses belittling language for Aila and sees her as his social inferior. This is what Youngest feels too as he thinks Amir's language towards Aila was harsh and contemptuous and he felt embarrassed seeing her get humiliated. Amir tells her that even beating her dishonours his hand. He considers transsexual people inferior as he tells Youngest. The visible mark of a bruise on Aila's left cheek shows the extent to which he has physically abused her. The physical and sexual abuse of Aila at the hands of Amir is an instance of transmisogynistic sexual victimization.

The General's sexual coercion of Aila is also an example of transmisogyny. The General believes in a gender hierarchy where there are set attributes for men and women. Women according to him occupy the lowly position of caretakers who reproduce children and nurture them while the heavy tasks and responsibilities of providing shelter, protection and livelihood are done by men. He tells Youngest that conflict arose when women began to challenge their servitude and the social roles

traditionally assigned to them. The General goes as far as eliminating women when he saw that they no longer followed these traditional roles. This shows that the General believes in traditional sexism. The General does not understand Aila's reasons for her transition as he considers any man transitioning to a woman as disgusting and unworthy of life. His belief in traditional sexism leads him to devalue Aila because of her femininity. His failure and inability to understand Aila's reasons for the gender change and the identity category of transsexual point to a belief in oppositional sexism. All of this shows the extent to which the General believes in a gender hierarchy and traditional and oppositional sexism which is responsible for his transmisogyny. The negative attitude toward trans women such as Aila and the sexist views upheld by him can be termed transmisogyny. He physically abuses Aila and also rapes her on certain occasions pointing to transmisogynistic sexual victimization.

5.8.3 Cissexism

Transsexual people experience cissexism (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Cissexism is the belief that transsexual people are inferior to cissexual (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Transsexual people's identified gender is seen as less authentic or inferior than cisgender people (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Cissexism is rooted in oppositional sexism. Oppositional sexism upholds the notion that women and men are categories with no overlapping traits and possess unique abilities, traits and desires (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). There are several discriminatory attitudes the focus of which is to undermine trans identities such as Trans Exclusion, Trans-objectification, Trans-Interrogation, Trans-mystification, and Trans-Erasure (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). These discriminatory attitudes which target trans identity are a result of cissexism. The objectification of transsexual bodies is trans-objectification (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Cissexuals become more interested in a transsexual person's physical transformation

thus undermining their identity post-transition (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). The cissexual becomes focused on the genitalia of a transsexual person and the discrepancy between their physical sex and gender identity (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). Trans objectification allows cissexual to demonize, ridicule, and mock transsexual people (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). An instance of cissexism is evident when Youngest is harassed by mercenaries when he travels in the Cut Throat Express. He is mocked by mercenaries who wanted to know his whereabouts. His dark blue hijab marked him as a “transie”, a transsexual person in the pleasure industry. The mercenaries catcalled Youngest and pushed and prodded him. They make fun of his sexual anatomy asking him whether has “[t]wo holes? Or three?” (Padmanabhan, *The Island of Lost Girls* 1). The harassment ends with Youngest’s jewellery being ripped off and a dead rat attached plaited to his long hair. The mercenaries ridicule Youngest for his sexual anatomy which can be regarded as an example of trans-objectification. They probe Youngest about the change in his anatomy. They are disturbed or obsessed over Youngest’s incongruity between his physical body and identified gender. His gender is seen as less authentic and he is mocked by these mercenaries as a result.

5.8.4 Trans-Sexualization

There is a notion that individuals transition and become trans women for inviting male sexual advances and male sexualization leads people to objectify and sexualize trans women known as trans sexualization (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). The sexualization of trans women leads to a disregard of their gender identity (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). An example of trans-sexualization is the porn and sex industry where trans women are constantly sexually objectified (Serano, *Whipping Girl*). In the dystopian world, transsexual women are objectified as sex slaves. The cisgender women in this dystopia barring the ones from the Zone are free to do what they please

but the same freedom is not afforded to trans women. The control of sex and the regulation of sex is one of the features of dystopias as discussed in 2.4.2 of the thesis. Dystopian society controls the sexual habits and activities of trans women. Dystopian society by reducing trans women to prostitutes keeps them marginalized. Most transsexual people cannot have a family life as their sexuality is reserved for their clients. A dystopian society is also defined by its unequal gender relations as discussed in 2.4.2 of the thesis. Transsexual people are confined to prostitution and they are sexually objectified by the other genders. The sexualization and objectification of trans women and their sexual coercion are examples of transsexualization. The control of the sexuality of transsexual people and their confinement to prostitution and their marginalized status in society, and the unequal gender relations are due to the refusal to accept the gender identity of trans women. It is believed that people transition and become trans women to invite male sexual advances rather than doing it because they identify differently. Transsexualization is responsible for dystopian conditions such as the control and regulation of transsexual people's sexuality and gender inequality faced by them.

5.8.5 Redemption and Hope for People with Transsexual Identities in the Dystopian world

The ill-treatment of transsexual people and their abuse is evident in the dystopian world. Trans women like Aila are forced to be prostitutes which is an instance of transsexualization. The dystopian world discriminates against individuals with transgender identities. *The Island of Lost Girls* is a critical dystopia as discussed in 2.4.4 of the thesis, in keeping with the nature of this dystopia, the island community provides a refuge or haven for transgender women and the hope that dystopian conditions can be remedied. They provide shelter, advice and support to

such trans women and respect their dignity. Vane tells Youngest that there was not a transgender persons' team if not a woman's only team to fight in Zone because of the lack of sponsorship. This shows her belief in empowering transgender people in dismantling the masculinist dystopian regime which is responsible for the suffering of women and transgender people alike. The members of the island believe in the empowerment of the marginalized gender such as women and transgender women which provides a possible solution to improving the conditions in the masculinist dystopia. Vane promises to provide shelter, and food to Aila and acknowledges her great suffering towards the end of the novel. She wants Aila to participate in the island community's greater battle against the inhumane system which subjugates transgender people and women alike. The need to rehabilitate and save trans women such as Aila by the island community indicates that they acknowledge and accept trans identities and do not engage in trans-sexualization like in the dystopian patriarchal world. Queer utopian literature such as *Meanwhile, Elsewhere: Science Fiction and Fantasy from Transgender Writers* offers "room for the heroic everydayness of real trans people's lives" (Fitzpatrick and Casey Plett 440). Such queer utopian literature emphasises the agency of trans people rather than treating them as spectacles. The island community's commitment to trans people is reminiscent of the utopian imagination's commitment to the cause and life of queer people as queer itself contains a utopian kernel according to Amalia Ziv (qtd. in Marks et al. 18). The upliftment of trans people can improve the conditions in dystopia and elevate it to a utopia. The novel is open-ended and even though it does not offer a conclusive end to the conflict, provides hope that the trans identities can be redeemed and given their due dignity.

