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Refugee Existence In Lawrence Hill's *The Illegal*

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I hereby declare that, in line with the Faculty of Arts' code of conduct for research integrity, the work submitted here is my own original work and that any additional sources of information have been duly cited.

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1 INTRODUCTION

> "We are facing the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time.
> Above all, this is not just a crisis of numbers; it is also a crisis of solidarity."

This statement by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon (UNHCR 5), is a potent declaration, for it highlights just how much the current migration and refugee crisis is as much a problem of the West as it is of the Rest. Indeed, the years 2015 and 2016 saw the migrant crisis dominate European headlines, with conflict and persecution in countries like Syria and Afghanistan prompting an unprecedented influx of migration to the continent. In 2016, the United Nations reported that "the number of refugees and internally displaced people worldwide had reached its highest point ever, surpassing the previous record seen during WWII" (Davis).

Yet as UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon alludes to, the biggest cause for concern in the West is not the influx of migrants, but rather the reaction that accompanies it. We have all seen the images: the thousands of immigrants dangerously crossing the Mediterranean; the bodies of young refugee children washed up on the shores; the inhumane living conditions of the refugees stranded in The Calais Jungle; the razor-wire borders erected by Eastern European countries; the controversial EU-Turkey deal; the violent clashes between police forces and immigrants in Moria; and the surge of xenophobic and anti-immigration rhetoric of populist parties such as the Freedom Party (Austria) and the Front National (France). According to UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, such instances of institutional negligence, discrimination, and injustice have created a "climate of xenophobia" in the West, (BBC) – symptomatic of what UN Secretary Ban Ki-moon coins the current "crisis of solidarity".

So how do we combat this crisis of solidarity? How do we bridge the differences between these two parties? How do we promote identification and understanding of such a complex social problem? While it is unlikely that a single overarching solution exists, there are without doubt, several small-scale initiatives that take on this problem, and offer their own insight and contributions towards solutions, not least literature. Throughout the history of the

novel, the likes of Dickens, Zola, Hardy, and Balzac have shared the common belief that fiction performs an important social function: it is a powerful tool not only for confronting social issues, but also for encouraging greater understanding and identification between different members of society. And though the modern and postmodern era has seen a retreat from social engagement, and much debate on whether literature should have a social function at all, many literary theorists and critics vehemently uphold fiction's social importance, not least American philosopher and professor Martha Nussbaum who is a strong believer that the importance of fiction is cognitive:

> We see person-like shapes all around us: but how do we relate to them? All too often we see them as just shapes, or physical objects in motion. What storytelling teaches us to do is to ask questions about the life behind the mask, the inner world concealed by the shape. It gets us into the habit of conjecturing that this shape, so similar to our own, is a house for emotions and wishes and projects that are also in some ways similar to our own: but it also gets us into the habit of understanding that that inner world is differently shaped by different social circumstances. (Nussbaum 350)

The timing of Lawrence Hill's *The Illegal*, published in 2015*,* is therefore not a coincidence. As a dystopian novel that takes on the plight of immigrants and refugees, *The Illegal* confronts readers with the current migration crisis, and in so doing compels them "to ask questions about the life behind the mask" (Nussbaum 350) in an attempt to create a social conscience, and to subsequently supersede the "crisis of solidarity".

But the specificities of Hill's undertaking remain obscure: how exactly does *The Illegal* relate to present-day immigration issues? And how do content and form contribute or support this representation? In order to answer the first question, it will be necessary to situate *The Illegal* in the long tradition of the social problem novel: a work of fiction which takes on the social issues faced by a specific faction of society, and whose main objective is not only social critique, but also social reform. A more specific classification of the novel within this tradition, what Raymond Williams coined "the social formula novel", will prove imperative for a beneficial understanding of how *The Illegal* represents the present-day immigration crisis, for Lawrence Hill's novel combines the representation of a social topic (as a migrant narrative), with the extrapolation of experiences concerning this topic in a fictional society (as a dystopian novel).

But content and form are also of absolute interest in themselves and warrant a more in-depth study in order to answer the second question. When considering migrant narratives, studies almost exclusively tend to focus on theories of migrant identities as a determining factor of the narrative, and *The Illegal* can therefore form no exception. Furthermore, the most recent theories on migrant identities, when coupled with postmodern ideas on cultures, may yet prove useful in uncovering the specificities of Lawrence Hill's social critique. In the same vein, it will be important to take a more detailed look at the form of the novel, as it is commonly agreed upon that the main objective of the dystopian genre is social critique. However, it is important to note that *The Illegal* is part of the recent trend of dystopian writing, what has come to be known as "critical dystopia", and which, while still adhering to certain techniques of the dystopian tradition, has also developed new techniques of social critique. It will thus be necessary to look at several of the most fundamental methods and techniques the (critical) dystopia makes use of in order to successfully achieve its objective.

After a brief introduction to the life and literary works of Lawrence Hill, the first part of this thesis will present a theoretical background in which recent studies concerning the social novel, immigrant narratives and critical dystopias are expounded. This theoretical framework will form the basis for the second part of the thesis, in which the concepts and theories discussed will be applied specifically to Lawrence Hill's *The Illegal,* in the hope of catching a glimpse of what lives behind the mask.

2 LAWRENCE HILL: GENERAL BACKGROUND

The African-Canadian author Lawrence Hill was born into a racially mixed family as the son of social activists and US émigrés to Canada (Krampe 57). Hill's writing has never shied away from addressing issues of race, ethnicity, cultural history and identity. Hill is the author of ten works of fiction and non-fiction ("About the Author"), all of which showcase Hill's determination for "keeping forgotten or suppressed aspects of (Black North American) history alive" and places importance on "traumatic elements of the Black presence in North America, such as segregation, discrimination, racism, (…) stereotyping, violence and racial hatred" (Krampe 58).

In a still segregated America, Hill's white mother Donna Bender and his black father Daniel Hill met in Washington D.C., and moved shortly after to Toronto, Canada in search of a society that would welcome an interracial couple (Ashenburg 64). The Hills had three children, the second of which was Lawrence who was born in Newmarket in 1957 and grew up in Don Mills, Ontario. However, despite growing up in a society that only slightly racialised, Hill's formative years were marked by a difficult but influential development of a self-consciously mixed-raced identity (Krampe 58) Hill learned to negotiate the separate worlds of his white and black family but always admitted to feeling more affinity with his black heritage. Hill's childhood was also marked by parents who both worked as human rights activists, by stories about the difficult times of segregation, by tales of his family's history who had known slavery, and by a house filled with books about black experience in North America (Ashenburg 64). It came as no surprise that Hill decided to write fiction, after obtaining a B.A. in economics from Laval University in Quebec City, an M.A. in creative writing from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore ("About the Author"), and a job as a reporter for the Winnipeg Free Press. Hill ultimately became a novelist because he was haunted by the plight of the black community in Canada. "If he hadn't been raised in Canada, Hill isn't sure he would have needed to write novels himself. American blacks understood their dramatic history and knew who they were." (Ashenburg 65)

Hill then went on to write numerous works of both fiction and non-fiction, with largely autobiographical elements and treating issues such as mixed-race identity and slavery. His first two novels, *Some Great Things* (1992) and *Any Known Blood* (1997), as well as his

most significant piece of non-fiction *BlackBerry, Sweet Juice: On Being Black and White in Canada,* were an underwhelming success selling a few thousand copies. However, it was his third novel, published in January 2007 that attracted widespread attention (Ashenburg 68). *The Book of Negroes* (also known as *Somebody Knows My Name* in certain countries), the fictionalised story about an African girl sold into slavery in the 18th-century and who journeys to Nova Scotia in search of freedom and back to Africa in search of her heritage and homeland, met with good reviews and by the spring of 2008 sales were soaring. The novel earned Hill both the Writers' Trust Prize and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, and by the summer of 2008 the novel had hit the Globe and Mail's paperback best-seller list. The success of the novel has also seen a surge in popularity in Hill's previous works, especially his second novel *Any Known Blood*, which then also hit the Globe's Canadian best-seller list (Ashenburg 70).

The Illegal, Hill's fourth and most recent novel was published in 2015. It has already been met with good reviews and won Canada Reads 2016 ("About the Author"). Set in two fictionalised countries in the Indian Ocean, *The Illegal* tells the story of a young black man called Keita who has to flee his country of Zantoroland and is forced to live as an illegal refugee in the richer and western country Freedom State. The novel follows Keita as he struggles to stay under the radar whilst trying to look after his family and survive in a hostile society in which many are out to get at him. Hill has previously stated that the initial inspiration for the story came from his sister who lived in West Berlin in the 1980s and was married to a Senegalese political cartoonist who had fallen out of favour. Hill became fascinated by watching how people got by and survived when they were living under the radar (Robb D.1.) By adopting the dystopian form, Hill feels he was able to "loosen up his imagination" in a way that he could "pick and choose from the very worst of public policies" across the world and not be tied to any specific geo-political reality (Robb D.1).

In keeping with his previous works, Hill's incentive to write *The Illegal* came from the documentation of black experience in Canada, as there are many parallels in the novel with the struggles faced by newcomers that try to integrate into Canadian society and the lonely road they face. Even with greater access to stories and images about displaced people, Hill claims North-American society often doesn't see or care about the challenges faced by refugees living among them (Robb D.1). "I feel that if an artist can do anything it's to try to evoke a greater sense of imagination and empathy and understanding" (Hill qtd. in Robb D.1).

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 THE SOCIAL NOVEL

3.1.1 Historical Development

The social novel, also known as the social problem novel or problem novel, is a socially engaged novel that takes on the plight of a certain social problem (typically gender, class, or race) with the objective of confronting readers with uncomfortable realities and therefore forcing them to re-evaluate their own values, morals and prejudices. While most social novels deem to simply expose the problem and establish an element of general concern, others can be more radical in their objective and wish to move the readers toward action and tackle the social injustices portrayed in the novel.

The idea of literature as being socially engaged and morally instructive is one that emerged in the mid 19th century both in Great Britain and the United States and has experienced a turbulent trajectory leading to the 21st century. In " 'Art for Humanity's Sake': The Social Novel as a Mode of Moral Discourse", D.M. Yeager traces the roots of the social novel, west of the Atlantic, to post-Civil War Christian social novels such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and Charles Monroe Sheldon's *In His Steps* (1896). In these early manifestations of the social novel, Christian writers took to address "the discrepancy between professed religious ideals and socioeconomic inequalities" (Wright qtd. in Yeager 446). These authors were social moralists who believed that fiction, as the quintessential mode of persuasion, could drive social change. Considering the prevailing misconception that social novels were, and always are, realist novels à la Dickens and Balzac, it is important to note that the ethics of these early social novels were rather that of idealization. "The conventional assumption was that fiction, particularly if it was to be morally inspiring, must show life as it ought to be rather than as it is. The protagonist should be a hero or heroine readers would strive to emulate" (Yeager 450). Human experience and characters were thus idealised and these romance works constituted a pious, hopeful message of goodness always being stronger than wickedness.

It was only at the end of the 19th century that literary critic and novelist William Dean Howells challenged this stance and initiated a shift in American literature from romance to realism. Howells was not opposed to the moral intent of these Christian novelists, for he too believed that fiction should have a moral function, but he *did* object to the narrative strategies of idealization of these novelists which he thought to be "incompatible with the end they sought" (Yeager 450). Instead of portraying only the enviable, lovely, inspiring subject, Howells believed that novelists had the obligation to portray the "whole truth" of the social world, that is to say, to represent the ordinary and familiar subject with his troubles, the suffering and aspirations, of people struggling with poverty, unemployment, failure, and brutality" (Yeager 453). He praised many exemplary European novels such as Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Tom Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and Emile Zola's *La Terre* – and spent much of his critical attention and non-fictional work on them. Howells "considered realism to be a particularly felicitous style because he believed that change begins in understanding; it therefore requires a meticulous, true representation of what is actually the case" (Yeager 455). According to Yeager, this type of representation portrays subjects and their problems in all their complexities and avoids easy answers, oversimplification and deceptive consolation. Realism allows the reader to better understand both him- or herself as well as other people, especially those from different social, religious, economic, national, political or ethnic backgrounds with which the reader has little social contact. In its more radical form, realism can also have a moral and political edge, forcing readers to confront social problems and becoming a real force for social justice.

> Two assumptions seem to inform Howells's conviction that literary fiction could and should be written "for humanity's sake": (1) that existential encounter (even vicarious encounter) and right understanding of injustice and suffering - of greed and selfishness, deprivation, and despair - will produce a desire that things should be different and (2) that such knowledge and desire will produce personal reorientation and will precipitate action (individual and collective) aimed at social reform. To know what is the case is to want and envision something better; to envision it is to try to bring it about. (Yeager 456)

From this point on, the realist novel and the socially engaged novel were inextricably linked, and a reference to one implied the other. As Tom Wolfe describes in "Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast", by the 1930s "the big realistic novel, with its broad social sweep, had put

American literature up on the world stage for the first time" (Wolfe 48). However, with the arrival of World War II, sensibilities started to change, and by the 1960s, the notion of "the death of the novel" was part of the prevailing intellectual opinion and the social novel was facing a crisis.

Strikingly, and because of this inextricable link between realism and social engagement, "the death of the novel" has been interpreted as both the death of the realistic novel (Wolfe) as well as the death of the social novel (Yeager), depending on where the focus is laid. Although the death of the realistic novel *implies* a loss of social engagement, as Wolfe illustrates in his article, the focus of attention is placed on the style of writing with novelists now attempting to either establish an avant-garde position beyond realism, including Absurdist novels, Magical Realist novels, Puppet-Master novels, Radical Disjunction novels; or go back to the primal origins of fiction before the realist revolution, back to myth, fable, and legend. Yeager on the other hand, talking about the death of the social novel, marks a strong trend in "social detachment" in literature. Both call on Philip Roth's famous pronouncement in 1961 in which he assesses that novelists faced with a hopeless, chaotic, scarcely believable social world, in which "[t]he actuality is continuously outdoing our talents, and culture tosses up figures that are the envy of any novelist" (Roth qtd. In Wolfe 48), can no longer understand, order or describe reality. As a result, there is "a voluntary withdrawal of interest by the fiction writer from some of the grander social and political phenomena of our times" (Roth qtd. in Yeager 456).

In "You Can't Write a Social Novel After September 11", Camilla Nelson further explains how in the 20th century, writers across Europe and America were abandoning any attempt to write about public life. Novelists no longer felt capable of writing about what was outside themselves as subjects, that is to say the public life, and as a result turned inward to the individual psyche. Indeed in the 20th century novel, "the tendency has been to narrow down the unruly scope of the novel in line with the individualist ethos and aesthetic traditions of the present, which, since the time of Henry James, have been shifting the focus of the novel further inward, so that the minds of the characters, not the social canvas or the story, become the real basis of interest of the novel" (Nelson 55). However, throughout and ever since this intellectual debate concerning the death of the novel, certain authors such as Tom Wolfe, Jonathan Franzen, and Martin Amis have been advocating the "rehabilitation (or perhaps resurrection) of the socially engaged novel" (Yeager 457).

The attacks of September 11 saw some tentative shifts to another kind of socially engaged novel. In the aftermath of the attacks, the reaction of the West exposed an

"eschatological anxiety and an unconvincing sudden seriousness, as if human nature itself changed the day the towers collapsed [but they] had forgotten that the world has always been a spectacular carnival of suffering" (Cowley qtd. in Nelson 57). And the fact that "on September 11 the earth did not move for three-quarters of the world's population" (Nelson 57), exposed the West's "insular and 'self-obsessed' literary culture which serves to dull (rather than inspire) the reader's social imagination" (Nelson 58). Nelson claims that as of this moment, English writers started to address the more urgent issues of the time. Novels such as Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close,* David Foster Wallace's novella *The Suffering Channel,* and Ian McEwan's *Saturday* began addressing the global fallout post September 11 and re-entering the public domain.

However, although these were socially engaged novels, they were not social novels in any traditional sense. These stories are still too introspective, for they do not portray "a mind in communion with others, but a mind in communion with itself" (Nelson 58). In this sense they are the very "inversion" of social novels for they do not thrust the reader out into the world but shut the world out and focus instead on how the characters interpret, inhabit, and distort reality and force it to accommodate to its personal mental cosmos (Nelson 58). This goes against the very objective of a social novel for "if the social novel means anything in the contemporary world, it must be a desire to engage, to make connections, to speak out across boundaries, to escape (…) the 'literal testimony of the Self', to make a gesture, however small or inadequate, towards a concept of literature that is genuinely dialogical" (Nelson 59). In this way, the 21st century social novel must write against the trend of individualism and introspection for the goal of a social novel is "shared imaginative experience, allowing the reader to transcend the limitations of their individual point of view and comprehend their world as a system of social relationships" (Nelson 56).

To achieve this social connectedness that defines the social novel as a genre, novelists must also break away from the modern and postmodern, that is, from "the 'sentence cult' which makes a fetish of language at the expense of communication and story" (Nelson 60). Difficult style, technique and language may be a benchmark for literary achievement, but it results in "reader disenchantment" and "there is a danger that literary writers, however socially engaged, are losing sight of the whole idea of inter-connectedness (between writer and reader, as well as between members of a given society)" (Nelson 61).

The answer however, is not a return to (or resurrection of) the highly detailed classic realism of the 19th century novel. Despite the previously mentioned misconception, "[t]he thing that unites such disparate works lies not in their 'realist' or 'documentary' character, but

in the ways in which they are dramas of milieux rather than dramas of individual consciousness-novels that are concerned to show a social order, with its faults and inconsistencies, rather than an individual human being" (Nelson 54). Furthermore, as Jonathan Franzen points out, in our era, the socially engaged novel must be content to leave the realism of Zola and Sinclair Lewis behind, for not only has television surpassed the novel's ability to provide social reportage, but "the explosion of sources of information has permanently diminished the standing of the novelist" (Yeager 458). Instead, Franzen advocates those novels that are uncompromising in their artistic integrity yet do not fail to ask the "big questions", the questions that are interesting to society and therefore appeal to large audiences, the questions that connect the personal and the more broadly cultural, and the question that have "a pronounced effect - on public consciousness if not actually on states of affairs" (Yeager 485).

3.1.2 Raymond Williams: The Social Formula Novel

Welsh academic, novelist and critic Raymond Henry Williams is well known for his literary theories about the relation between literature and culture and was therefore unsurprisingly ready to weigh in on the debate of the death of the traditional social/realistic novel.

In his seminal work *The Long Revolution* (1961), William concurs with Franzen's theories that the social novel can no longer return to the highly detailed classic realism of the 19th century novel. In fact, Williams argues, the disappearance of this type of documentary-like realism is not a wilful choice by modernist and postmodernist writers, for this type of realism was only possible in the late 19th - early 20th century as it reflected a type of common thinking of society then which has since changed. This "old, naïve realism is in any case dead, for it depended on a theory of natural seeing which is now impossible. When we thought we had only to open our eyes to see the common world, we could suppose that realism was a simple recording process" (Williams 314).

With the turn of the century, new ways of living and new understandings of perception have meant that we can no longer conceive of society and individuals as an inextricable unity. In contrast to Victorian society, our society is marked by a loss in "genuine community" (Williams 312), that is, a community in which a person is linked by many complex interlocking relationships, while instead links between persons have become "relatively single, temporary, discontinuous" (Williams 313). Again, the prevailing characteristic has since been that of "asserting and preserving an individuality" (Williams 313) as opposed to

finding or making a settlement and the shift in focus to the psychological and subjective is reflective of the new understandings of human perception and communication.

> When it was first discovered that man lives through his perceptual world, which is human interpretation of the material world outside him, this was thought to be a basis for the rejection of realism; only a personal vision was possible. But art is more than perception; it is a particular kind of active response, and a part of all human communication. Reality, in our terms, is that which human beings make common, by work or language. (Williams 315)

However, Williams argues that there is a specific type of social novel in the 20th century which best approximates the traditional realist novel for it establishes an adequate balance between both the social (as the principal focus of the 19th century traditional novel) and the individual (as the principal focus of the modern 20th century novel). This is what Williams coined "the social formula novel". The purpose of which is not description, but "the finding and materialization of a formula about society. A particular pattern is abstracted, from the sum of social experience, and a society is created from this pattern" (Williams 307). The simplest example of this type of novel, as Williams points out, is the "future-story" (Williams 307) which takes a pattern from contemporary society and extrapolates it, as a whole, in another place and time. The 'future' device is therefore used as a gimmick to write about contemporary society and is becoming "the main way of writing about social experience" (Williams 307). The personal-social complex of these stories are manifested through a fundamental conception of the relation between society and its individuals, ordinarily "a virtuous individual, or small personal group, against a vile society" (Williams 307).

3.2 THE MIGRANT NARRATIVE

In "Geography, Literature and Migration", Paul White notes how migration as a theme in literature is extremely common in writing produced over the last century, an era not coincidentally coined the "Age of Migration" (White 5). In the preface to *Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration*, Russell King et al. add that the interest in migration of the past century is not only a literary one, but also an academic one as it has formed an important part of the research agenda for the social sciences including geography, sociology, anthropology, social history, statistics, economics and others. With so much research continuously being done, the question then arises as to what added value literature has when it discusses current affairs such as migration.

The importance of literature on issues of current affairs lies in its unique ability to capture a more nuanced image of the problem. As Russell King et al. put it, the countless books, research papers and studies carried out by the social sciences result in an aggregate outlook on the social problem: recordings of the social, economic, cultural and demographic aspects of migration are assembled through statistical data amassed from surveys and censuses, or from observational ethnographic research. While this type of social-scientific research is rich in its own way, it is often "limited in its objectives, aiming to shed light on some single aspect of migration such as the decision to leave, location on arrival or sociolinguistics. It fails to capture the essence of what it is like to be a migrant; and be, or not be, part of a community, a nation, a society – cut off from history and from a sense of place" (King et al. ix-x). Non-academic literature (both creative and non-creative), in contrast to socio-scientific research, is therefore far more adept to offer insight into the nature and experience of being migrant: it can portray in a direct and penetrating way feelings of nostalgia, rootlessness, a sense of displacement, restlessness, communities lost and renewed, self-denial, self-recovery, identity shifts, family relationships, and much more. "Such insights are infinitely more subtle and meaningful than studies of migrants which base themselves on cold statistics or on depersonalised, aggregate responses to questionnaire surveys" (King et al. x). White corroborates this vision by adding that while social-scientific studies on migration emphasise the event and the aggregate (the outcome therefore inevitably focusing on the group), creative or imaginary literature "has the power to reflect complex and ambiguous realities that make it a far more plausible representation of human feelings and understandings than many of the artefacts used by academic research" (White 15).

In *Migration and Fiction: Narratives of Migration in Contemporary Canadian Literature*, Maria and Martin Löschnigg coin this sense of being and personal experience of the migrant that literature captures as the "human factor", which all boils down to "the multiplicity and transitory nature of migrant identities" (Löschnigg and Löschnigg 9). The question of identity, its construction and its negotiation, therefore plays an important role in migrant literature and lies at the heart of its focus of attention.

Keeping this in mind, in his essay "Grammar of Silence – Beyond Silence" Konrad Gross discerns a clear evolution in (Canadian) migrant fiction from multicultural to transcultural writing, an evolution which plays a crucial role in portraying how immigrants construct and negotiate their own identity. Whereas multiculturality "seeks to preserve and succeeds in paralysing cultures", transculturality entails a border-crossing and border-blending process between cultures which "brings out the dynamic potential of cultural diversity, the possibility of exchange and change among and within different ethnocultural groups" (Keefer qtd. In Gross 46). However, transculturality is not automatically free from a consciousness of cultural difference, for although all cultures today are fundamentally transnational due to an increase in global transnational networking, many people still tend to think of cultures as separate and homogenous entities.

As Gross goes on the explain, in literature, then, multicultural writing lays its emphasis on the isolation of the immigrant from the mainstream, as well as the discrepancy and conflict between the two cultures as a result of the immigrant's consciousness of cultural difference. Immigrants retain their own cultural traditions and perceptions and treat their home in their host country as an extension of their homeland. They find shelter within the traditions of their ethnic community; harbour a strong nostalgic longing for their homeland; and show a general attitude of resistance toward the traditions, perceptions, cultural heritage and language of the host country. Transcultural writing on the other hand, involves an immigrant who has no desire of returning to his/her homeland, preferring to settle in the new host country, but who faces issues of assimilation and acculturation. This type of writing often focuses on "the denial on the part of the majority culture of reaching out to the immigrant, and the bridging of the gap between the first and second generation or between the old and the new culture" (Gross 51).

In "Beyond Trauma: From Diaspora to Transmigration in South-Asian Canadian Literature", Elisabeth Damböck states that although she recognises how, since the early 1990s, 'transculturalism' has become a key term in literary, sociological and cultural studies of the migration issue, it fails to fully account for current developments. Damböck argues that

although transculturalism accounts for the shift in the idea of culture as an entity to the focus on the processes of cultural identity formation and on its dialogical nature, it is still "insufficient to describe fully the range of changes in migration patterns due to globalization, as [it] only describe[s] social interactions, but not the major precondition for these dialogues" (Damböck 73). Transculturalism shares with the old diaspora narratives (what Gross would call multicultural writing) a difference-consciousness, which results in narratives based on survival, here-there dichotomies, nostalgia for the homeland, memory narratives, and trauma-based identity formations. Despite transculturalism's dialogical networking and community building across borders, it remains a nationalised and territorialised happening. In this way, transculturalism "focuses on the observable effects of contemporary migration in society, but does not take into consideration a generally changed understanding and perception on migration" (Damböck 75).

Damböck therefore argues for the use 'transmigration' as a third term, in addition to transculturalism, to account for these changes. As a result of globalization, education, technology and travel, a new understanding of migration has started to emerge in the early 90s, which transcends the idea of migration as linked to acculturation, difference, uprootedness, and instead focus on economic possibilities and desires, and self-fulfilment. Transmigration therefore takes into account "the changed underlying processes of identity construction" (Damböck75).

This shift in the understanding of the idea of migration becomes evident in recent fiction:

> Recent works by ethnic, multicultural, or minority writers (…) have become more diverse and experimental in form, theme, focus, and technique. No longer are minority authors identifying simply with their ethnic or racial cultural background in opposition to dominant culture. Many authors consciously attempt to question or problematize the link between ethnic identity and literary production. (Ty and Verduyn qtd. in Damböck 76).

In other words, transmigrational writing is an attempt to question the very link between individual and cultural identity, focussing instead on universal matters and stories that go beyond a given ethnic background (Damböck 76). It should be noted however, that the evolution in migration patterns from multiculturalism, via transculturalism to transmigration is "not in general a development on the temporal axis, as migrants of different sorts and for

different reasons co-exist [even within the same narrative]. Transmigration is just increasingly found among them" (Damböck 77).

When looking at the difference in identity construction between multiculturalism and transculturalism on the one hand, and transmigration on the other, the underlying reason for the shift toward transmigration boils down to one central feature, namely the role that trauma plays, or does not play, in these narratives: "Stories of transmigration are distinct from immigrant fiction (…) mostly through their lack of migration as a narrative of trauma" (Damböck 79). Drawing on research done by Cathy Caruth, Kai Erikson and Pierre Janet, Damböck points out that "the basic characteristic of trauma is its untranslatability into a cohesive structure or self-narration. It can neither be fully incorporated into memory nor into meaningful, linear identity constructions" (Damböck 79). However, "to be traumatized is an active process, which can be carried out or refused especially on the level of collective and cultural trauma. It depends on whether the group or individuals from the group allow such trauma narratives to affect them and make them identify with these" (Damböck 81). The difference between immigrants and transmigrants then, is whether or not collective trauma plays a role in their individual identity formation.

In multicultural narratives, the trauma lies in the very fact of migration, more specifically, in the departure. As a result, these narratives are "steeped in nostalgia for the homeland and in myths and constructions of collective memory" (Damböck 78). In transcultural writing, on the other hand, the trauma lies in the "impossibility of arrival", or "the impossibility of belonging" (Damböck 78). This impossibility leads to alienation by the host nation, difficulty of assimilation, cultural conflict, and identity crisis. The trauma of both diaspora and transculturalism entails a preoccupation with the past, with a collective ethnic identity, and with an inability to transgress negotiations of differences.

However, transmigration marks a shift. Narratives of transmigration are less focused on identity construction, especially collective identities, and are no longer concerned with negotiating collective cultural differences. Instead they focus on individual tales, with more inclusive and positive attitudes toward pluralist societies. Transmigration is marked by "a changed state of mind that does not focus on places of departure or arrival, on processes of taking roots or of claiming a place, but is concerned with opportunities and goals and thus less geographically and historically bound" (Damböck 77). They therefore suffer less from alienation or the pressures of assimilation in the host society due to their cosmopolitan self-image and idea of society, or "deterritorialized identity" (Damböck 77). In other words, (collective) trauma does not play a role in their identity formation. Transmigrants are not

traumatised by either departure or arrival: “They are no longer bound to the idea of place and of taking or having roots. For them, migration is understood as an opportunity and consequently not limited to one journey of departure or arrival but to the option of a global existence, transgressing distances and borders” (Damböck 83).

Many transmigrational writers are also aware and often caution against the dangers inherent in trauma-based modes of perception. Both old diaspora narratives in which communities often construct an “artificial displaced cultural society” (Damböck 81), and transcultural narratives in which communities feel displaced or uprooted and therefore hold on to their cultural heritage, deal with communities that are prone to fundamentalist issues concerning their homelands. Based on an artificially upheld collective identity, and curbing interconnection and transnational interaction, such secluded cultural communities can easily become “breeding ground for fundamentalism” (Damböck 86) and can result in purist readings of their homeland, and an exclusivist, radical search for absolute ethnic states. Indirectly, such fundamentalism is also a critique of cultural marginalization “as a cause for the (self-) ghettoization of cultural minority groups” (Damböck 86). Consequently, fundamentalism is a result of both a strong determination to hold on to one’s cultural heritage, as well as a determination to belong fully to a new society while the host society stresses their difference and marginalises the immigrant group. The prevention and solution to such fundamentalism is through acknowledging and embracing one’s transnational identity, and thus, by allowing oneself to belong to several worlds and cultures (while keeping close ties with all of them), becoming a transmigrant (Damböck 87).

Damböck’s discussion of transmigration is strongly reminiscent of Homi Bhabha’s reflections on contemporary culture and his notion of the ‘Third Space’ as famously set out in his work *The Location of Culture* (1994) as becomes clear in dr. Keith Hollinshead’s “Tourism, Hybridity and Ambiguity”. In his seminal work, Bhabha advocates for a revision of our traditional notions of culture and cultural difference. Today’s reality, in which almost all societies have become hybrid societies, our previously dominant view on culture as a seemingly concrete, complete, homogenous, clear-cut, collective entity is rendered a fallacious illusion. In our postmodern world, where interaction and exchange of ideas and thoughts are done across boundaries of different societies, culture can no longer be considered a concrete entity but rather “a looser realm of *communal thought* which people of a given society participate in” (Hollinshead 122). According to Bhabha, culture “need no longer have a definitive geographical or pervasive socio-historical context, but (…) is increasingly a creatively disjunctive (i.e., a differently and oddly combined) mix of ideas and practices”

(Hollinshead 123). Bhabha's views are exemplary of the radical relativism of postmodernist interpretations of culture, which draws attention to the constructed nature of received cultural notions and sees culture as "intrinsically 'inventive' rather than being 'representative' acts of interpretation" (Hollinshead 123).

> Bhabha's treatise stands as a Lanfantian admonition that cultures and ethnicities are not as habitually distinct or as permanently polarised as many observers in society would comfortably have them, and that so many places and people exist ambivalently in 'displaced' or `under-recognised' *third spaces* located within *in-between* forms of supposed difference. Hence, in wider social spheres, many people just do not fit comfortably into the racial and ethnic boxes which census administrators and survey specialists, amongst others, subscribe for them. (Hollinshead 124)

In these so-called 'Third Spaces', individuals are free to negotiate their own identity, free from categorizations of race, gender, class, and nation that traditionally classify them. In "Homi Bhabha's Third Space and African Identity", Fetson Kalua stresses that these 'Third Spaces' "represent an act of unleashing that post-dialectical moment when people reject structures and hegemonies and occupy any one of the heterogeneous spaces where they negotiate narratives of their existences as well as of particular spaces of meanings and different identities within the postcolonial condition" (Kalua 25). In this way, Damböck's notion of transmigration reflects "Bhabha's deep awareness that any calls for a return to pure and uncontaminated cultural origins merely obfuscate the reality of the deep-rooted and largely irrevocable cultural effects of the process of transculturation" (Kalua 25).

3.3 THE CRITICAL DYSTOPIA

After the nineteenth century was largely dominated by utopian writing with the likes of Thomas More's *Utopia*, and the twentieth century saw a strong shift to predominantly dystopian writing such as George Orwell's *1984*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, a new trend started to emerge in the 1980s with writers such as Atwood, Cadigan, Robinson, Butler, Piercy and LeGuin transforming the genre into what is now known as the critical dystopia.

In the introduction to *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism*, M. Keith Booker partially attributes the emergence of the critical dystopia to a growing suspicion of utopia as either impossible, as a consequence of the modern turn to political scepticism, or undesirable, noting how the "fulfillment of all desire leads to dehumanizing stagnation" (Booker 17). Simultaneously, as Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan note in *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, there was also a growing exhaustion in the bleak vision of dystopia, and the need to move "beyond nihilistic anxiety into a new oppositional consciousness" (Baccolini and Moylan 3) which opens up to possibility of hope in the future. The resulting genre was one that drew on the classical dystopian narrative, but questioned its limits and suggested new directions. Critical dystopia is therefore typically a generic mix of both utopias and dystopias:

> [Critical dystopias are] a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in the time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as worse than contemporary society but that normally includes at least one eutopian enclave or holds out hope that the dystopia can be overcome and replaced with a eutopia. (Baccolini and Moylan 7)

Baccolini and Moylan go on to point out that critical dystopias, therefore, share many of the main characteristics of traditional dystopias. In contrast to the typical utopias which entail a visitor's guided journey through a displaced society which leads to a comparison with the visitor's own society, dystopias involve no such displacement: no dream or trip is taken, and the narrative begins directly in the terrible new world. Opening in *media res* means that cognitive estrangement is forestalled: the protagonist is already fully immersed in this particular society and is therefore surrounded by an air of normality. However, estrangement

soon occurs due to dystopian fiction basing its form on a narrative of the hegemonic order and counter-narrative of resistance: dystopian narratives are told from the subjective viewpoint of a narrator/protagonist who typically does not belong to the hegemonic order and therefore "a counter- narrative develops as the dystopian citizen moves from apparent contentment into an experience of alienation and resistance" (Baccolini and Moylan 4).

However, breaking with the traditional dystopian fiction, critical dystopias maintain an aspect of hope in its ending. "Traditionally a bleak, depressing genre with little space for hope within the story, dystopias maintain utopian hope *outside* their pages, if at all; for it is only if we consider dystopia a warning that we as readers can hope to escape its pessimistic future" (Baccolini and Moylan 4). Hope is therefore only traditionally available to the readers, those outside the text, and not to those inside the text, namely the protagonists. Whereas in *1984* or *Brave New World*, Winston Smith, Julia, John the Savage, and Lenin all succumb to the authoritarian society; there is no escape. Conversely, critical dystopias allow hope both inside and outside the text. By resisting closure, using open endings, and rejecting the subjugation of the protagonist to the authoritarian society at the end of the novel, both reader and protagonist maintain a utopian impulse. In this way, the critical dystopia "opens a space of contestation and opposition for those collective 'ex-centric' subjects whose class, gender, race, sexuality, and other positions are not empowered by hegemonic rule" (Baccolini and Moylan 7).

When taking a more in-depth look at dystopian novels and the textual strategies it has at its disposal, four main strategies come to light in which dystopian fiction manages to undermine hegemonic order and therefore acts as a form of resistance and critique of society.

3.3.1 Defamiliarization

In *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature*, Booker points out the long critical tendency "to see utopian and dystopian fiction as sacrificing artistic merit in the interest of content" (Booker 173) and therefore attributing the genre to the marginal popular culture realm. However, a smaller number of critics defend utopian and dystopian fiction from such dismissal, claiming it *is* worthy of serious critical attention. The defence of utopian and dystopian writing can split into a re-evaluation of its content (political engagement) as well as an affirmation of its artistic merit.