5.9 Treatment of Trans identities in Dystopia - Conclusion

All the instances in the novel's dystopian world prove that transgender identities have been discriminated against. The novel *The Island of Lost Girls* features several discriminatory behaviours against transgender people. They have been discriminated against due to their gender identity. The discriminatory attitudes can be taken as an effect of genderist beliefs, transphobia, femmephobia, gender bashing, transmisogyny, cissexism and trans-sexualization. All these various discriminatory behaviours and attitudes have their root cause in a refusal to acknowledge and accept the identity of a trans person as well as the harmful gender notions attached to their identity. It features a world where transsexual people are only allowed to engage in prostitution. The General and Amir, two figures representing patriarchy and believing in gendered roles discriminate against Aila for being a trans woman. They both believe in -oppositional and traditional sexism. They berate Aila and dislike her and want her to act more like a man. Amir and General both value masculinity and want Aila to behave in line with the social and cultural expectations of men even though she identifies as a trans woman. The dislike and prejudiced attitude towards Aila is transphobia. This is a result of their genderist views. They also dislike Aila because she became a trans woman as they consider femininity or becoming a woman a demotion that can be called femmephobia. They also physically abuse Aila which can be called gender bashing. Aila in addition to facing transphobia also has to face transmisogyny coming from her father and the General. She is discriminated against not only because she is a transsexual person but also because of her femininity. Amir and General's treatment of Aila can be termed transmisogynistic. Cissexism is also evident in the mistreatment of Youngest by the mercenaries. There is a wrong notion prevalent that becoming a trans woman is done only for gaining male attention. This

harmful notion is responsible for the sexualization of transsexual persons and the perception of them as apt for prostitution alone. Despite all the discrimination trans people can be redeemed and given their due worth as is evident in the support and refuge offered to them by the island community.

5.10 Gender Identities- Conclusion

The male and female characters in the novels are influenced by the environment and the way they are socialised. Some men in the dystopias have unhealthy notions about masculinity which is about controlling women, acquiring sexual partners, demonstrating violence, and believing in gender stereotypes. Such men are largely the product of dystopian patriarchal societies where men and masculinities are honoured and women and femininities are undervalued. The dystopia presented in *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls* both features patriarchal societies in which men have control. Being a man and possessing desired qualities regarded as manly or masculine can fetch rewards and other social benefits in these societies. The power centres in both dystopian worlds denigrate women and deprive them of any power. In *Escape*, this results in the absolute absence of women and anything feminine literally and figuratively and in *The Island of Lost Girls* it is a society where women are seen as sex slaves and prostitutes. In both the dystopian texts harmful and destructive notions attached to masculinity ensures that men are viewed and perceived as the stronger and superior gender and women as the weaker ones. Warriors, Blackson, and Amir are some of the male characters who have many harmful notions about masculinity which can be damaging not only to women but to themselves and these gender notions internalised by them make them support or uphold the gender inequality in dystopia. These characters who evince harmful notions attached to their masculinity help in upholding gender inequality, the

prevailing condition in these dystopias. The dystopian society also perpetuates and upholds the harmful gender notions evinced by Blackson, Amir and warriors that can maintain the status quo in this dystopia. Youngest, Eldest and Middle are the exceptions. They do not have many of these harmful notions about masculinity and are male characters who treat women with respect. This has also to do with their upbringing as they were born and brought up, raised and spent a major part of their lives in societies that were not patriarchal and non-dystopian. All these characters, because of evincing healthy masculinity, try to change or resist the conditions prevailing in this dystopia. In *Escape* literacy, education, knowledge, recovery of memory and history untainted by hegemonic androcentric discourse such as the ones possessed by Youngest, Eldest and Middle can help challenge the singleness of androcentric hegemonic discourses in Brotherland that perpetuate damaging and stereotypical notions about men and women. The dystopian society of Brotherland can be changed to a utopia with the emergence of a counter-discourse that can emerge with the rise of a literate population that have access to books and learning materials that challenge the hegemonic discourse in the dystopian society, that can replace and question the validity of the claims in the instructional manuals and the propaganda streamed continuously that perpetuate harmful gendered notions. The island community is another hope or possible solution to dismantling the harmful gendered notions about men and women prevailing in Brotherland that could lead to the establishment of a better society or a utopia. Vane wants Youngest to provide her with all information he has on Brotherland and the General towards the end of the novel indicating that the island community has a strategy to defeat the General and dismantle the patriarchal dystopian society and the masculinist values attached to it. Women in dystopias have to endure some sort of self-denial. They are not free to lead

their lives the way they want in a patriarchal and dystopian society. Meiji has to hide her identity as a woman as shown in the novel *Escape* which is a feminist dystopia and Rahmato'u a character in *The Island of Lost Girls* has to prostitute herself. Characters like Meiji and Rahmato'u are free to express themselves in the women-only community of the island. Vane, a mentor on the island, wants to empower girls and accept their female selves without the harmful gendered notions attached to them. She has internalised notions of gender that can be described as undoing gender. The island community led by Vane wants to dismantle the harmful gendered notions inculcated in girls and dismantle and defeat the Zone and the Generals both of which are representative of the barbaric dystopian society and the harmful masculinist values and sexist notions of womanhood it endorses. In this way, it serves as the possible solution for the amelioration of the dystopian patriarchal world that can lead to the establishment of a utopia. Vane's resolve to be a mentor to positively influence young women and her realization of the harmful notions attached to femininity inculcated in the girls on the Zone, Meiji's acceptance of her gender identity and her commitment to join the island community in their conflict against the Zone, and mentor Vane's gender identity which undoes prevailing gender norms and her resolve to end the exploitative practices in the Zone all point to the fact that all these women with these identities want to change the gender inequality and exploitation of women, the prevailing social condition in this dystopia due to their freedom from the internalisation of harmful gender norms. Various forms of discrimination are carried out against individuals with trans identity, all pointing to a refusal to accept trans identity or due to the harmful gender notions attached to trans identity. The dystopian world refuses to accept trans identities because accepting them can lead to change in the dystopian conditions where transsexual people are prostituted. Amir and General