Booker focuses on the defence of the genre's political engagement, claiming that the critical dismissal of dystopian literature to the realm of popular culture based on the alleged

fact that these are "little more than thinly veiled political tracts" (Booker 173-174) can be attributed to "an elitist rejection of popular culture" (Booker 173) as well as to "a bias against literary works that are socially and politically engaged, from an apparent belief that such engagement somehow contaminates the works and deprives them of their pristine literary purity" (Booker 174). However, partly due to this bourgeois tendency to isolate art to an autonomous sphere that deprives art of any real social, political or critical force, there has been a growing trend in literary studies (as of the 1980s) to insist on "the artificiality of treating the literary and the social as two separate noncommunicating realms" (Booker 174). Critics such as Bakhtin, Foucault and feminist theorists have argued "that 'literature' as a realm untainted by the social and the political simply does not exist" (Booker 174). This not only means that the conventional bourgeois prejudice that separates art and society is therefore political in itself, for as Bertolt Brecht said, "[a]ll art is political, (…) [t]hus for art to be 'unpolitical' means only to ally itself with the 'ruling' group" (Booker 175); but it also means that dystopian fiction merits a certain amount of critical attention "because more than most genres it inherently recognizes the mutual involvement of literature and society" (Booker 175).

Nevertheless, Booker is also quick to admit that this re-evaluation of literature's social engagement is just one side of the coin, and that what distinguishes literature from other discourse, say philosophy and sociology, is its literariness. However, unlike most critics, Booker is convinced of dystopian fiction's artistic merit. She argues that the dystopian novel, being in essence a form of social criticism, relies heavily on its literariness, that is to say, on "its ability to illuminate social and political issues from an angle not available to conventional social theorists and critics" (Booker 175). Although this ability to "renew and enrich our perceptions of reality" (Booker 175) is necessary and true of all types of literature, the technique *par excellence* to achieve this constitutes the principal technique of all dystopian literature, namely, defamiliarization. Therefore, "[i]f the main value of literature in general is its ability to make us see the world in new ways, to make us capable of entertaining new and different perspectives on reality, then dystopian fiction is not a marginal genre. It lies at the very heart of the literary project" (Booker 176).

In "Concrete Dystopia: Slavery and Its Others", Maria Varsam further emphasises the importance of defamiliarization to the objective of dystopian literature as social criticism. Through temporal and spatial defamiliarization, dystopian fiction invites identification with the narrator/protagonist's perception of society, which is necessary not only to empathise but also to judge and condemn the society (and by extension, the present).

> In fact, defamiliarization is the key strategy all utopian literature employs to some degree for the explicit purpose of social critique via renewed perception. Applied to dystopian fiction, defamiliarization makes us see the world anew, not as it is but as it *could* be; it shows the world in sharp focus in order to bring out conditions that exist already but which, as a result of our dulled perception, we can no longer see. (Varsam 206)

Different from the mimetic approach to art, which has a direct, stable and recognizable relation to reality, dystopian fiction turns reality into a site of interpretation, which exposes a discrepancy with the real world. In this way, "the real world is made to appear 'strange' in order to challenge the reader's complacency toward accepted views" (Varsam 206) of the world.

> The device of defamiliarization, then, may serve in dystopian fiction as a formal strategy that creates a bridge between certain elements of reality and fiction, the historical and the synchronic, on the one hand, the ahistorical and the diachronic, on the other. This makes it possible to draw parallels between de disparate historical events far removed from one another in space and time and to make connections between similar events placed in disparate contexts. Through the comparisons across time - future, present, and past - and across space, the author encourages the reader to critique the historical process and to assess what similarities and differences can be drawn. (Varsam 207)

3.3.2 Language appropriation

The role and power of language is a recurrent theme in dystopian literature. As Baccolini and Moylan point out, the conflict between the dystopian governments/power structures and the oppressed protagonist/citizen is as much a narrative conflict as it is a discursive one. The authoritarian dystopian government seeks to control and regulate social order through "coercion and consent" (Baccolini and Moylan 5), and language plays an exceedingly important role in this: "discursive power, exercised in the reproduction of meaning and the interpellation of subjects is a (…) necessary force. Language is a key weapon for the reigning dystopian power structure" (Baccolini and Moylan 5). This also means that for the

protagonist, emancipation is achieved through a confrontation and reappropriation of language: "the process of taking control over the means of language, representation, memory, and interpellation is a crucial weapon and strategy in moving dystopian resistance from a consciousness to an action that leads to (…) attempts to change the society" (Baccolini and Moylan 6).

The control of language by the state or governing power structure is a major recurring theme in many dystopian novels, the most overt and best known of which is in George Orwell's *1984* (1949). As Booker points out, Orwell's Party in *1984* even go as far as to develop a completely new official language, the so-called "Newspeak", the basic objective of which is to 'deprive the populace of the vocabulary in which to express dissident ideas, and therefore literally to make those ideas unthinkable" (Booker 80). In this way, the Party manages to instil conformity and obedience in its members by making all subversive thoughts (and therefore verbal resistance) impossible because there are no words in which to articulate such thoughts.

But why do dystopian novelists pay so much attention to language? To answer this question Booker points toward the parallel between dystopian fiction and modern language theorists. Drawing on theorists and critics such as Bakhtin, Derrida, Foucault and Lacan, Booker states that in literature, as in society, language plays a crucial role, and that "the conflicts and rivalries among different groups in society can be fundamentally figured as a clash between different languages" (Booker 80). This is because "certain habitual methods of Western 'logocentric' thought are embedded in the metaphysical nature of language itself" (Booker 80). In other words, language not only *reflects* society but it fundamentally *constructs* society: it influences the way we perceive, interpret and further develop our society. In keeping with the modern language theories, language in dystopian novels is attributed the same influence and potentialities. Therefore, dystopian power structures tend to focus on language not only as a specifically designed tool with which to manipulate and control its members, but also as a potential harbour of "powerfully subversive energies" (Booker 81) which are to be suppressed or eliminated. In a similar vein, "Newspeak" in Orwell's *1984* is strategically designed to ensure that "all access to 'reality' is necessarily mediated" (Booker 82) through the Party itself, thereby perpetuating its power and eliminating all possibility for subversion and resistance.

Subversion, however, always remains possible. Modern language theorists often emphasise the value of heteroglossia, linguistic pluralism and linguistic multiplicity as a means of countering "a 'monological' language that allows for only one view of the world"

(Booker 82). This can also be found in dystopian fictions, in which such subversion is used as an instrument of resistance. A prime example of such language appropriation, as pointed out by Booker, can found in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. In this novel language (especially written language) is controlled by the rulers of Gilead who use it to construct and maintain a patriarchal society: "men in Gilead maintain an especially strong control over written language, and women are generally forbidden to either read or write" (Booker 168); the women are stripped of their original names, and therefore their identity, and are instead given possessive nominations in order to make clear their status as mere property of men; women are limited to spoken language and are expected to speak only in clichés or other predetermined ways etc. This is all very similar to the type of control of language present in Orwell's *1984*.

However, "as is usually the case in dystopian fiction, language functions in *The Handmaid's Tale* as a potentially powerful locus of transgression as well" (Booker 168-169). By using small but extremely significant forms of language subversion, Offred is able to use language as a form of feminine resistance: she records her tale and therefore not only performs a 'male' action, but also insists on using her own voice to articulate her experiences; she cherishes her former name in an attempt to safeguard her identity; and she restores the plurality of language by frequently using puns, connotations, and other wordplay. In this way, Offred is able to use language in a subversive way "to maintain an identity of her own, apart from the one prescribed to her in this ultimate patriarchal society" (Booker 169).

Dystopian fiction has continued to attach great importance to language, especially the ways in which authoritarian states manipulate and control it in order to subjugate its citizens, as well as how these oppressed citizens in turn subvert and appropriate it in order to form a (collective or personal) resistance.

3.3.3 Genre Blending

Typical for critical dystopias, which already share characteristics of both utopian and dystopian fiction, is what is known as genre blending. Genre blending is the incorporation and subsequent deconstruction of a known genre and its conventions, and serves as key strategy for the novel's social critique: "Conservative forms are transformed by merging with dystopia, a merge that forces political reconsideration, and traditionally conservative forms can progressively transform the dystopian genre so that its pessimism shifts from being resigned to being militant" (Donawerth 29).

As mentioned earlier, the function of dystopian literature is to depict a non-existent society, situated in a time and place which the contemporaneous reader views as considerably worse than its own. It projects a sociopolitical system from the point of view of an oppressed character which "evokes for the reader a 'militant pessimism', and it leaves the ending open so that the possibility of a 'focused anger' and a 'radical hope' remain possible for the reader" (Donawerth 30). In "Genre Blending and the Critical Dystopia", Jane Donawerth sets out to explore the ways in which the blurring of borders between genres contribute to the creation of this 'militant' and 'radical' vision. Arguably the most overt example Donawerth calls upon to illustrate her point is that of Samuel R. Delany's epic science-fiction novel *Dhalgren* (1974).

Delany's *Dhalgren*, is a blend of the near-future dystopia and the epic. The genre of the epic can be best described as "a long quest story depicting a search for origins in the service of establishing a national identity, featuring a hero of representative national values and identity, and the battle scenes celebrating a people's struggle to give birth to themselves as a nation" (Donawerth 34). By using and appropriating the conventions of the epic, Donawerth describes Delany's *Dhalgren* as a "systematic dismantling of the epic within the genre of dystopia" (Donawerth 34).

The plot structure of the novel is invariably typical of the epic genre as it recounts a quest of the protagonist, Kid, who begins a search for his identity. However, "Kid's pilgrimage reflects the depletion of the hero myth" (Donawerth 35), for having entered and left the city, Kid gains no new awareness that will help him redeem the wasteland, he fails to discover his racial or family identity, and he is determined not to reproduce – crucial to building a nation – but to experience all forms of sexual pleasure. "As a protagonist, Kid contributes not to the establishment but to the critiquing American identity" (Donawerth 35). Likewise, the many battles included in *Dhalgren* fail to establish a new order as well as fail to distinguish between friend (patriot) and foe. Instead of celebrating imperial conquest, the violent encounters Delany describes ponder the civil unrest and mass demonstrations of the American 1960s civil rights and anti-war protests. Apart from structure and plot, *Dhalgren* also boasts of the generic style of the epic with the inclusion of several catalogues and epithets. But again, "Delany deconstructs the convention as he employs it. Rather than establish the plenitude of the nation and celebrate the spoils of the hero, his catalogues suggest the immensity of the fall from rational order occurring in [the ruined city of] Bellona" (Donawerth 35).

It is evident, therefore, that the generic conventions of the epic in Delany's *Dhalgren*, subvert its traditional function and are a key strategy to emphasise the social critique inherent

in dystopian literature. Instead of creating a national epic, which establishes national values and identities, the use of the epic genre in *Dhalgren* reinforces the political and social denouncement of the novel as dystopian fiction, and by extension of 1960s American society. This type of genre blending is a common feature of critical dystopias, and manifests itself in many different ways – always, however, as a means of subverting convention and strengthening the social critique inherent to dystopian fiction.

3.3.4 Concrete Dystopia

In "Concrete Dystopia: Slavery and Its Others", Maria Varsam defines concrete dystopias as "those events that form the *material* basis for the content of dystopian fiction which have inspired the writer to warn of the potential for history to repeat itself" (Varsam 209). To better understand this concept, Varsam looks at both "concrete dystopias" and "concrete utopias", and their relation to present reality.

What concrete utopia and dystopia share is the idea that reality is not fixed but fluid, infused with both positive and negative future-laden potential. Reality always "'includes what is becoming and might become' and as such is 'in a state of process' which incorporates future possibilities" (Varsam 208). Concrete utopia and dystopia therefore focus on "the real, material conditions of society that manifest itself as a result of humanity's desire for a better world" (Varsam 207). It implies that the past and the present real-life events are dystopian in their functions and effects because of humanity's need for progress and improvement. In this way, concrete utopias are a manifestation of the positive latent forces of the present reality (e.g. ethics, religions, philosophy) projected into the future, therefore bringing together the present and the future. Concrete dystopia, on the other hand, with its bleak outlook on the future, extrapolates from the negative forces and events in reality which attempt to crush the expression of hope (e.g. slavery, genocide, political dictatorship), showing no improvement or advancement in time and therefore bringing together the past and the present, as warning for the future (Varsam 208-9). In "Migrants and the Dystopian State", Matthew Goodwin focuses on one such real-life dystopia/concrete dystopia that has formed the material basis for much dystopian fiction, namely, migration.

According to Goodwin, since the beginning of the utopian and dystopian tradition, starting with Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), migration and especially the restriction on migration has been a constant fixture. Dystopian fiction in particular commonly features a government that controls its citizen's movements by restricting migration and therefore

making leaving the state or traveling within one's own state a challenge. This can be done by the use of natural or constructed barriers such as in Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921), but more often by bureaucratic institutional control, as in Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash* (1992). These examples show that "when we imagine terrible societies, they are terrible in part because the state migration system (walls and borders, border patrol, and bureaucracy) has proliferated" (Goodwin 129-130).

Goodwin goes on to analyse two Mexican short stories, José Luis Alverdis "Azúcar en los Labios" (1994) and Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz's "Cajunia" (1994), and one Chicano play, Cherrie Moraga's *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* (2001). These three works draw on the dystopian tradition of heightened migration control to reflect the experience of contemporary experience. The concrete dystopia that forms the material basis for the works is the state migration system of the United States: the experiences of the fictional migrants correlate with the real-life experiences of the majority of Mexican migrants (especially undocumented migrants) to the United States, who are continuously monitored, regulated by oppressive bureaucracies, and confronted with guarded borders and walls. Drawing on Varsam's definition of concrete dystopias, however, Goodwin contests that these stories are rather *mimetic* than extrapolative: "The equation between fictional and real-life migrants in these stories creates a frightening logic. Migrants in real life are treated the same as migrants living in a fictional dystopian society, therefore, migrants in real life face a dystopia" (Goodwin 130). State migration as a concrete dystopia is not a possible future manifestation due to latent forces in the present or past, as Varsam originally defined the concept, but rather an already fully manifested reality.

However, typical of such dystopian fiction in which migration forms a central theme of the story, is that it not only criticises state migration systems, also to express fear of a potential radicalization to the point that the oppressed state becomes a dystopia. In Cherrie Moraga's *The Hungry Woman*, for instance, the protagonist, Medea, lives in the Chicano state of Aztlán, but is expelled from the state after they discover that she has a lesbian lover. The story expresses the fear of minority groups oppressing their own members and thus becoming oppressors themselves: "the story is a rich metaphor for the exclusion that Chicano/a gays and lesbians experienced from the Chicano/a nationalist movement, and so, Aztlán in the story may be a utopia for some Chicano/a nationalists, but for the Chicano/a queers it is a nightmarish dystopia" and as a result "Chicano/a nationalism mimics United States' imperialism with the result that the queers are deported just as Mexicans were deported" (Goodwin 136).

Thus, it becomes clear that the objective of such concrete dystopias not only to critique the authoritarian state, but also to warn its oppressed citizens not to allow their resistance to turn into a state of fundamentalism. Whether it is by the creation of similar restrictive border control; by the exclusion of those outside their society, including their oppressors; or by the exclusion of others within their own society, intolerance and racism from minority groups could lead to radicalization, and previous victims can form the very same authoritarian dystopia from which they are trying to escape.

4 ANALYSIS OF LAWRENCE HILL'S *THE ILLEGAL*

4.1 THE SOCIAL FORMULA NOVEL

Lawrence Hill's *The Illegal* is undoubtedly inspired by the current global migration crisis, which has seen more than fifty million people forcibly displaced for the first time since World War II (Amnesty International "What We Do: Armed Conflict"). Both as a social novel that takes on the plight of refugees, and as a dystopian novel whose objective is social critique, *The Illegal* can be seen as a manifestation of what Raymond Williams coined "the social formula novel": in a bid to explore, critique, and have the reader confront the numerous social injustices that refugees and migrants experience, *The Illegal* creates a society in which the very worst injustices faced by refugees from around the world are concentrated in a single geo-political entity, that is to say, in the two fictional and neighbouring island countries of Zantoroland and Freedom State. Thus, in keeping with Williams's definition of the social formula novel, *The Illegal* can be dissected into three parts: (1) a pattern that is abstracted, (2) the society that is created from this pattern (manifestations in the novel), and (3) (specific examples of) the sum of social experiences from which this pattern is abstracted (manifestations in real-life).

Against the backdrop of South to North Migration, the abstracted pattern of immigrant and refugee existence in *The Illegal* depicts how refugees flee their home countries in a bid to escape several social injustices and human rights violations, only to find that while their very lives may no longer be at stake in the democratic and developed countries to which they flee, they still find themselves becoming victims of similar injustices and abuses, only this time targeted specifically at refugees. The social injustices which comprise this social pattern and which infuse the refugee experience include armed conflict, unlawful detentions, enforced disappearances, torture, extreme poverty, discrimination, censorship, lack of justice, and anti-immigration laws[1].

[1] This list of social injustices is inferred from a list of fifteen focus points of Amnesty International. These can be found on their webpage Amnesty International "What We Do." *Amnesty International*, https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/. Accessed 13 April 2017.

This social pattern then forms the model for the newly created societies in *The Illegal* made up of the southern, underdeveloped homeland of Zantoroland, and the northern affluent host nation of Freedom State. In Part 1 of *The Illegal*, the novel recounts the formative years of the protagonist Keita in his homeland, and in so doing, uncovers the manifestation of social injustices in Zantoroland.[2] In *The Illegal*, armed conflict is the main driving force behind Keita's decision to leave Zantoroland: ethnic tensions between the majority Kano and the minority Faloo lead to a Kano coup d'état (Hill 21) and a subsequent military dictatorship which targets all political dissidents and the Faloo ethnic minority (Hill 343). Under the military dictatorship unlawful imprisonment, torture, and enforced disappearances are common practice: political dissidents, journalists, out-of-favour athletes, returned refugees, and Faloos are either "snatched off the street (…) never to be seen again" (Hill 29), or are unlawfully detained and tortured in government headquarters (Hill 33, 44, 353). In this way, Zantoroland evokes several heinous political realities, such as the ethnic strife leading to the Rwandan genocide; the military coups common in many African, South American, and Middle Eastern countries; and the mass disappearances in the Argentinian Dirty War.