both discriminate against Aila because she is a transsexual woman. Their discriminatory attitude is due to genderism, femmephobia, and transmisogyny and they physically abuse her too which is gender bashing. Transsexual women such as Aila are sexualized and objectified in this dystopian world which can be called transsexualization and is responsible for the unequal status of transgender people in this dystopian world. An instance of cissexism is also evident in the way mercenaries treat Youngest. Aila embraces her identity as a transsexual woman despite the humiliation faced by her. The refusal to acknowledge and accept the transgender identity category is responsible for the marginalised status of transgender people. The island community provides a refuge for trans women such as Aila indicating the hope that an effort has been made to empower and rehabilitate them that can improve the conditions in this dystopia and transform this into a utopia. The island community does this because this community has accepted trans identity and does not discriminate against it like in the dystopian world. Aila's participation and resolve to join the island community against the Zone indicate she also wants the patriarchal dystopian world to accept the trans identity instead of seeing it as an identity category existing for inviting male sexual advances. Her proud acceptance of her identity as a transsexual woman lead her to change the prevailing dystopian conditions. Characters such as Blackson, Amir and the warriors by evincing many harmful gender notions uphold the gender inequality in dystopia and Youngest, Eldest and Middle, Meiji, Aila, and Vane possess a gender identity bereft of such harmful gender notions that helps them to change or resist the conditions in this dystopia. It can be surmised that there are some harmful notions attached to men, women and transgender individuals in these dystopian societies which can be harmful to the happy co-existence of these

different genders. The dismantling of such harmful gendered notions can improve the conditions in this dystopia and elevate it to a utopia.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

6.1 Dystopias in *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls*

The novels *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls* are dystopian fiction that subscribes to the traits of dystopias. Each of these texts is judged according to the criterion for the evaluation of dystopian texts. Authorial intention, themes and reader response are used for the evaluation. On analysis, it is revealed that the author has intended both societies depicted in the texts to be dystopian. The dystopian society in *Escape* features a totalitarian androcentric regime that makes use of propaganda, surveillance mechanisms, punitive mechanisms, and control of information, memory and history to brainwash its citizens. The hegemonic androcentric discourses in society shape the official version of memory and history. The destruction of all past literature and ignorance of the population makes it easier for the regime to control its citizens. Sexuality is also an area of concern as the dystopian regime bans heterosexuality. The official or regime version's of events justifies genocide and paints the image of the Generals as good administrators. This dystopian landscape is also bereft of vegetation due to the atomic bomb explosion. *Escape* has a totalitarian regime that makes decisions and imposes on individuals without regarding their rights and choices. Surveillance mechanisms such as the boyz, satellites and dynamic surveillance orbs are employed to pry on citizens. The dystopian administration curtails all individual differences and dissent by its punitive measure. The technology in this dystopia such as drone generation technology and cloning technology is also exploited by the regime for sustaining itself in power. The text depicted in *Escape* is also a feminist dystopia. It features a society where women are exploited and

degraded, and their interests and existence are not even considered. The novel subscribes to the criteria used for the judgement of dystopian fiction. The novel is intended by Padmanabhan to be dystopian and features many themes commonly found in dystopias such as authoritarianism, control of sexuality, control of memory, information and history, suppression of individuality, reliance on technology, control of language and desolate environment. The analysis of the text as dystopian also helps to illuminate the features of a dystopian society. The dystopian society in *Escape* is defined by an androcentric authoritarian regime that spies on citizens, intimidates them using punitive means, controls their sexuality and brainwashes them using hegemonic androcentric discourses.

The Island of Lost Girls too subscribes to the criteria followed for the judgement of dystopian fiction. The novel features many themes commonly found in dystopian fiction such as gender inequality, desolate and destroyed environment, control of sexuality, surveillance mechanisms, and reliance on technology producing negative effects. The dystopian world controls the sexuality of certain genders, the sexuality of feems or women in the zone is reserved for warriors and transsexual people are forced into prostitution. The dystopian world is also a world where many nations have submerged and feature scarce flora and fauna. Surveillance mechanisms such as the electronic leashes used by the General to spy on Youngest are a feature of this world. Technology such as Shutterfly used in this world is used to pry on citizens unknowingly and invade their privacy. Biotechnology such as gene sculpting is used to produce hybrid being such as whale who is then used and exploited for various needs. The society featured in the novel also gives hope that conditions in this society can be remedied through its depiction of the island community and the plan it has for dismantling the zone. The novel is a critical dystopia that gives hope to its readers.

Both dystopias have common features such as surveillance mechanisms, gender inequality, reliance on technology causing negative effects, destroyed and desolate environment and control of sexual relations. Both societies exploit women and are responsible for their marginalization. The societies featured in the novel are patriarchal. The possibility of hope distinguishes these two societies. In *Escape*, there is no such hope offered to the reader while on *The Island of Lost Girls* such hope is given through the island community.

6.2 Identities Beyond the Human in Dystopias

The dystopian world features a number of life forms that are not human such as animals, nature and transhuman beings. The animals featured in *Escape* are ill-treated as they are not regarded as persons, as beings with an identity. Camel is used for knowing its survival rate in the Waste a highly radioactive area, animals such as apes are used in cloning technology, and sows are used in drone generation technology. Swan uses pigs and goats for experimentation and uses it for inserting personalities in drones. The experimentation and use of animals as the subject of tests and in technology show they have been denied an identity, treated as the equivalent of an inanimate object even though all these are sentient beings, can be called persons. They do share an identity with humans, being sentient beings who do not like to be harmed. The mistreatment of animals in *Escape* can be also attributed to the refusal to acknowledge the identity of animals. The dystopian society by refusing to acknowledge the identity of these animals perpetuates and continues the exploitation of animals- the prevailing condition in this dystopia. In the world of *The Island of Lost Girls* animals such as hybrid marine crabs, hybrid turtles, and hybrid lizards are treated as the property of their human owners and denied any identity. The marine crab is used by the islanders so that they can live parasitically within them. The hybrid

turtle is used to ferry passengers. The hybrid lizard is used for warfare and can eat humans. Marine animals are being treated this way also because they have been denied an identity. Each of these animals is sentient and can be called a person because of this they have to be given a place in the moral community. Persons mean they share an identity with humans- they like to continue living. The meat of animals such as crabs, sharks, turtles and fish are consumed which means the human community is denying them an identity by eating them. The refusal to give an identity to such animals makes it easy for the human community to eat them as meat. All these animals are sentient, possess a minimum degree of self-awareness and are persons and share an identity with humans – that is an interest in continued existence. Noor, the whale domesticated and bred on the island showcases and communicates emotions such as pleasure, pain, amazement or any such emotion. It is a sentient being and deserves the status of a person as per Francione's definition. Noor has a personality of his own and is not an inanimate being even though the mentors of the island treat him as their property or possession and call him a mere animal. Noor is reduced to an inanimate object with no identity when used this way. It can be surmised that the denial of identity to Noor is the reason for its exploitation. One also reduces animals to property when one uses them as resources for producing products; it's part of instrumentalising animals or using them as a means to an end. In the zoobiotic lab, certain zoobiotic models are used such as the use of marine crabs for the production of TravelCrab. This crab is treated as a property, an inanimate object and denied an identity when used in this way. It can be also said then that a refusal to accept the identity of the crab is the reason for its use as a resource. The crab is a sentient being which can be called a person which means it shares an identity with humans- that is an interest in its continued existence. The use of eel for harnessing the energy

requirement of the mentors also points to how the mentors use this eel as their property, thereby treating it as an inanimate object with no identity. Eel is a sentient being that can be called a person which means they share an identity with humans- an interest in continued existence. The refusal to acknowledge the identity of eel is the reason for its mistreatment. The technologically advanced dystopia provides means to instrumentalise animals as biotechnology is one of the means harnessed to produce such organic machines. Technology here is begetting negative consequences as it provides a means to reduce animals to products and disregard their interests and self. The acknowledgement and acceptance of animals as beings with interests in their continued existence just like humans can put an end to animal exploitation that can transform this dystopia into a utopia. The dystopian world of both novels by resisting or denying an identity to animals is complicit in perpetuating animal exploitation as beings with interests in their continued existence are never exploited and regarded as part of the moral community. Animal exploitation is the condition that defines both these dystopias and denial of identity leads to the maintenance of this dystopian state. The dystopian world of *Escape* features a desolate and destroyed environment. Nature is associated with femininity in *Escape* by virtue of its nurturing functions. The General's destruction of the environment can be attributed to a worldview which regards culture and masculinity as important over nature and women. There exists a culture-nature framework or dualism in *Escape* where those regarded as nature is given no value. Such a patriarchal conceptual oppressive framework is responsible for the desolate and destroyed environment in this dystopian society. Such a conceptualization of the identity of nature and women as merged and as part of a dualism that regards them as inferior is responsible for the desolate and destroyed environment in *Brotherland*. Such an identity given to nature helps maintain the

exploitation and disregard of nature, the conditions that define this dystopia. Such a rejection of the negative association of nature with woman and such an identity can lead to better regard for nature and revegetation of landscape that can transform this dystopia into a utopia. The mentors in the island community revere nature and its life-giving force just like women. The identity of women and nature is regarded as merged. The island community is the only place in the dystopian world of the novel that is shown as engaging in agricultural activities unlike the rest of the dystopian world which is desolate and barren. The dystopian world rejects such a view or merged identity of woman and nature as the dystopian world celebrates values deemed masculine such as aggression, violence and destruction which is antithetical to feminine values of caring and compassion that the shared identity of nature and woman is based on. It is due to the refusal of the dystopian world to embrace such an identity that nature in this world is destroyed and desolate and in such a dystopian condition. The island community's reverence and respect for the natural world can help to repair the damaged environment of the dystopian world. In this way the acceptance of the identity of nature as life-sustaining maternal force, can provide a solution to the improvement of a desolate environment in both the dystopias and turn it into a utopia as in utopia human-environment relations are improved and the world is vegetated again.

The Generals in the novel possess a transhuman identity. The General is transhuman as he and his clone brothers were produced using cloning technology that made them intelligent and capable men. On the death of any of the clones, similar ones can take the dead clones' place thus ensuring a transcendence of mortality. They are regarded as different from the rest of the clones in Brotherland. Cloning can be seen as an enhancement that leads to the creation of many desirable traits. The

General is a transhuman cyborg because of his dependence on technology. The General confers with his clone brothers using the radio phone embeds fused to his body that allows him and his clone brothers to know what each other is saying thus negating communication gaps that regular humans face. They use technology to stay connected to each other as technology is part of their very existence and identity. The dystopian society's reliance on futuristic technology can be said to be responsible for the creation of transhuman and cyborg beings such as the General as cloning technology and jaw phone embeds are futuristic technology only shown in dystopian science fiction. The General and his clone brothers also represent negative images of techno-organic synthesis or such superior humans that dystopian fiction often shows. Even transhuman beings such as the General promotes androcentrism through their beliefs in gender roles as the General is a male cyborg. The beings with transhuman identities in the novel do not help in challenging anthropocentric thinking.

Technology which is employed to produce artificial and new forms of life such as the transhuman identities such as that of General end up having a negative impact on society. These transhuman and cyborg identities such as those possessed by the General and his clones are responsible for maintaining despotism in Brotherland- a defining trait or condition of a dystopia. Dystopian society thus resists animal identity and creates and supports transhuman, cyborg identities and nature-woman identity that is part of nature-culture dualism. Cyborg and transhuman identity and the construction of the identity of nature as a feminine subject part of the nature-culture framework are responsible for maintaining the dystopian conditions. Animal identity and the positive association and conception of the identity of nature with women are identities that can change the conditions in this dystopia. Acknowledging and accepting the identity of animals, as persons, as members of a moral community can

put an end to the exploitation of animals and can transform this dystopia into a utopia as animals are not exploited in a utopian society. The acknowledgement of the identity of nature leads to the reverence of nature and acknowledgement and support of its nurturing functions just like those of women which can put an end to the endless exploitation of nature in both dystopias and turn the dystopia into a utopia. Sustenance and flourishing of non-human nature and animals can alone turn dystopia into a utopia. Such sustenance and preservation of non-human nature and animals can only take place by acknowledging and accepting the identity of animals as beings with interests and nature as a feminine force, worthy of respect, that sustains all life. Transhuman cyborg being such as the General help to uphold anthropocentrism and androcentrism as the General is a male cyborg. An abolishment of such cloning technology alone can defeat the General and his clones that is the elimination of transhuman identities and cyborg identities can transform this dystopia into a utopia. Transforming this dystopia to a utopia thus also involves dismantling transhuman and cyborg identities and the merged identity of nature and women, which is part of a dualism that accords them with no value at the same time, accepting and supporting the identity of animals and of nature as a maternal feminine life-sustaining force that is worthy of all respect and reverence.