Further consequences of the military dictatorship in Zantoroland include discrimination, poverty, censorship and lack of justice. Indeed, growing unpopularity for Faloos as business people and politicians (Hill 13) takes a radical turn as Faloos fall victim to several hate crimes (Hill 14, 22) and, when targeted by the new government, returned refugees are forced to carry a red cane as "a sign for all who oppose the government" (Hill 35) – a form of discrimination that is reminiscent of the Yellow Star of David which the Jews were made to wear in World War II. And whilst the new government lives in luxury (Hill 35, 50), the majority of the population live in overcrowded, informal settlements (Hill 17) with poor living conditions (Hill 8) and a high death rate due to disease (Hill 230), whilst the targeting of the Faloo also means that even the better off minority of Zantoroland are now also declining into poverty (Hill 47). This evokes the plight of people in countries such as Zimbabwe, where due to dictatorial rule and the ensuing economic meltdown, the middle class was all but wiped out in the first decade of this century.

Under the new Zantoroland dictatorship, freedom of speech is also under threat: Zantoroland officials kidnap, torture and kill dissident journalists (Hill 33); take control of all media outlets including television, radio and internet (Hill 21, 42); and plant bugs and

[2] For a full and detailed analysis of the social injustices that comprise both Zantoroland and Freedom State, see Appendix A: Social Injustices.

surveillance equipment in dissidents' houses (Hill 45) - reminding us of dictatorial practices in present-day countries such as Turkey, Egypt, Ethiopia and China. Lastly, a weak criminal justice system (typical of when the government itself is the main perpetrator) means that state corruption (Hill 35), oppression, and human rights violations (Hill 42) go unopposed - the pinnacle of such corruption being Zantoroland's secret dealings with Freedom State which sees refugees who *do* manage to escape the social injustices of Zantoroland tracked down and deported back to the homeland (Hill 48), as is happening to North Korean refugees in China.

And so, fleeing violence, poverty, corruption, discrimination and persecution, Keita decides to leave his home and go in search of a better life, and thus joins the many thousands of immigrants and refugees from Zantoroland residing in Freedom State. Once in Freedom State (Part 2), it soon becomes clear that his struggles do not end there, for having escaped the social injustices of his home country, Keita encounters several more in the host country, where refugee rights are all but upheld – thus simply swapping one dystopian society for another.

Anti-immigration laws in Freedom State see all legal immigration from Zantoroland closed (Hill 269), immigrants from Zantoroland crossing the Ortiz Sea in shabby boats immediately arrested and deported upon arrival in Freedom State (Hill 64-9), and dissident refugees from Zantoroland deported back to their homeland (Hill 321). Furthermore, anti-immigration rhetoric accusing immigrants of abusing and draining the economy in Freedom State is omnipresent (Hill 66-7, 237, 264), and anti-immigration propaganda is used by the government of Freedom State to justify and cover up any illegal action taken towards immigrants (Hill 194, 333, 374). This all strongly evokes the thousands of refugees and immigrants from Syria and the shores of northern Africa crossing the Mediterranean, and arriving in boatloads on the shores of Greece; European countries such as Hungary closing their borders due to the unprecedented influx of immigrants; right-wing political parties such as Marine LePen's Front National running on a platform of mass deportation; President Donald Trump's anti-Muslim travel ban; and the EU-Turkey deal designed to stop immigrants from entering Europe.

Due to such an inhospitable environment, immigrants and refugees in Freedom State go into hiding in the slum known as AfricTown: an informal settlement which houses the black and immigrant population of Freedom State, some five kilometres off the capital city Clarkson. Here people are forced to live in old shipping containers which are overcrowded (Hill 89), without electricity or water (Hill 89), without sanitation (Hill 90), without proper education (Hill 90), without official healthcare (Hill 218); and with the constant threat of

being raided for illegal immigrants (Hill 56). In this way, AfricTown does not only evoke living conditions in the vast slums of Cape Town (South Africa) and the favelas in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), but equally so the immigrant camps of, for instance, Calais (France).

The violations of immigrant and refugee rights, as well as the institutional negligence of AfricTown are emanations of a more general xenophobic, racist and discriminatory attitude of Freedom State politics, which sees state officials publicly portray an inclusive, multi-cultural, unprejudiced image (Hill 184, 125), whilst privately, immigrants continue to suffer verbal, physical, and institutional abuse. This evokes several countries, such as Turkey and Hungary, who publicly agree with European values and policies set forth by the European Union, but in practice fail to do so.

The institutional discrimination and human rights abuses of immigrants and refugees also puts a strain on freedom of speech in Freedom State: the Prime Minister spies on members of his own government (Hill 360); he ensures the imprisonment of journalists who threaten government dealings (Hill 45); and he is willing to kill in order to retrieve incriminating evidence (Hill 373). Once again, the social injustices and human rights violations faced by (and targeted specifically at) immigrants and refugees, in Freedom State go unopposed as (similarly to Zantoroland) the government itself is the main perpetrator. Justice for Keita only comes in the epilogue of the novel (Part 3), which maintains the utopian impulse of the novel as the government of Freedom State is finally held accountable, and Keita is finally able to settle in Freedom State as a legal citizen.

Thus, as a social formula novel, *The Illegal* constitutes an agglomeration of the very worst social injustices faced by immigrants and refugees, both in their home countries and in the host nations. It is therefore no coincidence that the leitmotif of long-distance running – embodied by the protagonist and refugee Keita – acts as a fundamental metaphor for refugee existence. For whilst Keita literally runs for his life (to avoid persecution in Zantoroland, and to earn enough money to survive in Freedom State), many refugees do so metaphorically when on the run, trying to escape trouble, and trying to stay alive. *The Illegal* makes sure to bridge the gap between the literal and figurative meaning of running, by continuously linking the act of running to the act of breathing: "*Run, Keita. Just run*. So he got up and ran, focusing on his breathing, just as he had been coached. *Inhale deeply, fill the diaphragm, exhale. Control the air. Keep de oxygen moving through your blood. Breathe. Run*" (Hill 15).

4.2 THE MIGRANT NOVEL

In order to determine whether *The Illegal*, as a migrant narrative, is multicultural, transcultural or transmigrant, it would prove beneficial to analyse the characters of the novel in order to establish the type of migrant attitudes they embody and reflect.

There are several migrant characters in the novel: apart from Keita Ali, the protagonist, it is also important to analyse other main migrant characters such as Yoyo Ali, Charity Ali, Viola Hill, John Falconer, Candace Freixa, Lula DiStefano and Graeme Wellington. These are all characters who, although they may be living in Freedom State and even be naturalised citizens of the nation, descend from a foreign bloodline (synonymous with 'black' in *The Illegal*). In contrast to other characters such as Rocco Calder and Ivernia Beech, these characters are non-native inhabitants of Freedom State and are therefore either direct immigrants or the product of an immigrant experience (such as Graeme Wellington who is Prime Minister of Freedom State but, as we find out at the end of the novel, is an 'octoroon' i.e. one-eight black). In this way, although it is only Keita who migrates from Zantoroland to Freedom State, he encounters many other first or second-generation immigrants whose migrant identities are of equal importance in the novel.

In order to determine whether these characters are multicultural, transcultural or transmigrant, it is incumbent to discern as to how far their actions, movements, perceptions, and general attitude coincide with the characteristics for migrant identities set out by Gross and Damböck. In this way, the identity of each character can be established and general patterns can be ascertained, as becomes evident in figure 1: a schematic overview in which the most requisite characteristics of multicultural, transcultural and transmigrant identities (as expounded by Gross and Damböck) are set out and attributed to a specific character according to explicit or directly inferable references in the novel.

From this schematic overview it becomes evident that the transmigrational characters prevail: Keita, Charity, Viola, John and Candace all seem to distance themselves from any collective cultural identity and instead focus on their individuality and personal circumstances. At the polar opposite of the transmigrational characters, and fewer in number, are the multicultural migrants Lula and Graeme. Yoyo constitutes the only transcultural migrant present in the novel. In order to discern how these different migrant identities are developed in the novel, Viola, Yoyo and Lula are discussed in further detail as representative

		MIGRANT IDENTITIES										
					TRANSCULTURAL				TRANSMIGRATIONAL			
					Assimilation							
					Failed (due to resistance of host society)		Successful (thanks to acceptance of host society)					
		MULTICULTURAL										
		Isolation from mainstream culture and a retreat to native community	Antagonistic relationship with the host society	Nostalgia for homeland	Here-there dichotomy	Focus on survival	Cultural blending	Dialogic (ex)change	Absence of nostalgia for homeland	Transnational/ transcultural networking	Focus on economic possibilities, personal desires and self-fulfilment	Deterritorialised/ Cosmopolitan self image
CHARACTERS	Keita	{x}	{x}	{x}	{x}	{x}			x	x	x	x
	Yoyo						x	x		x		
	Charity									x	x	x
	Viola								x	x	x	x
	John									x	x	x
	Candace								x	x	x	x
	Lula	x	x							x		
	Graeme*	x	x									

Key: x Determinative characteristics attributed to the character
{x} Non-determinative characteristics attributed to the character (initial/temporary characteristics)
* A character whose so-called "own" culture turns out *not* to be the native culture
Overlapping characteristics

FIG. 1. A schematic overview of the characteristics of multicultural, transcultural and transmigrational identities and the characters in *The Illegal* they are attributed to (based on explicit/directly inferable evidence in the novel).

of the transmigrational, transcultural and multicultural identity respectively[3]. The protagonist Keita also deserves special and separate mentioning, as he constitutes the only character that undergoes a transformation (see fig. 1).

One of the most exemplary transmigrational characters in *The Illegal*, is undoubtedly Viola: a "blagaybulled-black, gay and disabled" (Hill 63) journalist and second-generation immigrant (she is a citizen of Freedom State, as was her mother) who was born and raised in AfricTown but now lives and works in Clarkson (the capital city of Freedom State). It is important to note that, although AfricTown is a town in Freedom State, it has to be regarded as a separate and homogenous society. This is because, unlike the rest of Freedom State, AfricTown is poverty-stricken and houses the black population of Freedom State. It is therefore considered more as an extension of Zantoroland than of Freedom State: "Zantoroland. What a dump. Dictatorship. Poverty. The whole country of 4.5 million people was like one giant AfricTown" (Hill127).

In this way, not only does Viola's job as a journalist elicit trans*national* networking, as becomes evident when she travels to Zantoroland to research for a news report, but her having "escaped" (Hill 302) from AfricTown to Clarkson can essentially be seen as a trans*cultural* transgression from (black) AfricTown to (white) Freedom State. Once in Clarkson (Freedom State), Viola harbours no nostalgia for her homeland (AfricTown), but instead counts her blessings, admitting, "If I hadn't had the accident, I probably would have stayed. And maybe I'd be dead now, or strung out on drugs or booze" (Hill 74). However, the struggle for survival in AfricTown has only become apparent to Viola in hindsight and was not initially the driving force behind her displacement. Instead, her decision to leave AfricTown was triggered by her desire to become a journalist and is therefore motivated by personal goals and opportunities, and her wish for self-fulfilment:

> To be given a crack at serious news stories, Viola Hill had to be perfect on the job. Always on time. Always ready. Invincible. Got the flu? Don't tell anybody. Having a day when all she could think about was that she wished her mom were still alive? Swallow that emotion. Having a rare burst of phantom pain, like a knife ripping through her thighs? How bloody unfair was that, to feel ten-out-of-ten agony in a part of her body that she no longer owned? Even phantom pains she had to mask. (…) She

[3] For a full and detailed analysis of all migrant characters in figure 1, see Appendix B: Immigrant Characters.

> didn't want people thinking she'd keel over and die. They would never promote her. (Hill 113)

In this passage, it becomes clear just how little cultural identity and difference-consciousness plays a part in Viola's everyday thinking: despite being the only black journalist surrounded by a white majority, Viola never once contemplates that her cultural or ethnic background may prove an obstacle on her road to self-fulfilment – the only difficulty is maintaining a level of professionalism, like everyone else has to do. Viola's individualism is further emphasised when, during a demonstration calling for better living conditions in AfricTown which she is covering for the newspaper, Viola refuses to go up on stage when Lula DiStefano calls upon her and claims that she "was not a community activist. She was here to report the story, not become it" (Hill 331). Viola's identity is therefore not rooted in a cultural community or place of origin, but in her goals in life. She refuses to identify herself through a collective identity and instead embraces a more cosmopolitan attitude.

The only transcultural character in *The Illegal* is Keita's father Yoyo. Originally a Bamileke from Cameroon, who has lived and worked in France for several years and is now living in Zantoroland amongst the Faloo, Yoyo has made both transnational and transcultural transgressions. In addition, and in a similar fashion to Viola Hill, Yoyo's illustrious career for many foreign newspapers including the *New York Times*, the *Atlantic*, the *Guardian*, the *Toronto Star*, and *Le Monde* (Hill 44) attest to his vast transnational networking and interaction. However, it is Yoyo's special relationship with the Faloo people in Zantoroland that yields him the title of transcultural migrant: as a Bamileke, Yoyo has spent the vast majority of his time as a journalist writing about, and taking up the plight of, the Faloo (as ethnic tension between the Faloo and the Kano rises in Zantoroland). As Deacon Andrews explains to Keita, "[Yoyo] is the only man who is trying to tell the world about the Faloo people. We used to be looked up to in this country. (…) Now we are in danger. Your father is a great man. Courageous. Some may say too courageous" (Hill 13). In this way, as a journalist of one ethnic background takes up the plight of another, a process of dialogic exchange between the two cultures is established. Furthermore, Yoyo's advocacy and activism on the part of the threatened Faloo community has led to a cultural border blending by which the Faloo have seemingly adopted Yoyo into their community as one of their own. This becomes evident in several passages in which members of the Faloo express their gratitude and respect toward Yoyo and, by extension, his family:

> One of the men startled Keita by calling out to him. "Boy, give me a dollar."
> (…) Keita's mouth fell open.
> "Leave him alone," another man said. "He's the journalist's son."
> "Whose son?" the first man asked.
> "Yoyo Ali, the journalist."
> "Well, in that case, son, go with God, and tell your father that the returnees [Faloo dissidents extradited from Freedom State] send their best." (Hill 18)

Nevertheless, although Yoyo shows a positive attitude toward other cultures and cultural diversity, his advocacy for the rights of the Faloo reveals a mindset that is still concerned with nationalised, or territorialised identities. In contrast to Viola Hill and the other transmigrant characters in the novel, Yoyo is not completely void of the difference-consciousness that characterises both transcultural and multicultural identities. However, in contrast to the multicultural characters such as Lula and Graeme, Yoyo's difference-consciousness is one that encourages friendly and amicable relationships between different cultures as opposed to the antagonism and conflict that arises from a multicultural perspective.

Arguably the antithesis of Viola and the other transmigrational characters are the multicultural migrants, not least the infamous Lula DiStefano. Lula, also known as the "unofficial queen of AfricTown" (Hill 76), is an illegal from Zantoroland and owns and controls the whole of AfricTown: she rents out shipping containers (housing), organises community events, and owns the infamous Bombay Booty Brothel as well as the nightclub known as The Pit. Lula has many transnational and transcultural qualities: she is an internationally educated individual having studied at the London School of Economics (Hill 117); she has a worldly view as becomes evident by the décor of her Bombay Booty which has many impressionist paintings (the likes of Monet, Degas, Renoir) hanging on the wall, as well as an Italian marble floor (Hill 94); and she frequently does business with Freedom State and Zantoroland officials (Hill 208). Lula therefore has the makings of a transcultural or transmigrational identity, but, instead of using it all for self-fulfilment and to develop as an individual, Lula is so rooted in her cultural identity that she focuses all her time and energy in the advancement of the community.

Loyal to her cultural heritage, Lula retreats from the host society and helps build the community in AfricTown, which separates itself (geographically and culturally) from Freedom State. As mentioned earlier, this new home is considered an extension of the homeland Zantoroland. Lula is deeply invested in the advancement and improvement of

AfricTown: she pays for John Falconer's school fees when his mother can't (Hill 86); she encourages local talent in The Pit (Hill 195); organises soup kitchens (Hill 210); as well as demonstrations demanding better living conditions in AfricTown (Hill 328-36). Lula's deep-rooted cultural identity and her unwillingness to cross cultural boundaries results in an antagonistic relationship between the two cultures in Freedom State which becomes palpable in Lula's "us versus them" attitude. That is to say, everything Lula does, including any seemingly transcultural transactions with Freedom State officials, is done for the development of AfricTown. Her determination knows no bounds and she is not above blackmailing Freedom State officials (Hill 328), nor sacrificing one of her own, for the good of the many - as becomes evident when it is revealed that she had Yvette deported in order to frame the Prime Minister: "But framing Graeme was the only way to get him to back off the raids and give me what I wanted. What the people of AfricTown needed. If he had to deal with the fallout over the deportations of a teenage prostitute, then he would have to negotiate" (Hill 385). Lula's identification with a collective community and cultural origin is therefore in stark contrast to the more positive and inclusive attitudes of the transmigrational characters such as Viola.

It is important to note that, whilst Graeme is attributed the same migrant identity as Lula, the culture identified with is completely reversed in Graeme's case: although Graeme Wellington is of migrant descent (as mentioned earlier it is revealed that he is actually an 'octoroon'), his determination to hide and even annihilate any trace of his past lineage leads to a radical identification with the white native population of Freedom State: "She [Lula] was one of the only people that knew. And maybe the only living person. His parents had died long ago, and he had no siblings, and he had long ago cut off most ties to his past. He got by, saying that he had spent a lot of time in the sun, playing rugby and tennis and all that, and that there were Italians in his family" (Hill 337). Therefore, although Graeme is originally a (black) migrant, the denial of his ancestral roots leads to a *reversed* radical identification with the native *white* community and an exclusivist attitude toward the *black* community.

As mentioned earlier, the protagonist Keita occupies a special position in the migrant paradigm: in contrast to the previously mentioned characters that are ascribed a fixed identity, Keita is the only character that undergoes a transformation throughout the novel as he shifts from having a multicultural to a transmigrational identity. At the start of the novel, when Keita is still living in Zantoroland we learn that he lives in a segregated society: as part of the Faloo (minority ethnic group), Keita lives in a residential district which is separated from the Kano (majority ethnic group) and which Keita generally avoids or "skirt[s]" (Hill 17) when he

goes for a run. Keita's general resistance to other cultures is further emphasised when contrasted with his sister Charity whose "worldliness" (Hill 19) often reveals Keita's lack thereof, as is illustrated by the passage in which Charity, embracing the French (foreign) language, orders her madeleine "*au citron"*, which she claims is *beaucoup plus sophistiqué*" - and which prompts Keita to urge his sister to "[s]top being such a snob" (Hill 19). Keita therefore takes much more time in his transition towards transmigration as opposed to his sister Charity whose zest for self-fulfilment and worldly pleasures is evident from the outset: her dream to "be a journalist and see the world" (Hill 19) motivates her interest in different cultures as well as her success at school, as "head of her debating team, top of the class in all subjects" (Hill 10). Therefore when a Harvard scholarship provides her with an opportunity to achieve her goals, Charity never second-guesses a move to America (Hill 36).

This in contrast to Keita, whose decision to leave Zantoroland for Freedom State is not one driven by the wish for self-fulfilment, for while he dreams of running in the Olympics, he repeatedly turns down marathon agent Anton Hamm's offer to advance his racing career overseas (Hill 39). Instead, Keita only decides to leave when his life truly depends on it: "He was his father's son [son of a dissident journalist], and that in itself would be a death sentence. He had to get out and stay alive and find his sister" (Hill 48). When Keita first arrives in Zantoroland, he has moments of estrangement when he encounters new phenomena, which he constantly compares to his homeland:

> It was the strangest bus ride Keita had ever taken. There were no chickens or goats aboard. There was only one passenger per seat, and no one stood in the aisles or sat among luggage on top of the bus. As a matter of fact, they didn't even have luggage on top of the bus. (…) Not a single person sang or laughed or danced during the twenty-six hour trip. Nobody turned on a transistor radio; in fact, no one seemed to carry one. No strangers met, argued about politics, shared a sandwich or discovered that they were distant relatives. (Hill 58)

Passages such as these, in which Keita opposes Freedom State's formal and individualist way of life to Zantoroland's informal and communal way of life, illustrate the here-there dichotomy which many multicultural migrants struggle with. Keita is also often triggered with nostalgic longing for his homeland and especially with memories of his parents: "Keita remembered the sound of their laughter. It was like a duet. The laugh they made together was Keita's purest notion of home. Home had a door, and as it opened and Keita walked through

it, he felt an ocean of tears welling inside him. So he walked back out and closed the door gently behind him" (Hill 147). Keita's 'closing the door' to his memories is also a clear indicator of a trauma-based identity (Damböck): as he represses his memories, he initially fails to come to terms with the past.

However, as the novel progresses, so too does Keita's sense of identity as he slowly starts to deal with the past, and subsequently starts to look to the future instead. In keeping with the definition set out by Damböck, Keita's turning point towards a transmigrational identity can be pinpointed to the moment he decides to 'open' that door and in so doing, allows the trauma to be translated into a cohesive structure of self-narration, thus no longer letting it play a role in his identity formation: "Keita felt the same grief well up in him (…) That time, he had closed the door, gently but firmly, on his sadness. This time, he held it open a crack to let his story seep out" (Hill 224). This moment marks a shift in Keita: it is the moment he stops identifying himself through a collective, cultural identity and instead starts to see himself as an individual.

The more Keita starts to interact with people living in Freedom State and starts to build transcultural and transnational relationships (with the likes of Candace, Ivernia, John), the more he lets go of his past and starts to develop a deterritorialised and cosmopolitan identity. Keita's nostalgia gradually disappears, and by the end of the novel it becomes clear that he has lost all admiration for his homeland: "Now they would send him home – if you could give that name, home, to the country that had killed your father and kidnapped your sister" (Hill 276). Keita has let go of his cultural roots and starts to envision a more positive future: to Keita, Freedom State now represents a positive and inclusive, cosmopolitan society, which allows for economic opportunities as well as personal advancement and self-fulfilment:

> In the best possible outcome, Keita and his sister would be reunited in Freedom State. They would not have to hide and would be allowed to stay in the country. Charity could build a career and her life, and Keita could finally run free. He couldn't imagine a more beautiful way to be welcomed into the country than to be invited to run for the Olympic team. (Hill 232)

It has to be pointed out that the transmigrational characters (Keita, Charity, Viola, John, Candace) in *The Illegal* are given special prominence, not least as the ones that play an important role in opposing and challenging the traditional notions of culture and cultural difference. The still hegemonic assumption in Freedom State that culture is a homogenous

entity in which race, place of origin, and legal status correlate means that many of the transmigrational characters in *The Illegal*, because of their black skin, constantly have to fend off the assumption that they are illegal immigrants from Zantoroland. Occasionally, these transmigrational characters make explicit the struggle to overcome racial and cultural categorization. A case in point is Candace Freixa, a black woman whose mother was Portuguese and whose father was Brazilian, born and raised in AfricTown, but a natural citizen of Freedom State. A true hodgepodge of cultural identities, Candace still finds herself confronting hegemonic misconceptions:

> Among her fellow cops, she didn't advertise where she came from. She didn't want to fend off the inevitable questions. Where was she born? How did she gain citizenship? Had she forged her papers? Candace was born and raised in AfricTown, and, yes, so was her mother. Not every person in the community was illegal, although Candace had tried years ago of making that point. (Hill 129)

Another prime example of a character who finds himself actively having to challenge the racial and cultural categorizations is John Falconer. Born to a white mother and a mixed-race father, John, who is thus "blacker than white but whiter than black" (Hill 91), is often mistaken to be white – an assumption he vehemently refutes, for despite its advantages in Freedom State, John does not want to pegged to just *one* cultural heritage when he in fact belongs to more. His documentary on AfricTown is thus "his way of staking a claim" (Hill 99) to his black heritage. Thus, comfortable in multiple cultures and simultaneously refusing to identify with just one, Keita, Charity, Viola, John and Candace refuse to succumb to the traditional notions of culture and cultural difference and instead come to inhabit true postmodern, cosmopolitan, "third-space" (liminal) subjects.

Furthermore, it is imperative to point out that the fate of the characters depends wholly on their migrant identity, for a happy end is reserved entirely and only for the transmigrational characters. The same holds true for white native characters such as Rocco Calder and Ivernia Beech who demonstrate a more positive, inclusive and cosmopolitan perspective toward other cultures which is typically associated with a transmigrational attitude. Indeed, whilst the multicultural and transcultural characters succumb to a bleak ending (Lula flees, Graeme ends up in prison, Yoyo is killed), it is only the transmigrational characters that see their struggles resolved and their ambitions fulfilled: Keita obtains legal citizenship in Freedom State, opens up his own bakery, and is accepted into the Freedom State Olympic marathon team; Charity

also obtains legal citizenship as well as her MA from Harvard University; Candace is up for promotion to Captain of the Clarkson Police Department and is also accepted into the Olympic marathon team; Viola wins the prize for the best investigative news reporter of the year; John's award-winning documentary on AfricTown leads to a full-time scholarship at the Clarkson Academy for the Gifted; Ivernia has the charges against her dropped and is free from the clutches of the Office of Independent Living; and Rocco becomes the new Prime Minister of Freedom State.

This can arguably be seen as a criticism of and warning against the dangers of trauma-based identities as breeding grounds for fundamentalist violence. Indeed, Lula's strong determination to hold on to her cultural origin, Graeme's strong desire to belong to Freedom State, and Yoyo's tenacious advocacy for the Faloo (however noble), all lead to an activist stance which, in the case of Lula and Graeme, leads to exclusivist attitudes and radicalisation. Therefore, where Lula and Graeme serve as a warning, Keita, Candace, Charity, Viola and John serve as the solution: by embracing a transcultural, deterritorialised, individual and cosmopolitan attitude, these characters are comfortable oscillating between the different cultures and are therefore less prone to fundamentalist attitudes.

4.3 THE CRITICAL DYSTOPIA

4.3.1 Defamiliarization

Akin to the dystopian tradition, the spatial and temporal defamiliarization in *The Illegal* is of paramount importance to its main objective of social critique. Having previously established that the issues of immigration in *The Illegal* are a conglomeration of real-life, present-day experiences, social critique would not be effective if it were not for the spatial and temporal defamiliarization which allows for a renewed perspective on migrant and refugee existence and unsettles the reader's accustomed perception of migrant reality.

However, as Patrick D. Murphy expounds in "Reducing the Dystopian Distance: Pseudo-Documentary Framing in Near-Future Fiction", writers of dystopian fiction face an important decision to make when "determining the degree of distance between present world and possible world", for "[w]hile authors who want their work to touch immediately the life of the reader benefit greatly from the utilization of spatial and historical distance to fabulate a utopia or dystopia, they also face the danger of having that same distance sever the didactic signals of their chosen genre" (Murphy 25). In order to be effectively didactic, the similarities between real world and imaginative world have to be rendered adequately, for if the work seems too far removed from the everyday, too exaggerated, or generally distorted beyond recognition, the resulting effect is not didactic "cognition", but rather escapist "sublimation" (Murphy 26).

With this in mind, the spatial defamiliarization of Lawrence Hill's imaginative world consisting of two fictionalised countries, Zantoroland and Freedom State, is placed within the very world we know. In the heart of the Indian Ocean, Freedom State and Zantoroland are presented as if they *could* be a part of this world, and all references to other countries and international institutions are in keeping with reality as we know it: references to Ivy League Universities in the USA such as Harvard (Hill 36), to famous sporting events such as the Boston Marathon (Hill 52) and the Olympic Games (Hill 40), to the reputation and dominance of Ethiopian and Kenyan marathon runners (Hill 126) as well as actual famous athletes such as Roger Bannister (Hill 4) and Meb Keflezighi (Hill 12), to ethnic groups in Cameroon such as the Bamileke (Hill 14), to international organizations such as PEN International and Amnesty International (Hill 342), etc.

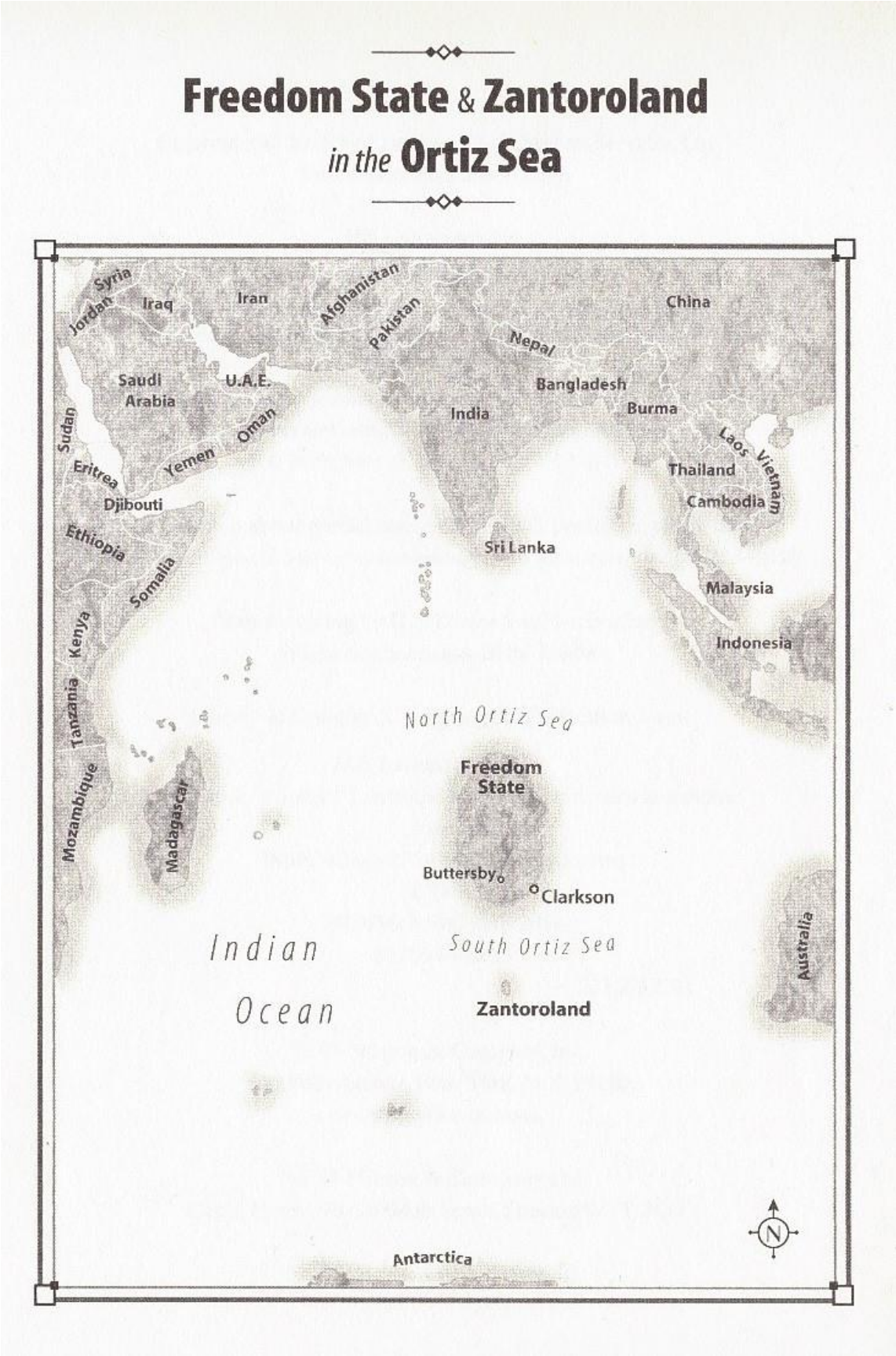

FIG. 2. Map of Freedom State and Zantoroland in the Ortiz Sea by Dawn Huck, as presented in *The Illegal: A Novel*. W.W. Norton and Company, 2016.

Furthermore, the choice to situate these two fictional countries in the heart of the Indian Ocean is to place them at the heart of the immigration problem. According to statistics of the *UNHCR Global Trends: Forced Displacement 2015*, East Africa and the Horn of Africa hosted the largest amount of refugees, at 4.4 million individuals (UNHCR 14), and over half (54%) of all refugees worldwide came from just three countries, including Syria (4.9 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million), and Somalia (1.1 million). Other East African and Middle Eastern countries make up the list of top six refugee host countries, including Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Ethiopia and Jordan (UNHCR 3). The cartography of *The Illegal* (see figure 2) places both Zantoroland and Freedom State in such a way that their proximity to these regions evokes the current refugee crisis and heightens verisimilitude. The use of fictional countries in *The Illegal* is a means for Lawrence Hill to pick and choose from the very worst of political policies around the world without having the reader link these policies to any one geo-political reality. However, in order for readers not to disavow its relevance (cf. 3.1 The social formula novel), much emphasis is laid on referentiality and verisimilitude, thereby anchoring the novel in the real world.

Apart from its relation with the rest of the world, Hill's fictionalised countries are also of interest in themselves. Not only do their individual forms evoke the original *Utopia* (1516) of Sir Thomas More, which featured a similarly mapped-out island set in the Indian Ocean, but their juxtaposition also serves an important axiological function. Set in the Ortiz Sea, the island form of Freedom State is a representation of its isolationism, whereas for Zantoroland, it serves as a natural barrier, which emphass the obstacles that immigrants face when trying to reach another country. Freedom State's sheer size in comparison to Zantoroland (see fig 2) is representative of the power relations between the two countries: Freedom State "brought thousands of people from Zantoroland in chains, enslaved them (…) and used them to build what is now one of the world's biggest economies" (Hill 75). In addition, Freedom State's positioning north of Zantoroland parallels the Global North-South Divide in which the Global North (generally the West and First World countries) are richer and more developed countries, and the Global South (the Third World countries) are poorer and less developed: indeed Freedom State is described as the third richest nation in the world, and "boasted one of the world's oldest and most stable parliamentary democracies" (Hill 100).

However, the topography of each country seems to suggest that although Freedom State may objectively be superior to Zantoroland, (pre-coup d'état), the latter and its people assuredly occupy the high ground. This is portrayed by the axiological contradiction between the mountains and high altitude of Zantoroland (Hill 7) in contrast to Freedom State which is

at sea-level (Hill 2). This is further emphasised by the more natural setting of Zantoroland, compared to the urban architecture of Freedom State, for whereas Zantoroland is described as having orchards, flatlands, hills, mountains, and lakes (Hill 2, 16), Freedom State only seems to boast of large cities and artificial spaces of nature in the many parks within these cities. The moral high ground of the people of Zantoroland who are more in harmony with their surroundings and the people they are surrounded by is therefore a recurring notion in the novel: "In any city or town in Zantoroland, a foreigner would have trouble walking the streets for two hours without being invited into somebody's home. The poorest people in the world brought in strangers, it seemed, and the richest people in the world kept them out" (Hill 235).

In terms of temporal defamiliarization, *The Illegal* (first published in 2015) is divided into three parts. Part 1, which consists of four introductory chapters, spans from the year 2004 to the start of the year 2018, and narrates Keita's formative years in Zantoroland before he arrives in Freedom State. Part 2 is the main focus of the novel, comprising of thirty-six chapters, and is set solely in the year 2018. Here the novel recounts Keita's experiences as a refugee in Freedom Sate, a country that has recently elected the right-wing, anti-immigration Family Party. The final two chapters are set in the year 2019 and make up Part 3. These serve as an epilogue to the novel in which we read about the fates of the characters, including Keita's happy ending, after having officially settled in Freedom State as a legal citizen.