6.3 Heterosexual, Gay and Lesbian Identities in Dystopias

In the dystopian world, gay identity is tolerated by the dystopian regime, and lesbian and heterosexual identity is not readily accepted. Heterosexual identities refer to the identities of individuals who identify as being attracted to members of the opposite sex. Individuals with heterosexual identities are policed and not accepted by the dystopian regime. The privileged status given to heterosexuality is due to the procreative role attached to the heterosexually constituted family unit. The regime did

not eliminate women only because it knew that heterosexually constituted families and relationships were still needed for procreating. This changed after cloning technology is invented. This technology makes it possible to breed new offspring with the blood sample of the male parent alone. He wants to control the birth rate as he knew that birth rates associated with heterosexual families cannot be controlled as women did not breed according to collective ethics. The dystopian regime wanted to control degeneracy and the high birth rate associated with heterosexual families and it does so by investing in and inventing cloning technology, the monopoly of which made it possible to control the birth rate and eliminate heterosexual families as their procreative function is eliminated with cloning. The monopoly of cloning technology and the decision to ban heterosexual families are all biopolitical interventions by the dystopian regime. These biopolitical interventions made it difficult for people with heterosexual identities to pursue their romantic or sexual desires. The dystopian regime headed by the General also believes that there is a threat in dual parentage and that the female gene is corrupted and can lead to the birth of degenerate offspring. These notions of degeneracy associated with women lead the dystopian regime to eliminate women which ends up destroying heterosexual unions. The General's administration believed that killing women makes the population stronger by shielding them from the degeneracy associated with women. The killing of women is a biopolitical intervention taken by the regime for its supposed aim of strengthening and sustaining the population of men. The notion of the traditional family is not supported by the dystopian regime as the procreative role attached to such families is redundant in this dystopian country. The General want the citizens to accept new family setups that consist of only men. There are punishments and penalties for those harbouring women in this dystopian society which makes it not possible to engage in

any relations with women. Individuals with heterosexual identities pursue their romantic or sexual desires covertly or secretly. Individuals with heterosexual identities are resisting the status quo prevailing in dystopia when doing so. Even expressing one's attraction to a woman is met with suspicion. The dystopian regime does everything in its control to prevent heterosexual unions. The biopolitical interventions by the dystopian regime, the control of heterosexual relations, the mass killing of women, the degeneracy theory believed by the regime, and the new concept of the family all make it difficult for people who identify as heterosexual to practise their sexuality. The non-acceptance of individuals with heterosexual identities by the dystopian regime helps to maintain the same conditions in dystopia-that of a restrictive society that regulates sexuality. The possibility of the acceptance of heterosexual identities is heralded by the future demise of the dystopian regime initiated by the island community, which will transform this dystopia into a utopia. Individuals with gay identity are accepted in Brotherland and there are a number of reasons that leads individuals with gay identity the ease and freedom to exercise their sexuality. There are no rules restricting the life of gay men in this dystopian country. They do not face any social stigma on disclosing they are gay. They do not have to hide their identity or remain closeted. There are no legal or social sanctions against them as is evident in the display of the sexual desires of certain authority figures such as the General and Budget. The General is gay and is seen as indulging in sex with his clone brothers. He also sees an erotic dance performed by male dancers indicating he is gay. In Budget's Continuum Palace there are many social and cultural events that give the individuals the opportunity to socialise with each other. Meiji is leered on by the onlookers assembled in the palace indicating that it is a place where individuals come to look for romantic or sexual partners. This indicates how authority figures

freely express and embrace their sexuality without any consequences. The gathering at Budget's palace is a social event attended by many people indicating that there is no displeasure or resistance against such public displays of same-sex love and desires. A public event like this would have been met with homophobic protests and insults if there was resistance to it but the presence of Budget, an authority figure and other citizens indicate that the citizens present there as well as the dystopian administration tolerates it. The dystopian administration's support and tolerance of gay people can be also due to the fact the General is gay. Individuals with gay identities are accepted in Brotherland by the dystopian regime and there are no laws or rules restricting them or policing them which makes the exercise of sexuality easier for them. The acceptance of gay identity also means a negation of procreative sex. Procreative sex would lead to the birth of girls who are outlawed in the dystopian society. The acceptance of only gay identity in a way leads to the maintenance of this dystopia as a country without women. Individuals with gay identities also contribute to maintaining this situation as they cannot engage in procreative sex. Lesbianism is defined as the commonality amongst women, the support given, and the advice offered. The women's only community on the island can be defined as per Rich's term of lesbianism. The women's only community empowers girls by teaching them useful skills, stripping them of the harmful patriarchal notions of gender and making them learn to accept their bodies rather than see them as an adversary. The women on this island bond over their shared experiences. The presence of actual lesbian relations existing on the island is also hinted at when Youngest, whom the mentors regard as a trans woman is provided with Anita, a sexual companion. This woman's community can help ameliorate the conditions of this dystopia as they forge plans to dismantle the degrading social practices carried out in the Zone. Such a lesbian identity can

transform this dystopia into a utopia. The Whole World Union allows the mentors to form this island only after getting the assurance that they will not interfere in the activities of the Zone and maintain neutrality. This shows how the dystopian world represented by WWU, is scared and hesitant of such a woman's only community and relationship that can stop women from falling prey to predatory male desires. Such a lesbian identity conceived as a bonding and friendship between women is not readily accepted as the unjust practices in this dystopian world will be dismantled if they are readily accepted. The mentor's plan to dismantle the Zone gives the hope that such lesbian identity will be accepted in the future with the dismantlement of the patriarchal Zone. Dystopia can be transformed into a utopia by accepting all sexual identities. The mentors of the island have a plan in place against the General that indicates the hope that the General's administration will be destroyed eventually leading to freedom and acceptance of people with heterosexual identities. The destruction of the Zone in the future will also lead to the acceptance of the lesbian identity, conceived as female bonding and activism.