With Part 1 focusing completely on Zantoroland, much emphasis is placed on the making of an authoritarian-dictatorial regime. Covering eighteen years, the rise of the dictatorial regime that oppresses its citizens and violates numerous fundamental human rights is presented as a phenomenon that spans the age of time: it is a phenomenon of the past, of the present and undoubtedly of the future. By contrast, Part 2 in Freedom State is set only in the future (albeit the very near-future), and focuses on the rise of the immigration crisis as well as on xenophobic populism in traditionally democratic societies. Unmistakably the bulk of the novel, immigration and xenophobia in Freedom State constitute the main focus of *The Illegal*, and therefore serve as the principal source of social critique and warning. Set in 2018, Hill's prediction of our future for which he aims to warn his readers, is set to unfold within the following couple of years, and serves as yet another device to heighten the verisimilitude of the novel and provide a proximity to the reader's life. Thus *The Illegal* constitutes a dystopia in which "*inevitability* rather than *possibility* is stressed" (Murphy 30). In doing so, the novel strongly resists sublimation, for "[o]nly cognition is encouraged by a work (…) in which *nothing* in the present needs to change in order for the catastrophic, dystopian events to occur in the very near future" (Murphy 30).

Indeed, the "inevitability" of Lawrence Hill's prediction has become increasingly apparent. The proliferation of the immigrant crisis, as well as of the racist xenophobia and populism riding on the tide of the current explosion of the immigrant crisis, is rapidly playing catch-up with *The Illegal*, it may even have surpassed it. In 2015 already, UNHCR reported that "the current number of displaced globally is (…) the highest since the aftermath of World War II. Since 2011,when UNHCR announced a new record of 42.5 million forcibly displaced people globally, these numbers have risen sharply each year [with] an increase of more than 50 per cent in five years" (UNHCR 5). Similarly, in the *Amnesty International Report 2016/2017,* Amnesty International singles out 2016 as the year of "seismic events", and points to Donald Trump whose "election followed a campaign during which he frequently made deeply divisive statements marked by misogyny and xenophobia, and pledged to roll back established civil liberties and introduce policies which would be profoundly inimical to human rights" (Amnesty International 12). Donald Trump serves as a potent example of a "global trend towards angrier and more divisive politics. Across the world, leaders and politicians wagered their future power on narratives of fear and disunity, pinning blame on the 'other' for the real or manufactured grievances of the electorate" (Amnesty International *International Report* 12).

Thus, the world Lawrence Hill feared and felt obligated to warn against, looms on the horizon: "In the face of this, it has become alarmingly easy to paint a dystopian picture of the world and its future. The urgent and increasingly difficult task ahead is to rekindle global commitment to these core values on which humankind depends" (Amnesty International *International Report* 13). Social action is therefore dire, but not despairing – a belief Lawrence Hill expresses in the utopian impulse of the final two chapters (Part 3) of *The Illegal.*

4.3.2 Language Appropriation

As a novel that focuses not only on the rise of the migration crisis, but also the rise of xenophobia as a consequence of the crisis, it is not surprising that *The Illegal* pays attention to the power of language. With xenophobia being fuelled by nationalist political parties, which "wield politics of demonization that hounds, scapegoats and dehumanizes entire groups of people to win the support of voters" (Amnesty International "The State of the World"), it is important to become aware of how language is used as a weapon to control and regulate social order, and to oppress certain members of society. This is why language appropriation

plays an important role in *The Illegal,* as several characters are confronted with exceedingly oppressive language in connection with cultural minorities – both in the South (Zantoroland) and in the North (Freedom State).

Examples of language appropriation in *The Illegal* are frequent but subtle, and used to challenge the oppressive governing power structures both in Zantoroland and in Freedom State. In Zantoroland, after the coup d'état and under the dictatorship of now President Jenkins Randall, no form of opposition is tolerated – including freedom of expression. For this reason, any form of verbal resistance has to be offered creatively and subtly – whether it is by insidious wordplay, or by simply speaking out of turn:

> "So, Mr Ali, renowned journalist of Zantoroland, how are your eggs this evening?"
> "They are almost as excellent as you," Yoyo said.
> Keita admired his father's answer. One was required to use the term "Your Excellency" in each phrase uttered to Jenkins Randall. This way Yoyo came close, without quite satisfying the president's requirements. (Hill 43)

> Keita and Yoyo stood at a respectful distance; they knew to be silent unless they were asked a direct question.
> "Eggs and beans," the president said.
> "Would you like some?" Keita said. Speaking out of turn – without explicit invitation from the president – was the only way he knew to convey his contempt. (Hill 42)

When Keita arrives in Freedom State and the question turns to migration, language can be appropriated more openly and therefore often depicts explicit challenges to words used in the hegemonic discourse concerning migration. The term "illegal" is especially and repeatedly challenged by various characters, including Viola: "The government called undocumented people 'Illegals', but Viola refused to use the term. As far as she was concerned, it was fair to accuse somebody of *doing* something illegal but not to say that they *were* illegal" (Hill 71); and Ivernia: "She went on to say that she didn't understand why these people had to be referred to as Illegals. 'To identify a human being as illegal is to diminish his or her humanity,' she said. 'Why don't we call them people without documentation?' " (Hill 268).

Not just the use of specific words but the logic of anti-immigration rhetoric is also openly questioned: when demonstrators claim that immigrants should be deported because they don't pay taxes and drain the country's resources, Ivernia criticises the hypocrisy in such

remarks, pointing out that not only does a closing of legal immigration from Zantoroland mean that "they can't really come in any legal way, then", but also that "[i]f you want to increase tax revenue, declare a general amnesty and regularize the situation of people without documentation, then bring them into the national economy – entitling them to work and obliging them to pay taxes" (Hill 269). In this way, Ivernia and Viola especially take on the task of confronting and challenging the "alternative facts" or misinformation often present in the rhetoric of many populist parties as propaganda tools, which then seeps through to the general public.

The migrant characters in Freedom State also use language to maintain their own identity and not have it dictated by the hegemonic power structures or the white-majority population. This is the case when Viola defiantly invents her own word, "blagaybulled" (Hill 63), to mockingly undermine her identity as seen by the oppressors; when John condemns Rocco Calder for calling him "boy" which he claims is "a condescending way to refer to people of African heritage" (Hill 72); or when Keita, in an ironic twist, uses the western alias of famous English athlete "Roger Bannister" (Hill 4) in order to hide his true identity and thus remain off the radar and free from harm.

Although the incidents mentioned above are diverse and interspersed throughout the novel, there is a specific form of language appropriation that Keita uses as a consistent and systematic form of verbal resistance: song. Not only is the recurrence of song in *The Illegal* a direct comment on the oral tradition of African countries that is all but absent in western countries, it is also – and perhaps for this very reason – Keita's safe place. Having grown up in Zantoroland, Keita comes to view song as an important part of human communication and interconnection, whether that is between a community, by singing hymns in church (Hill 11); between a family, by singing songs that bond a father and a son (Hill 46); or within himself, by allowing him to get in touch with his personal feelings: "Singing made Keita finally feel the real meaning of his loss. Singing made his mother's death seem both inconceivable and insurmountable, and for the first time, Keita felt a thousand shards of sadness massing under his skin and threatening to cut their way free" (Hill 25). It is no surprise then, that singing becomes Keita's coping mechanism when he moves to Freedom State and drives him to continue despite the struggles and hostility he faces in his new host society:

> He would sing like the marathoners who had run past his family's church in the Red Hills of Zantoroland. He would sing as if Deacon Andrews and his parents were still alive. He would sing as if he had not been hiding for weeks in Freedom State, and had

> no reason to wonder what had happened to his sister or to fear his own life. So, from the hit country song "Ain't Mine," Keita sang loud and clear. (Hill 120)

In a world where he feels powerless and helpless, Keita attempts to safeguard his identity through song: "Singing and running are my only weapons" (Hill 213). Keita's tactic that he employs during his marathons can therefore be taken as a potent metaphor for his struggle throughout the novel in an ultimate act of subversion and resistance: "*Want to shatter your opponent's confidence? Just when he starts to hurt, you sing*" (Hill 4).

4.3.3 Genre Blending

In keeping with the tradition of critical dystopias, *The Illegal* incorporates other genres as a key strategy in its social critique. *The Illegal* can be divided into two discernible sections, in which the novel starts off as a blend of the near-future dystopia and the Bildungsroman, and ends as a blend of the near-future dystopia and the political thriller.

The Illegal embodies many of the traditional characteristics of a Bildungsroman as it follows and narrates the formative years of the protagonist, Keita, from a young age (he is ten years old when we first meet him), into young adulthood (he is twenty-four years old at the end of the novel). Similarly to many traditional novels of formation, Keita gets separated from his family at a young age: his mother dies of diabetes (Hill 23), his sister leaves Zantoroland to go and study in the USA (Hill 41), and his father is tortured and killed for being a dissident journalist (Hill 48). By the age of twenty-three, Keita has witnessed a series of defining events following the coup d'état (mostly related to ethnic violence and repression), which prompts his decision to leave Zantoroland – a displacement which parallels that of a traditional novel of development when the hero, having experienced a loss of faith in the values of his home, goes in search of an alternative society. This journey away from home can also be considered in keeping with the traditional journey away from the rural, as Zantoroland (described as having many hills, lakes, plantations, flatlands, orchards, mountains etc.) can be deemed slightly more countrified in comparison with Freedom State. However, due to his immigrant status and the xenophobic attitudes of the people of Freedom State, Keita soon discovers that the peaceable society he wishes to escape to remains absent and leads to a disillusionment with the new world which is typical of the Bildungsroman, and results in a feeling of nostalgia for the homeland, and alienation in the new social order: "He had no family with him. No friends. Not a soul who cared the least for him. It was an odd feeling to

walk the streets of a country knowing that not a single person knew your name or a thing about you – or would notice if you lived or died" (Hill 57).

Nevertheless, and typical of the critical dystopia, the conventions of the Bildungsroman are soon subverted in an attempt to undermine the traditional underlying meaning. In "The Paradox of 'Bildung'", Adam Bresnick describes the traditional genre as the story of a young protagonist who overcomes this alienation after a process of "successful socialization" (Bresnick 827) in which the protagonist comes to terms with both himself and the social order. Subsequently, the protagonist assumes a position in the socio-political order, which is therefore newly redeemed and validated by this happening. The traditional novel of formation is therefore "characterized by an irony gradually foreclosed, rather than by the sudden violence of the sublime" (Bresnick 827). In this way it "offers a normative narrative model (*Vorbild*) that the reader is enjoined to emulate through the agency of his or her imaginative power (*Einbildungskraft*) in order to become a liberal-bourgeois subject, as opposed to a revolutionary subject" (Bresnick 827). However, this is precisely the underlying ideology of the Bildungsroman that *The Illegal* thwarts. Firstly, the "beautiful dream of social reconciliation" (Bresnick 828) is achieved not through Keita's acceptance and submission to the social order (which would entail Keita's deportation back to Zantoroland in accordance with its immigration laws), but by the capitulation and concession of the social order to *Keita* (as he is presented with a special permit granting interim legal status to a refugee and eventually legal citizenship). And secondly, this process of social reconciliation is not presented as a gradual procedure, but rather as one that *does* necessitate (revolutionary) action, for the novel's climax (when Keita is to be presented with his special permit) leads to a violent confrontation between sympathisers (Candace, John, Rocco) and adversaries (Prime Minister Graeme, his assistant Geoffrey Moore, and his lackey Saunders) (Hill 364-76).

Concurrently, however, when Keita leaves Zantoroland and arrives in Freedom State, *The Illegal* can also be considered a political thriller, and complies with many of the genre conventions set out by Echart and Castrillo in "Towards a Narrative Definition of the American Political Thriller Film". Indeed *The Illegal* narrates the story of the victim (as opposed to the detective or the criminal in other crime fiction), Keita, who is confronted with a political threat, that is to say, the xenophobic policies of the right-wing Family Party. In keeping with the tradition of the political thriller *The Illegal* presents us with a protagonist who has lost touch with his roots (having been separated from his family and his homeland in Zantoroland), and finds himself in a "world gone awry, taken over by the modern, senseless chaos of a life without meaning and a social community without reliable moral standards"

(Echart and Castrillo 112) (as becomes apparent in the xenophobic attitude of the Freedom State society) but which is still familiar and ordinary enough to be considered realistic.

Stylistically, *The Illegal* pays homage to the genre's exploitation of states such as suspense, exhilaration and speed which become possible "because the protagonist of the thriller is placed in a 'situation of great crisis' (...) attempting to regain control and therefore subject to states of fear, anxiety, and even paranoia" (Echart and Castrillo 112). As we approach the climax of the novel which leads to the violent confrontation mentioned above, the chapters (each from a different character's perspective) become increasingly short - the final chapters even consisting of just over one page - and thus creating this feeling of speed and suspense in an almost cinematographic manner. The familiar iconography of the political thriller is also present in *The Illegal* with references to surveillance equipment, such as cameras (Hill 65, 85), spying equipment (Hill 45, 360), and interrogation rooms such as The Office for Independent living (Hill 77); bureaucratic offices such as the Pink Palace which are described as ominous from the outside and soulless on the inside (Hill 29); portrayals of political institutions, such as the Freedom Building; as well as official symbols of those institutions, such as the numerous flags of Freedom State and portraits of the Prime Minister in the Office of Independent Living (Hill 307) as well as of President Randall in the Pink Palace (Hill 29).

Yet once again, *The Illegal* subverts the conventions of the traditional political thriller in such a manner as to dismantle the genre's underlying objective. As Echart and Castrillo point out, the traditional enemies in a political thriller are anarchists, spies, Nazis, Communists, drug lords, or terrorists; but also, and increasingly popular, institutional power (including the government itself). However it is important to discern that, when an author decides to make the government the enemy of the political thriller, it is always a *corrupt* government, one that is "bent on saving the country from itself, generally by violating the Constitution or several fundamental rights, or outright disposing of the lives of a few thousand [citizens]" (Echart and Castrillo 117). In this way, these political thrillers serve as a critique on "the attitude of politicians for whom the end justifies any means" (Echart and Castrillo 117) and as reminder for "the need of purification of those institutions" (Echart and Castrillo 119).

However, although the government of Freedom State is the enemy in *The Illegal*, whose anti-immigration policies constitute the political threat to the hero, Keita, it does not violate any constitutional or national laws: the anti-immigration policies (closing legal immigration to Freedom State and deporting illegal immigrants back to Zantoroland) that

threaten Keita *are* the laws of the country, and what's more, they are the very basis on which the people of Freedom State democratically elected the party (Hill 72). In this way, it is not so much the government that is to be blamed (as an autonomous, malevolent institution), as the everyday citizen who democratically elects these governments based on their own sensibilities. The problem of immigration can therefore not be solely ascribed to the Establishment, but has to be confronted at the grassroots. In this way, *The Illegal* is therefore directed not at the Establishment but at the common man, and is thus to be read as a critique on the disavowal of personal accountability. This further explains why the transmigrational characters (cf. 3.2 Migrant Narrative) are those who win in the end, for whereas those characters that cling to other entities (governmental or cultural) suffer an unhappy fate, it is the transmigrational characters – those who focus and exploit their individual agency – who receive a happy ending.

4.3.4 Concrete Dystopia

Considering that *The Illegal* takes on the plight of immigrants and refugees, it comes as no surprise that the novel follows in the dystopian tradition of depicting an authoritarian regime which, in a bid to oppress and coerce its citizens, significantly restricts and controls all migration.

In *The Illegal*, such proliferation of the state migration system is true of both post-coup d'état Zantoroland, and Freedom State. In Zantoroland, as democracy makes way for a dictatorship and many business people start to flee the country, self-proclaimed "President for Life" (Hill 21) General Randall shuts down the internet, banks, and the airport (Hill 23); confiscates passports of alleged dissidents (Hill 41); declares it a "criminal offence to leave Zantoroland without permission" (Hill 354); and "monitor[s]" and keeps tabs on the movements of those citizens that *are* able escape to Zantoroland (Hill 354). In Freedom State, the state migration system is equally distressing: the Ortiz Sea acts as a natural barrier for immigrants, while bureaucratic barriers means that incoming foreigners are subjected to three lines of immigration control (inspection of passports, visas, and luggage respectively) (Hill 55); immigrants in AfricTown are constantly harassed, raided, arrested and even deported if they cannot provide documentation of citizenship (Hill 90); legal immigration from Zantoroland has been closed (Hill 269); and immigrants arriving by boat are intercepted and sent back (Hill 304).

However, migration plays a far more significant role in *The Illegal* when compared to other traditional dystopian novels. In keeping with the literary theory set forth by Goodwin, it is important to note that, although immigration is a popular feature in most dystopian fiction that deals with authoritarian regimes, when it is also the main theme of the novel (as it is in *The Illegal*), it serves not only as a critique of the authoritarian state and its state migration system, but also as a warning to the oppressed citizens not to allow their resistance to boil over into fundamentalism.

In Zantoroland, the coup d'état is a case in point of how a utopian society can transform into a dystopian society in which the former oppressed become the new oppressors. Having been enslaved by Freedom State "for some two centuries" (Hill 17), Zantorolanders – Faloo and Kano people alike – had been subject to much oppression by Freedom State, the effects of which are still palpable in the present (many of the Zantorolanders migrating to Freedom State are descendants of those slaves that were deported back to Zantoroland after the abolition of slavery). However, instead of standing in solidarity with each other, as formerly and jointly oppressed minority group, animosity soon starts brewing *within* the now independent Zantoroland society. Tensions rise between the Kano and the Faloo, and the Kano revolt against the Faloo minority who for several decades have governed the country both politically and economically, leading to a feeling of resentment amongst several of the Kano. As a result, the Kano start to oppress members of their own society, turning the previously (relatively) utopian society of Zantoroland into a dystopian one: Faloos are restricted from leaving the country (Hill 23, 41, 354); their businesses are looted and they are the victim of hate crimes (Hill 22); dissidents are tortured and killed (Hill 354); the president takes control of media outlets (Hill 21), employs spying tactics (Hill 45), and heavily restricts freedom of speech to the point that any journalist who opposes the new regime is killed (Hill 48). This new dystopian society is not unlike that of Freedom State, their previous oppressors, where immigrants are subject to hate speech (Hill 4, 66); where the government heavily restricts migration (Hill 55, 90, 269) as well as freedom of speech (Hill 349), and employs spying tactics (Hill 360); and where democracy gives way to an authoritarian leadership who micromanages and calls all the shots (Hill 71).

In Freedom State, Lula DiStefano serves as an additional warning for those minority groups (AfricTown) whose resistance towards its oppressors could turn into a radicalism that leads to a comparable oppression, not only of those oppressors (the government of Freedom State), but also of its own members (similar to the Faloo and Kano in Zantoroland). Lula's resolute determination to better the living standards for those living in AfricTown drives her

radical action, which is morally and ethically dubious: in her pursuit to negotiate terms with the Freedom State government, Lula not only blackmails Freedom State officials, but even has one of her own employees from AfricTown deported in order to frame the Prime Minister and force him into negotiations. Lula's warfare with the oppressors (Freedom State) is relentless, as she unapologetically vows to do whatever it takes to get ahead:

> "I did that. (…) Two hundred new taps last year alone. At times, I feared we would have a cholera outbreak in AfricTown. But no longer. (…) I also pay for a hot lunch program. People eat lunch there, for free. Three times a week. And I hire dancers, sex workers, cooks, plumbers, electricians – where else do you see black folks working in Freedom State? I deserve the fucking Nobel Peace Prize." (Hill 385)

As previously mentioned, it is the transmigrant characters, and the positive, inclusive natives, that form the antithesis to such fundamentalist potentialities illustrated by the Kano in Zantoroland and by Lula in Freedom State. In contrast to the growing intolerance and radicalism of the Kano and Lula, the transmigrational characters, Keita, Viola, John, Candace, Rocco and Ivernia, show a great sympathy and solidarity for one another and others – an admirable philosophy of life considering that, similar to the Kano radicals or Lula, these characters, *too,* suffer different forms of oppression.

Indeed, each of these characters find themselves in a position in which their freedom, independence or individual agency is threatened: Keita, who is an illegal immigrant from Zantoroland with no legal right in Freedom State; Viola, who "wanted people to read to look for her stories and read them, without knowing or caring that she was blagaybulled" (Hill 63); John, who resents being harassed by adults who "were inordinately gifted at fucking up lives of parentless teenagers who were perfectly capable of carrying on by themselves" (Hill 85); Candace, whose job as a female police officer is challenged by the fact that "[s]ome guys couldn't take being outranked by a woman" (Hill 335); Rocco, who is left powerless and voiceless to carry out his job due to the Prime Minister's micromanagement (Hill 71); and Ivernia, whose old age means that the Office for Independent Living could strip her of her freedoms (Hill 78).

And yet, despite being oppressed for various reasons, these characters refuse to become the oppressors in their search for emancipation. Instead, they demonstrate tolerance, solidarity and alliance – the inverse reaction of radical fundamentalism, serving as the beau ideal.

5 CONCLUSION

Publication of Lawrence Hill's *The Illegal* in 2015 coincided with headlines being dominated by the global migration crisis, which has seen over fifty million people displaced worldwide, and an unparalleled wave of migration to Europe and other western countries. Unable to keep up with the unprecedented inpouring of migrants at its frontiers the West established a series of impromptu and controversial physical and legislative barriers, more worried with keeping migrants and refugees at arm's length, than with providing any viable assistance, and thus creating a climate of xenophobia which only served to further enlarge the gap between the West and the Rest.

Having set out to establish how *The Illegal* relates to the current migration crisis, and how content and form contribute to this representation, it becomes clear that Lawrence Hill tackles this complex social problem in the hope of creating some understanding and solidarity between the two parties. As a dystopian novel that takes on the plight of immigrants and refugees, Hill aims to confront readers with the uncomfortable truths concerning the current migration crisis. In this way, Hill places himself in the long tradition of social novels which tackle social issues in the hope to not only create social conscience, but also to inspire social reform. In its more specific manifestation, *The Illegal* adheres to the principles of what Raymond Williams coins the "social formula novel", for Hill makes an abstraction of the current immigration crisis in which the very worst of social injustices and human rights abuses faced by immigrants and refugees are presented as an agglomeration in a fictional society, or in this case, the fictional islands of Zantoroland and Freedom State. This abstraction and agglomeration not only confront the reader with the sum of experiences of what migrants and refugees suffer in their home countries, such as armed conflict, torture, enforced disappearances, and extreme poverty; but also confronts the reader with the harsh reality of the anti-immigration legislature, xenophobic rhetoric, discrimination and institutional negligence suffered in the (western) host societies.

This social critique of western society is reinforced by the content and form of *The Illegal*, which are shaped by various strategies and techniques which serve to continuously subvert hegemonic sensibilities concerning migration, and therefore force western readers to re-evaluate their modes of perception and judgment. As a migrant narrative, the prevalence (and fate) of transmigrational characters in *The Illegal,* which evokes Bhabha's notion of

third-space cultures, challenges hegemonic concepts between culture and identity, and by extension migration: in today's hybrid societies, cultures can no longer be thought of as separate homogenous entities, and the idea of cultural difference, arguably the root cause of xenophobia, is therefore obsolete.

Formal strategies common to the (critical) dystopia further subvert hegemonic order: not only do techniques of defamiliarization, language appropriation and the use of concrete dystopias expose society, language and state migration systems as oppressive and suppressive forces for immigrants and refugees, but the subversion of the political thriller genre also underscores the importance of personal accountability of the western individual (as opposed to the Establishment) in the creation of such a dystopian society. Furthermore, as a near-future dystopia with a high degree of verisimilitude, *The Illegal* stresses the need for social reform; for it highlights the inevitability, rather than the mere possibility, of the dystopian world it depicts becoming a reality. This social reform requires active and revolutionary participation of the western individual, as is made clear by the subversion of the Bildungsroman, which suggests that the solution is not peaceful subjugation of the immigrant to society, but rather (revolutionary) amendment of both the society and the individuals.

In this way, *The Illegal* primarily and most obviously adheres to the main objective of a social problem novel as a social critique of the (western) hegemonic society that oppresses a minority, with Hill advocating for western individuals to embrace a new positive and inclusive society, one in which immigrants and refugees take their place alongside the natives. The time of cultural difference is no more, and the "Other" therefore no longer exists. Instead we are all, native citizens and migrants alike, free to negotiate our own identities, and are therefore to be perceived and treated as an individual, free from categorizations of race, culture, language and nation that for so long has created a divide between the West and the "Other".

However, the analysis has also revealed that Hill's novel does not only direct itself to the western reader, but takes its social critique a step further, calling into question the dominant perceptions and attitudes of the migrants and refugees as well. Indeed, *The Illegal* acknowledges that the problem of cultural difference is one mutually shared between the natives and immigrants. The novel therefore warns against multicultural and transcultural migrant identities, with immigrants who are either holding on too tightly to their native culture, or vigorously attempting to fully belong to another, being prone to fundamentalist and exclusivist attitudes. As the fate of the characters in *The Illegal* is entirely dependent on

whether they have adopted a transmigrational identity or not (regardless of their likeability or moral code), the novel condemns the idea of collective identity.

Instead, *The Illegal* seems to propose that all immigrants, even refugees, should let go of their past culture and cultural identity, and should embrace a new, individual identity, one that transgresses multiple cultural borders and thus allow oneself to belong to several worlds and cultures at once. Only then is successful and synergetic integration into the new host society guaranteed – providing, of course, that the host country adheres to the social criticism and to the call for social reform and, in turn, *allows* for such an inclusive, pluralist society.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SOCIAL INJUSTICES

- **ZANTOROLAND**

Social Injustice		Illustration in *The Illegal*		Page no.
Armed Conflict	Conflict	Ethnic strife	Growing unpopularity of Faloos as shopkeepers, business people, and politicians	13
			Masked men physically attack Faloo shopkeepers, loot their business (stealing whatever they could carry: suits, ties, coffeepots, radios, lamps, laptops) and order them to close their businesses.	22
			Deacon Andrews, head of the Faloo Zion Baptist Church, is attacked and killed in his own church	14
		Military Dictatorship	Jenkins Randall, commander-in-chief of the army and a Kano stages a coup d'état and storms the Presidential Palace with his troops. Randall orders the killing of the duly elected President and Faloo.	21
			General Randall announces himself President for Life and declares the Kano people as the rightful majority in Zantoroland	21
			General Randall closes the banks and shuts down the airport in a bid to stop the business people fleeing the country	23
			Political opponents are imprisoned, killed, tortured, and victims are left naked and dead in public places	42
			Keita knows that as a Faloo, and the son of a dissident journalist, his life is in danger	48
			Amnesty International keeps close track and reports on the killings and imprisonments of dissidents, members of the Faloo business class, and even friends of the Faloos among the Kano majority	343
	Unlawful Imprisonment	Zantoroland marathoners who failed to make it on the medal podium at the Olympic Games are imprisoned upon return		44
		Yoyo, a dissident journalist who takes on the plight of the Faloo, is being detained in the Pink Palace		28-9
		Viola Hill, a journalist from Freedom State who has come to Zantoroland for research, is detained for allegedly "spying on the government"		353

	Torture	When Yoyo is released after his detention in the Pink Palace, he is treated for "the two broken fingers on each hand, the broken ankle, the other badly bruised ankle, the split lips [and] the concussed head"		33
		Out-of-favour athletes are imprisoned and tortured		44
	Enforced Disappearances	Keita is warned not to approach the Pink Palace (a pink building housing government offices) or to walk within a block of it: "Faloos and dissidents were sometimes snatched off the street near there, never to be seen again"		29
		Victims' relatives are contacted and asked for impossible ransom demands. This is a strategy used to break people's will: "They were meant to feel that nothing could be done for their loved ones and that nothing would be done for them either, if their turn came"		47
		Ransom is "just a way to terrorize and intimidate your family"		35
Others	Poverty	Healthcare	People die from HIV/AIDS, diarrhoea, typhus, malaria, infections resulting from cuts	230
			Keita's mother presumably dies of diabetes (could have been prevented if diagnosed)	23
		Poverty	Kano ethnic majority live in mud brick houses, with corrugated tin roofs, no pavements, narrow, muddy, potholed roads. Keita therefore avoids running through this area as "taunting the shoeless" may place him in a dangerous situation.	17
			Keita's home in Yagwa is in better conditions than most: most have broken windows, broken roofs, broken door locks and no functioning air-conditioning	16
			Zantoroland annual income average of three thousand dollars – Keita can find no one who can lend him money	47
			The financial situation of Keita's family is worsening: "his father's accounts had dwindled", "his father no longer wore new clothes or used their car, which sat dormant outside their house, or ate much beyond a bit of boiled rice or an orange"	47
		Public Services	Zantoroland is subject to regular electricity cuts and random blackouts – leading people to rely on batter powered lanterns, kitchen appliances and burner stoves hooked to two propane gas tanks	8
	Discrimination	All those who oppose the government are forced to carry around a red cane		35
		Gays are persecuted and forced to flee the country		220
		Faloos are regular victims of hate crimes cf. Ethnic strife		13, 22
	Censorship/ Freedom of Speech	With the coup d'état, General Randall takes control of the television and radio stations		21
		General Randall blocks all Internet access		23
		Free media is under threat: Yoyo keeps confidential notes and incendiary stories hidden in a row of teapots on a kitchen shelf		9

		Yoyo works for newspapers around the world such as the New York Times – He regularly ahs to leave Zantoroland in order to research or publish articles – After the coup d'état his passport is confiscated	41
		Keita discovers a tiny bug under a chair in the family kitchen. Yoyo explains that is a bug for recording conversations	45
		Yoyo is killed and is left lying naked and dead at the Fountain of Independence	48
		Viola is detained in Zantoroland for allegedly "spying on the government"	352-3
	Lack of Justice	In Zantoroland, everything can be arranged with a bribe (e.g. opening a bank account without sufficient documentation)	185
		The president is responsible for the torture, death, and disappearances of countless people	42
		Ransom for victims who have been detained by the governments is a means of public funding: "the president had a taste for yachts and palaces and was anxious to build up his private coffers" - "He wants to be rich as other despots, but there is no viable income tax base, so he has no money to steal from standard revenues" – Therefore the president orders his men to kidnap people (especially dissidents) and issue ransom demands, known as "The Tax"	35
		Zantoroland cabinet ministers live luxurious lives – they were known to dine at the Five Stars	50
		Notes of Yoyo point to money laundering and secret dealings with Freedom State who seem to be deporting mostly political dissidents	48
		When Viola calls a state official in Zantoroland to find out what exactly happened to Yvette Peters, a man confirms, "they had detained a young woman named Yvette Peters because she had arrived in the country without proper documentation, and that she died in custody of natural causes. When Viola asked what exactly that meant, [the man] merely repeated 'natural causes'."	117

- **FREEDOM STATE**

Social Injustice		Illustration in *The Illegal*	Page no.
Anti-Immigration	Anti-immigration Laws	Immigrants arriving by boat are immediately arrested on site	64-69
		The Family Party has been elected for the first time in history. They had come to power promising mass deportations, strict border control and the insurance that the people of traditional European stock would not be overrun in their own country	127
		The Family Party keep deporting refugees back to Zantoroland – despite reports that the Zantoroland governments had been torturing and executing members of its Faloo ethnic minority	83
		Freedom State refuses to admit, acknowledge or legalize refugees fleeing troubles in Zantoroland – so they cluster in AfricTown	100
		Freedom State has closed legal immigration from Zantoroland	269
		New laws are being passed, such as the Act to Prevent Illegals from Abusing the Generosity of Freedom State which would make it illegal for the director of a sports event to provide a financial reward to any competitor who was not a citizen or a visitor with a valid visa.	326
		Freedom State are intercepting boats and returning them to where they came from before they even set foot on Freedom State	127
		Freedom State Coast Guard had intercepted two boats from Zantoroland, which were overcrowded (over three hundred people in two boats), had been at sea for a month, and had seen thirteen people die of dehydration or cholera. They boats were forced to turn around and head back to Zantoroland. On arrival in Zantoroland, a riot broke out and police moved in. Six more men died.	180
	Anti-immigration Rhetoric	"Our country is going down the drain. We're supposed to be a wealthy nation. But we have violence, unemployment, dropping exports and then the whole black market system in AfricTown is draining our economy. It costs thousands of dollars to detain, clothe and feed and Illegal for a year. Take 'em out of prisons and send 'em back to where they came from, and bulldoze AfricTown while you're at it."	67
		"None of them have permission to enter Freedom State. This makes them Illegals, which makes them criminal."	68
		"Illegals don't pay taxes. They drain our resources. They are violent and criminal. Out with Illegals!"	237
		"Because they have it made in Freedom State. Services, electricity, clean water, a booming economy. They have every opportunity to abuse our generosity"	264

	Anti-immigration Propaganda	State officials hire film crews to hide on AfricTown Road and record any criminal acts in AfricTown. This would then form the centrepiece of the Family Party's election campaign: *Do you believe in law and order? Vote against illegals in Freedom State. Vote for the Family Party.*		193
		At the fire-side talks, the Minister gives a slide show with basic statistics about tax revenue loss, economic stress and criminality associated with Illegals in the country - This is then countered by Ivernia who says that if the country wants to increase tax revenue then they should acknowledge and regularize illegals and bring them into the national economy (thus entitling them to work and obliging them to pay taxes)		268 269
		During the demonstration of the AfricTown population against the Freedom State government, the Prime Minister and his assistant arrange for an insider in the demonstration (a black man working and being paid by the government) whose job was to beat up on white people (also insiders) in the demonstration. Photos of blacks attacking whites would justify police intervention		333
		In order to retrieve the incriminating evidence John and Keita have on the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister and his assistant are willing to kill – and then blame Keita, the immigrant, as a cover-up story: "This illegal refugee burst into your office and started shooting like a madman. My man here seized his gun and shot the terrorist and saved some lives. Some, but not all"		374
		Before the Family Party was elected, a boatload of refugees had been starved of food and water on the boat (this fact was not mentioned in the news reports that followed). When they arrived in Freedom State, some of the refugees murdered the captain of the boat and went on a rampage. Some refugees stormed a restaurant and demanded food and drink they could not pay for. A fight broke out: two local men and six refugees died. The incident made national and international news and led more voters to the Family Party who "milked it for all it was worth."		132
Others	Poverty (AfricTown)	Described as a "slum", "ghetto", "township"		76
		Overcrowding	Some hundred thousand people living in just fifteen thousand containers	76
			An average of seven people per container	89
		Poverty	Cars left unattended are stripped for spare bits	90
			Children sleeping in garages and on the street	264
			Inside the containers people live with the bare necessities, and not much living space: one room that serves as bedroom, study, living room, and kitchen all at once	87
			Shipping containers are interspersed with wooden shacks	217
			Lula DiStefano who own and runs AfricTown arranges a soup kitchen where people can get free meals three days a week	210

		Sanitation	There are no bathrooms in the containers. Alternative include the crapping grounds (free), outhouses (paid), or the use of buckets which are then thrown in the waste ditches behind the containers	90
		Public Services	Of the fifteen thousand shipping containers, only a few hundred had running water and electricity	89
			Many people resort to bootleg electricity or try to siphon electricity from the main line and run it to their homes	89
			The containers share public taps (one tap for every fifteen shipping containers)	89
		Healthcare	Because Keita is an illegal, he is unable to receive official healthcare for his hernia in Freedom State	150-1
			Keita is forced to seek unofficial medical help in AfricTown who is forced to use makeshift medicine because his medical license is unrecognized in Freedom State	218
		Education	There is a school in AfricTown based on the curriculum of the Freedom State standardized exams, but many parents keep their children out of it because it is often raided by police who arrest any children without documentation of citizenship	90
	Discrimination	Hypocritical Cosmopolitan Public Image	The Prime Minister's Executive Assistant tells Rocco (the Federal Immigration Minister) to get some art by AfricTown painters on his wall. "The idea, (…) was to display a cosmopolitan face while accelerating deportation."	125
			The Prime Minister's Executive Assistant tells Rocco to invite concerned citizens from al walks of life to a small, informal fireside discussion on migration which would feign public input.	187
			The Freedom State Police Departments use Candace as a public face the police force. "*See?* her police force seemed desperate to trumpet. *See the black woman in uniform? See how we are a multicultural police force?*"	252
			Bank advertisements feature signs that advertise it as a "People's Bank" and showed a photo of an employee greeting customers representing every conceivable racial group	184
			The Federal Minister of Immigration is considering bending the rules on the immigration policy and granting Keita legal interim status because he is a top-class runner. "What a public relations coup it would be, if Keita ran in the Olympics-for Freedom State."	306
			At the fireside talks the government has invited an anti-immigration, pro-Freedom State *black* businessman who claims that Freedom State was the best country in the world and that he had never experienced discrimination.	267