6.4 Gender Identities in Dystopias

Dystopias have a number of individuals with different gender identities. There are various gender categories such as men, women and transgender in this world. Dystopia has many men such as Youngest, Eldest and Middle, Blackson, and Amir. Youngest is the protagonist of this novel, the guardian of Meiji and the youngest brother of Eldest and Middle. Youngest has many attributes that he regards as part of his masculinity such as his power, wealth and his physicality. Youngest is a propertied man with an estate and dronery and he regards his success and wealth as part of his manhood. Youngest enjoys the good looks of a man and he regarded it as part of his masculinity. He also conducts his body in particular ways, the way he

moves, talks and moves are regarded as part of his masculinity. Youngest is forced to transition to get a female body because of his blackmail by the General. Even though his body is at odds with his masculine identity he is forced to do so for the sake of his daughter. He does not believe in the many harmful gendered notions existing in Brotherland as he has memory and history unaffected by the hegemonic discourse and knowledge, education and literacy. He harbours Meiji in his home, an act of sedition committed by him against the regime and also joins the island community in their plan to defeat the General. All this is possible only because Youngest embodies healthy masculinity, not influenced by the dystopian society's harmful gender notions, which leads him to undertake an enterprise that will change the conditions in this dystopia. The dystopian world rejects healthy masculine identities such as that of Youngest because harmful gender notions are required to maintain this dystopia. Eldest and Middle are the guardians of Meiji and the older brothers to Youngest. They do not have the harmful gendered notions internalised by many citizens of Brotherland as they were adults when the Change happened. They can't be manipulated or brainwashed as they know the reality of the dystopian regime and the harmful gendered notions spread by them. The biggest proof that they are not brainwashed by the regime is their harbouring of Meiji in their estate. They are in a way trying to resist or dismantle the conditions in the dystopian society when they harbour Meiji as this dystopian society does not permit women. They are able to do this because like Youngest they possess memory, and knowledge of history uninfluenced by the hegemonic discourses and literacy, knowledge, and education and evince healthy masculinity. The dystopian society does not support individuals like Eldest and Middle who have a healthy masculinity and who believes in gender equality as the dystopian society consists of citizens who believe in harmful gender

notions on which the society is predicated. Acceptance and support of healthy masculinities such as the ones possessed by Youngest and Middle can transform this dystopia into a utopia. Blackson- a citizen of Brotherland, believes in many harmful gendered notions. He believes that women do not have any social roles other than reproduction and that men are the providers and breadwinners. He believes in stereotypical gendered roles. He has been brainwashed by the propaganda of the regime which leaves him with a distorted notion of gender roles. He believes in these gender roles because he has been brainwashed by the dystopian society's hegemonic androcentric discourses that shape the knowledge of history and memory that perpetuate harmful gender notions. The dystopian regime also controls all information in this dystopian society which is responsible for the propagation and perpetuation of gendered notions such as the ones internalised by Blackson. The past literature is also destroyed in Brotherland and there is strict censorship which helps in perpetuating and upholding such harmful gender notions as upheld by Blackson. The presence of surveillance and punitive mechanisms in this dystopian society means individuals such as Blackson cannot change their harmful gender notions as talking about a woman or harbouring them is punishable. The presence of women would have allowed Blackson to challenge such gender notions and debunk some of these wrong notions which is not possible as the dystopian society in Brotherland has eliminated women altogether from its discourse also physically, from this country. Everything in the dystopian society of *Escape* that defines it such as surveillance mechanisms, suppression of individuality and individual difference using punitive mechanisms, hegemonic discourses, official version or regime's version of memory, discursive control of information and history, control and censorship of language is meant to uphold harmful gender notions such as the ones internalised by Blackson. Blackson's

views on gender also ensure the continuance of the deplorable conditions in this dystopian society that regards women as the weaker sex. Amir is the father of Aila. He regards many traits as part of his masculinity such as corporeality, physicality, wealth, power, control and violence, and anti-femininity. He regards the particular ways in which a man moves and walks as part of masculinity and he has internalised such a notion of the male body. Physicality and strength are also associated by Amir as a marker of masculinity. He regards men as possessing physical strength compared to other genders. The ability to exercise control over others, especially his daughter Aila is regarded by him as a trait of manhood. He also sees masculinity as anti-femininity. He regards certain traits as masculine which men and boys should possess, he does not tolerate any traits or features that he regarded as feminine which is why he starts disliking his son Aila who later transitioned to become a trans woman. Amir is complicit in perpetuating gender inequality, the prevailing social condition in this dystopian world as he makes clone sons so that he could enlist them as warriors in the Zone. The dystopian world also supports Amir as the ideas of masculinity endorsed and supported by them is similar to the ones internalised by Amir. The warriors are men who engage in combat in the Zone. The warrior's combat roles and aggression are an essential part of their masculinity. Engaging in combat is regarded as a masculine activity and the warriors consider this a part of their masculinity. Violence and aggression they display in combat are regarded by warriors as a part of their masculinity. The warrior acquires money and status as they win each combat which is regarded by them as part of their masculinity. Women cannot participate in these war games which makes them end up as sex slaves in the Zone. Combat roles are reserved for men only. Women prostituted in the Zone are regarded as essential to boost the morale of warriors and accumulating sexual partners is linked to the masculinity of

warriors. Gender inequality in the dystopian world such as the prostitution of women is due to privileging of masculinity and harmful gender notions attached to the masculinity of warriors. The warriors in turn try to uphold the conditions in this dystopia by engaging in combat in the Zone. There are certain male characters in the novel such as warriors, Amir and Blackson who evince many harmful traits attached to masculinity such as power and violence over women, accumulating sexual partners, and masculinity as anti-femininity. Youngest, Eldest and Middle are free from such harmful gender notions. Both the patriarchal dystopian societies perpetuate, favour and uphold harmful notions attached to masculinity which are responsible for gender inequality in these dystopias. Blackson, warriors and Amir have internalised such harmful notions which leads them to support and uphold the gender inequality in these dystopias. Youngest, Eldest and Middle evince a healthier masculinity because of which they do try to change or resist the prevailing deplorable conditions in this dystopia. In *Escape* recovery of memory and history unaffected by hegemonic discourses, literacy, knowledge and education can help citizens to realize the limitations of androcentric hegemonic discourses that perpetuate such harmful gender notions and can help to dismantle such gender notions. The women in the island community also have a plan to defeat the General and his dystopian administration which will lead to the dismantling of the harmful gender notions supported by the regime. In *The Island of Lost Girls*, the mentors of the island have the plan to dismantle the zone which will lead to the dismantlement of the category of warriors itself and notions attached to the masculinity of warriors. Acceptance of healthy masculinity such as the ones possessed by Youngest, Eldest and Middle can also transform this dystopia into a utopia. Dismantlement of harmful notions attached to

masculinity and acceptance of healthy masculinity can lead to an egalitarian society that will transform this dystopia into a utopia.

Women characters in the novel are Meiji, Rahmato'u, and Vane. Meiji is the protagonist of both novels and the only remaining woman in Brotherland. Meiji leads a very sheltered life in the estate of her uncles until she is guided to the world of gendered discourses by her guardian Youngest. She is not able to express her gender identity as a woman in the dystopian society as it has outlawed the existence of women. It is Youngest who initiates her to gender differences in their journey of escape. On the island, she is confused about her identity as her memories are erased and she has a prosthetic penis attached to her. She does not know if she feels safe in confiding her real identity to fellow women. Her fear and hesitation are gradually dissipated when she gets her memories back which makes her easy to embrace her identity. Her decision to participate in the island community's conflict against the Zone and the General indicates she wants to improve the conditions in the dystopia where women like her are not able to express their gender identity and lead a free life. Her acceptance of her identity as a woman leads her to fight for her fellow women. The dystopia rejects gender identity and gender category of women like Meiji as the dystopian society of Brotherland is a male-only country. Rahmato'u is one of the girls from the Zone who comes to the island to better her life. She is a woman who was taught that her gender identity was equated to her sexual attractiveness. This is why she feels comfortable being naked when asked to disrobe in front of others. The mentors of the island and her training on the island help her to shed off such harmful sexist gendered notions and embrace an autonomous self free from these patriarchal constraints. Her autonomous identity bereft of harmful sexist notions leads her to change the dystopian society itself where there is gender inequality and where there

are many harmful notions attached to femininity. Her commitment and resolve to be a mentor on the island indicate that she wants to undo harmful gender notions attached to young women from the Zone that can change the conditions in this dystopia and eliminate gender inequality. Her acceptance of her gender identity as an autonomous independent woman with dreams and desires leads her to change the conditions in dystopia. The dystopian society is not accepting of people like Rahmato'u as the ideas of gender evinced by them are antithetical to the ones endorsed by them. Vane is a mentor on the island who wants the girls to be rid of the harmful notions of femininity attached to them. The beliefs and views on gender that she has internalised can be best regarded as views and notions that undo gender. She does not believe a woman's worth lies in her attractiveness and does not view the female body as an adversary that is responsible for the objectification of women. She tries to undo the harmful gendered notions in girls which equates their identity to their attractiveness. The dystopian world is suspicious of Vane and does not readily accept her gender identity as the notions imbibed by her can upset the gendered hierarchy of this dystopian world. Her dismantling of the harmful gendered notions in these girls can also help to dismantle the system in the Zone and the practices of prostitution and sexual slavery there as these young women are imparted with dignity and made to realize that their worth is not tied to their bodies. She also requests information on the Generals from Youngest indicating her plan to dismantle the General's dystopian regime and the masculinist values and harmful gender notions it endorses. The women's only community on the island even though not a utopia is also reminiscent of women's only communities in utopias with revised gender norms. Vane's attempts to undo harmful gender notions and gender inequality by dismantling the Zone, and also defeating the Generals can have a positive impact and transform this dystopia into a

utopia. Both patriarchal dystopian societies exploit women in various ways. Women like Meiji are not free to express their gender identity in the dystopian society of *Escape* and in *The Island of Lost Girls* there are harmful notions attached to femininity internalised by women such as Rahmato'u that leads to their objectification. Meiji, Vane and Rahmato'u have embraced and accepted their identity as women despite the exploitation of women in both dystopias. They know the suffering of women in patriarchal societies which leads them to change the conditions in this dystopia. Vane's decision and plan to destroy the Zone, defeat the General and her ideas of gender that dismantle harmful notions can transform this dystopian society into a utopia and make it rid of harmful notions attached to femininity.

Transsexual people are the victims of transphobia, cissexism, transsexualization and transmisogyny in this dystopian world; all of these discriminatory attitudes have their root cause as a failure to accept and acknowledge the identity of trans people. Aila is a trans woman. She underwent sex reassignment surgery to get a body in tune with her identity which makes her a transsexual person. Her realization of her gender identity, sharing of it with others, changes in her lifestyle to live a life in sync with her identity are all -milestones in her life as a transsexual person. She does not hide her identity as a transsexual person, she never tries to pass as a cis woman. It is evident that Aila embraces her transsexual identity from her experiences. The hatred towards trans identities in the dystopian world of the novels is due to transphobia, genderism, transmisogyny, cissexism, femmephobia and transsexualization; all pointing to a refusal to accept trans identity which makes trans people marginalised. Aila faces transphobia when her father gets angry and disappointed in her as a child when she does not display the usual attitudes and behaviours of a boy her age. Her gender invariance is the reason for Amir's

transphobic feelings towards her. He also physically abuses her and rapes her which can be termed transmisogyny, a specific sort of misogynistic and transphobic behaviour directed towards trans women. Genderist beliefs are responsible for Amir's transphobia. It is revealed that Amir believed in a world where there are two genders- men and women where men are superior to women. He also considers transitioning to a woman as a social demotion as he values masculinity and regards femininity as inferior. The devaluation of femininity or femmephobia is also a reason for Amir's transphobia. The General displays transphobia towards Aila. He tells her to act more like a man and less like a woman. He wants Aila to behave in accordance with the social and cultural expectations and behaviour of a man. He believes in gender roles and a gender binary. His genderist beliefs are the reason for his transphobia. The General believes that women are inferior to men. His transphobia is then also due to femmephobia. He devalues women and he cannot understand the reason why Aila transitioned to embrace the life of a woman. His rape of Aila is an example of transmisogyny as the General displays signs of both transphobia and misogyny toward her. Cissexism is also evident in the way the mercenaries at Cutthroat Express make fun of the anatomy of Youngest. In the dystopian world, transsexual people like Aila are forced into prostitution. This is an example of trans-sexualization. The gender inequality faced by transsexual women in this dystopian world is also due to transsexualization as well as other discriminatory attitudes. Aila joins the island community at the end of *The Island of Lost Girls* in their conflict against the Zone. The island community accept the identity of trans people such as Aila and provides them with a refuge. She also joins the island community as she wants to dismantle the harmful notion attached to transsexual women, that they transitioned for inviting male sexual advances. Aila's acceptance of her identity and her desire for a better world for

trans women like her where their identities are accepted and acknowledged leads her to undertake such an enterprise and change the conditions in this dystopia. The acceptance of trans identities such as that of Aila can transform this dystopia into a utopia.

There are harmful notions about men, women and transgender individuals in all dystopian societies. Certain identity categories with harmful gender notions attached to them such as masculinity evinced by Blackson, Amir, and warriors uphold the deplorable conditions in this dystopia such as forced prostitution of women and trans women and outlawing of women altogether. While certain characters with healthy masculinity such as Youngest, Eldest and Middle try to change or resist the conditions in this dystopia. Meiji, Vane and Rahmato'u are women who want to dismantle the institutions and practices that endorse harmful notions attached to gender. Their acceptance of their gender identity as women leads them to also understand the suffering of women in this dystopian world that makes them decide to change the conditions in this dystopia. Aila, a transsexual woman has proudly accepted her trans identity and wants to change the gender inequality in this dystopia that objectifies them. Her resolve to change the dystopian condition is also due to her desire for society to acknowledge and accept the trans identity. Certain characters by virtue of their identity try to change the conditions in this dystopia and certain other characters try to uphold the conditions in this dystopia and thereby preserve this dystopian society. The undoing of harmful gender notions can change this dystopia into a utopia. Recovery of memory, knowledge, and history unaffected by hegemonic discourses and the island community's decision to destroy the Generals who endorse many harmful gender notions can dismantle harmful gendered notions in *Escape* and in *The Island of Lost Girls* gender notions are dismantled by the undoing of gender

established by the mentors as well as the destruction of masculinist institutions and regimes such as the WWU and the Zone. Acceptance and support of healthy masculinities such as the ones possessed by Youngest, Middle and Eldest and accepting trans identities like the mentors on the island as they provide refuge to trans women can eliminate marginalisation of trans people; acceptance of all these gender identities can also transform this dystopia to a utopia.

6.5 Identities in Dystopias and Hopes for a Utopia

Acceptance, acknowledgement and tolerance of various sexual identities such as heterosexual and lesbian identities, acceptance of healthy notions of masculinity and trans identities, acceptance of the identity of animals as beings with interests, acknowledgement and acceptance of the identity of nature as a life-giving and sustaining feminine force, abolishment of transhuman and cyborg identities such as those of the Generals and his clones through abolishment of cloning technology, dismantlement of harmful notions attached to masculinity, femininity and transgender identity category can all lead to the transformation of this dystopia to a utopia. The acceptance of all sexual identities can happen with the mentor's plan to dismantle the dystopian administration of the General, WWU and the Zone, revegetation of the natural world is possible with the acceptance of the identity of nature as a life-giving feminine force that sustains and nurtures all life forms, the dismantlement of harmful gender notions attached to masculinity and acceptance and support of healthy masculinities in *Escape* is possible with a recovery of literacy, education, knowledge, history, memory unaffected by hegemonic discourse, and the mentors plan to destroy the Generals, undoing of harmful notions attached to femininity as well as masculinity in the dystopian world of *The Island of Lost Girls* is possible with the influence of the women in the island community who undo gender as well as plan to destroy the Zone

and WWU that is responsible for perpetuating harmful gender notions, abolishment of trans-sexualization and various forms of discrimination against trans people is possible with the acknowledgement and acceptance of trans people's identity. All the possible solutions that can transform this dystopia into a utopia involve either dismantling or supporting certain identities.

Chapter Seven

Recommendations

Research on *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls* can focus on post-apocalyptic elements of the text since the action in both texts are set after a cataclysmic event. The effects of the cataclysm on the environment, animal and plant species, and humans can be analysed as part of this study. Studies of various spaces shown in *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls* such as the Forbidden Country, the Zone and the island can be conducted. Further research can be done on the dystopian fiction of Manjula Padmanabhan such as her plays and short stories. The study on identities in dystopias can be extended to these dystopias of Padmanabhan. In her dystopian plays and short stories, gender identities, queer identities and sexual identities are some of the varied identities on which further research can be conducted. The influence of dystopian society on these identities can be also explored as dystopian societies influence or shape such identities. The body often figures as a trope in her narratives. The research on the dystopian plays and short stories of Padmanabhan can also focus on various ways biotechnology and other speculative technology offer ways to transcend the human body's limitations. In Padmanabhan's dystopian plays and short stories, research on various aspects of dystopias such as authoritarian control, posthuman life, environment and apocalyptic scenarios, and futuristic technology can be done. A comprehensive study of futuristic technology in Padmanabhan's other dystopian texts involves studying the impact of technology, its uses and its employment as an element of the science fiction genre. Her dystopian fiction such as her plays and short stories also has a discourse on environmental changes and degradation. Ecocritical readings of the dystopian desolate landscape shown in the texts can help to illuminate the depiction of nature in these texts.

Dystopian texts often figure posthuman life which is considered superior to humans. Speculative fiction allows the authors to imagine such futuristic scenarios and Padmanabhan's dystopian fiction such as her plays and short stories often figures such posthuman life. Dystopia fiction casts posthuman figures in a negative light. The study of posthuman figures in Padmanabhan's dystopian plays and short stories can focus on their place in society, interactions with humans, and power relations between humans and posthumans. The dystopian fiction of Padmanabhan is also defined by dark humour. A study of her works can focus on the comic elements that are situated even in the bleak narratives of dystopias.

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