		Xenophobic attitudes	"What did you expect, with a government elected on a 'boot out the refugees' platform? If the country's leaders were going to talk about blacks that way, it only stood to reason that the insanity would trickle down to the population". The Family Party "gave Freedom State the license to hate refugees. And [the] government fed the prejudice."	132
			Candace Freixa is a citizen of Freedom State but is black: She is used to people assuming she is foreigner and an Illegal, and receiving verbal abuse (e.g. calling her "nigger")	130
	Censorship/ Freedom of Speech	Viola's investigation into the Yvette Peters story is threatening to uncover the secret dealing between Freedom State and Zantoroland, which has seen Freedom State deport dissident refugees back to Zantoroland in exchange for Zantoroland accepting back large amounts of deported immigrants. "But all this nonsense over Yvette Peters was threatening the whole operation. If [the Prime Minister's] Zantoroland contacts got nervous, or if the world press cottoned on to this story, there could be trouble" – So the Prime Minister calls his Zantoroland contacts and arranges for Viola to be arrested.		349
		The Prime Minister is willing to kill in order to retrieve some incriminating evidence which places him in the brothel in AfricTown, the very place the Prime Minister vowed to destroy in his election campaign		337
	Lack of Justice	The Freedom State governments offers Anton Hamm sixty thousand in cash yearly and make arrangements for the Tax Agency for Freedom State to accept Anton's illegal tax returns for the last two years. In exchange Anton is to provide information about Illegals from Zantoroland who are hiding in Freedom State		169
		The Prime Minister is revoking more and more authority and power from his state officials, so as to be the sole authority on all things immigration e.g. he revokes Rocco's (the Federal Immigration Minister) power to sign permits granting legal interim status to refugees. Only the Prime Minister would be granted such power.		318
		In order to calm down the mob at the demonstration who are demanding to know what happened to Yvette Peters (a black citizen of Freedom State who was mysteriously deported and died in custody in Zantoroland), Rocco advocates against violence and claims that they "can contain this and disperse the crowd with a promise to investigate" – an suggestion the Prime Minister refuses		335
		In order to deliver on its campaign promise of mass deportations, the Family Party has to get Zantoroland to accept returned refugees. They do this by offering Zantoroland large sums of money for each returned immigrant/refugee (for "assimilation and resettlement" costs) as well as promising to track down and deport dissidents who are wanted in Zantoroland.		348, 321, 354

APPENDIX B: IMMIGRANT CHARACTERS (FIGURE 2)

- **TRANSMIGRATIONAL CHARACTERS**

Keita Ali

Characteristic		Illustration in *The Illegal*	Page no.	Additional Remarks
Multicultural	Isolation from mainstream culture and a retreat to the native community	Refuses to leave Zantoroland in pursuit of a marathon career – wants to stay with his father	39-40	Opposite of self-fulfilment
		Faloos live in a separate residential district from the Kanos (which Keita "skirts" on his runs)	17	Isolation in Zantoroland
		Goes into hiding – all alone with no one who knows him, cares for him, or would notice if he went missing	57	(Involuntary but necessary) isolation in Freedom State
	Antagonistic relationship with the host society	Takes "pride" in great national runners	11	Nationalist feeling
		Wishes he was a Bamileke (Cameroon) and not a Faloo (Zantoroland) so that the Kano wouldn't hate him	14	Seemingly the opposite of loyalty - but it does show the same difference-consciousness typical of multicultural loyalty
		Calls Charity a "snob" when she speaks French	19	Resistant to other cultures
	Nostalgia for homeland (Zantoroland)	Keita likes country music with catchy melodies and words that tell a story like the marathoners that passed the church in Zantoroland – makes him forget his sorrows (death of the deacon and parents, having to hide for weeks in Freedom State, having no news of his sister's whereabouts, fears for his own life)	120	
		Bananas make him think of home, of women on their way to market, carrying platters of bananas on their heads, of Charity who just like him never managed to carry trays on her head	144	
		When being massaged he thinks of the last time he saw/heard his parents together on the front porch of their house – sounded like a duet of laughter – but Keita feels like	147	Metaphor for his trauma-based identity

		crying when the 'enters the door to home', so he gently closes the door behind him			
	Here-there dichotomy	Estrangement	During the bus ride, he is bewildered at the differences in Freedom State as opposed to Zantoroland	58	
			He notices the different meaning that singing has in Zantoroland and in Freedom State	159	
			Wonders at the absence of old people in the daily life in Freedom State as opposed to their omnipresence in Zantoroland	228	
			Muses about the difference in hospitality between Zantoroland and Freedom State	235	
			Notices the difference in cleanliness between Zantoroland and AfricTown	206	
	Focus on survival	After his father is killed he is forced to leave because as a son of a dissident and a Faloo he is in danger		48	
		Knows that if he wants to stay alive he has to go into hiding in Freedom State before Hamm sends him back to Zantoroland		57	
		Is only sure of 2 things = his father would have wanted him to do whatever it takes to stay alive and to find his sister		164	
		In the shower he prays for strength to run as many times as necessary to help his sister, and he cries		182	
		Keita rarely drinks alcohol (prefers water), not just to stay fit, but because he is afraid to not be in control of faculties when he needs them (being in hiding)		245	Running is a means of survival – not yet a means of self-fulfilment (comes later)
		Feels he has chosen a good country to hide in because its hospital networks and transportation system gives him a greater statistical likelihood of staying alive		143	

Transmigrational	Absence of nostalgia for homeland (Zantoroland)	Feels at home with DeNorval, Maria and Xenia	221	
		"Opens the door" to his memories	224	Turning point: allows him to work through his trauma
		Feels that the best possible outcome is him building a life in Freedom State with his sister	232	No desire to return to Zantoroland
		Finds it difficult to call Zantoroland "home"	276	
		Moves to Boston to start his career as marathon runner	16	
	Transcultural/ transnational networking	Is invited to AfricTown by Lula and accepts as he doesn't want to keep on spending money on motels (every night another motel to not get caught)	204	
		Daydreams of winning Olympic gold and being rich	8	Dream that only comes into fulfilment in Freedom State
	Focus on economic possibilities, personal desires and self-fulfilment	Sees possibility to set up a safe running track in AfricTown	211	Starts to recognize the opportunities that are available for him to pursue in Freedom State
		Wants to join the Freedom State Olympic marathon team	232	
		Wants to open up a running club in AfricTown	324	
		Shrugs off Deed's racists remarks	144	
	Cosmopolitan self-image	Feels at home with Ivernia (native from Freedom State) as well as with DeNorval (an immigrant in AfricTown)	244 + 221	General positive and inclusive attitude

Charity Ali

Characteristic	Illustration in *The Illegal*	Page no.	Additional Remarks
Transcultural/ transnational networking	Embraces foreign languages such as French	19	
	Moves to Boston, USA to study	36	
	Moves to, and settles, in Freedom State	379	

Focus on economic possibilities, personal desires and self-fulfilment	Head of the debating team, top the class in all subjects	10	Ambitious (even uses flattery to get ahead) - will come into self-fulfilment in America and Freedom State
	"Keita heard Charity compliment Mrs Pollock on her new blue dress. His sister would do anything to get ahead"	11	
	Embraces the French language which she thinks will help her become a famous journalist	19	
	First student in the history of Zantoroland to be offered a full scholarship at an American University	36	Migrates in order to bring her dreams of becoming journalist into self-fulfilment
	Moves to Freedom State and wants to become a newspaper reporter	380	Migrates and fulfilling her dream of becoming famous journalist
Cosmopolitan self-image	Takes an interest in learning about all the different liqueurs from around the country (where they come from and what makes them special) - Her mother says her future husband will appreciate her "worldliness"	19	Open and interested in other cultures
	"I don't want a husband," Charity said. "I just want to be a journalist and see the world"	19	Interested in traveling and experiencing different cultures
	Embraces foreign languages such as French	19	Embraces different cultures
	When she leaves for America, all she takes with her is one small knapsack of her essential belongings	37	Detached – not clinging on to sentimental items that remind her of home – only taking what is absolutely necessary
	From Zantoroland, lives in America, but doing a PhD in African studies	41	Comfortable and interested in many different cultures/societies

Viola Hill

Characteristic	Illustration in *The Illegal*	Page no.	Additional Remarks
Absence of nostalgia for homeland (AfricTown)	Tells John how she is happy she left AfricTown: "If I hadn't had the accident, I probably would have stayed. And maybe I'd be dead now, or strung out on drugs or booze."	74	
	Says she "escaped" from AfricTown	304	

Transcultural/ transnational networking	Born and raised in AfricTown, now living in Clarkson	74	
	Goes to AfricTown to visit Keita – still knows many people who live there	342	
	Goes to Zantoroland to research the Yvette case	341	
Focus on economic possibilities, personal desires and self-fulfilment	Moved to Clarkson to become a serious journalist: writes about sports in the *Clarkson Evening Telegram* but wants to write about 'real' news	63, 113	
	Leaves AfricTown to write the same kind of articles that had been written about her by the Freedom State news about the accident that killed her mother and left her without the use of her legs	118	
Cosmopolitan self-image	"To be given a crack at serious news stories, Viola Hill had to be perfect on the job. Always on time. Always ready. Invincible. Got the flu? Don't tell anybody. Having a day when all she could think about was that she wished her mom were still alive? Swallow that emotion …"	113	No difference-consciousness: obstacle to fulfilling her dreams lies in her professionalism – she never once considers her race plays a role
	Refuses to join Lula on stage at the demonstration claiming she is only there to cover the story for the newspaper	331	Not an activist for a particular culture/society
	As a journalist. Viola wants people to praise her for her work, and not for being a "blagaybulled"	63	

John Falconer

Characteristic	Illustration in *The Illegal*	Page no.	Additional Remarks
Transcultural/ transnational networking	Lives in AfricTown but attends school in Clarkson: the first black child at the Clarkson Academy for the Gifted	74	
	Mother is white and from Freedom State, his father was half and half (mixed race) and from Zantoroland	100, 74	
Focus on economic possibilities, personal desires and self-fulfilment	Says he would like to work for the *Telegram* one day like Viola does – uses his brains (good grades) to get what he wants: permission from the headmistress to spend spring term making a documentary about AfricTown and the fate of Zantorolanders in Freedom Sate	73, 85	Like Charity – knows how to use his assets to get ahead
	Wants out of being in Lula's debt – hopes his documentary leads to a full-time scholarship and boarding school	94	Wants to move to Clarkson (Freedom State) permanently – only way of fulfilling his dream

Cosmopolitan self-image	Writes winning essay "North and South. We are all Ortizans"	72	Cultural mediator – advocates for greater identification and solidarity with other cultures
	"John had mixed feelings about AfricTown" – He enjoys the freedom that allows "his genius to flower" but sometimes feels singled-out for being so light-skinned (name-calling).	91	Feels comfortable in both worlds but not attached to either of them
	Hates the name-calling referring to his being light-skinned	91	Hates being considered white – wants to prove his black roots. However, this is to establish his cosmopolitan image (to prove he belongs to more cultures than just the white hegemonic culture).
	His documentary is a way of "staking a claim" to being black ("if you were mixed but wanted to be black, you had to fight extra hard to establish your identity)	99	
	Lashes out at Yvette who calls him "a white boy": "Don't call me that! I' not white. I'm mixed"	110	

Candace Freixa

Characteristic	Illustration in *The Illegal*	Page no.	Additional Remarks
Absence of nostalgia for homeland (AfricTown)	"Candace had come from AfricTown and had no intention of moving back"	129	
Transcultural/ transnational networking	Participates in track and cross-country meets in Dublin, Amsterdam and New York	129	
	Born and raised in AfricTown, citizen of Freedom State, lives in Clarkson	129	
	Mother is both black and Portuguese (mixed), Father is black man from Brazil	256	
	Is a member of the Clarkson Police Force and well-versed, but when Rocco Calder calls her *curvaceous* she feels like letting loose "the most colourful AfricTown tongue-lashing"	130	Feels at home in both worlds/cultures
	Knows a lot of people in the worst parts of town – makes her a catch in the police force's eyes	252	Able to navigate both worlds/cultures
Focus on economic	"The police force used her as a public face. Why not kill two birds with one stone and have a black woman cop highly visible at public events. And Candace	130-131	Takes any opportunity given to her to reach her goals (including being

possibilities, personal desires and self-fulfilment	used it, for sure. Anything to get ahead. On the police force's tab, she had taken three years of riding lessons. Thousand of dollars of training for free! … Anything to get ahead. She wanted to make staff sergeant before she turned twenty-eight"		the poster girl for a multicultural police force – use other's difference-consciousness for own benefit)
	Is loved by the force for being young, ethnic, black with a BA and a MA – the force is grooming her as the public face of the police force: has taken advantage of professional development opportunities to ride a horse, learn martial arts and pass a test as an advanced markswoman – intends to bide her time until they let her transfer, preferably to Public Affairs in five years time	252	Ambitious and will take advantage of any opportunity given to her
	Charity recognizes her as hard-working and ambitious (wants to be the first black woman and the first black person to make captain of the Clarkson Police Department)	379	
	At Lula's demonstration she is not participating but is part of the police force ordered to keep the peace and arrest any perpetrators	335	Not compelled to be part of the social activism
Cosmopolitan self-image	Plans to go dancing in Buttersby and "if the right guy happened to come along (…) and if he didn't open his big fat mouth and say something negative about Illegals in Freedom State, he might just get lucky"	129	Positive and inclusive attitude toward society – no patience for bigots
	Scolds Billy Deeds for calling Keita a *nigger*	130	Positive and inclusive attitude toward society – no patience for racism
	Defends AfricTown and immigrants at Rocco Calder's fireside talks about the immigration problem	267	

- **TRANSCULTURAL CHARACTERS**

Yoyo Ali

Characteristic	Illustration in *The Illegal*	Page no.	Additional Remarks
Dialogic (ex)change	Is a Bamileke from Cameroon but takes on the plight of the Faloo people – writes stories about the rising unpopularity and threat they face	13, 14	Helps the Faloo and in return he is welcomed into their community BUT shows his difference-consciousness: still thinks in terms of ethnic groups/cultures/nations
Cultural blending	Dean Andrews calls him a "great man' for taking in the plight of the Faloo	13	Faloo considered Yoyo one of their own –taken care of by the Faloo community
	Faloo returnees stop harassing Keita when they find out he is the son of Yoyo	18	
	The Hospital covers the medical expenses of Yoyo's treatment	33	
Transcultural/ transnational networking	From Cameroon, lived and worked in France, and USA (Baltimore) – and now Zantoroland	14, 41	
	As a journalist, Yoyo flies overseas often to do research	18	
	As a journalist, Yoyo writes for many foreign newspapers including the *New York Times*, the *Atlantic*, the *Guardian*, the *Toronto Star*, and *Le Monde*	44	
	Maintains a strong relationship with Canadian journalist Mahatma Grafton – both friend and colleague	41	

- **MULTICULTURAL CHARACTERS**

Lula DiStefano

Characteristic	Illustration in *The Illegal*		Page no.	Additional Remarks
Transcultural/ transnational networking	Moved from Zantoroland to Freedom State when she was young		383	
	Studied at the London School of Economics (but then returned to Freedom State)		117	
	Negotiates with Zantoroland and Freedom State port authorities to obtain used shipping containers		208	Networks set up for business
	The Pit is covered with many impressionist paintings (Monet, Degas, Renoir) hanging on the walls, and imported Italian marble on the floors		94	Worldly view and international taste
Isolation from mainstream culture and a retreat to the native community	Lives, owns, runs and dedicates her whole life to AfricTown: the "unofficial queen of AfricTown"		76	
Antagonistic relationship with the host society	Loyalty to her own people/culture	Personally contributed fifty thousand dollars to Viola's fundraiser after her accident	118	"Us versus them" attitude
		Helps John pay his school fees and basic necessities when his mother is not around	86-7	
		Encourages local talent: has performers from AfricTown in the Pit	195	
		Ensures unofficial medical help for those who cannot afford proper health care	217-222	
		Organizes and pays for a soup kitchen	210	
	Antagonistic relationship with the "other"'/host culture	Asks Yvette to steal the Prime Minister's ID and anything incriminating she can find – which she later uses to blackmail the Rime Minister in one of her demonstrations in a bid to force him to negotiate better living standards in AfricTown	99, 329	
		Asks John to tape de encounter between Minister of Immigration Rocco Calder and one of her prostitutes Darlene for "insurance": "She wanted fifteen more water holes dug, a	223	

		new school built and a reliable power line installed to feed electricity to AfricTown"		
	Loyalty to her own culture turns radical – sacrifices one of her own for the greater good	Gives up information about illegals hiding in AfricTown/Freedom State to the government of Freedom State in exchange for payment She is even willing to give Keita up to the authorities in exchange for peace in AfricTown	321 340	
		Arranges for Yvette to get deported in a bid to frame the Prime Minister and force him to negotiate better living standards in AfricTown.	259, 385	

Graeme Wellington

Characteristic	Illustration in *The Illegal*	Page no.	Additional Remarks
Isolation from mainstream culture and a retreat to the native community	"She [Lula] was one of the only people that knew. And maybe the only living person. His parents had died long ago, and he had no siblings, and he had long ago cut off most ties to his past. He got by, saying that he had spent a lot of time in the sun, playing rugby and tennis and all that, and that there were Italians in his family"	337	His determination to hide and even annihilate any trace of his past black lineage leads to a *radical* identification with the native *white* population of Freedom State
Antagonistic relationship with the host society	Is Prime Minister of the Family Party: a party who runs on a platform of "implementing policies to draw a firm line between those seas [that is, the North and South Ortiz Sea separating Freedom Sate from Zantoroland], to stop the ships carrying refugees north and to live up to its election campaign promises to initiate a robust deportation program"	72	His determination to belong to the native white population of Freedom State leads to a radical antagonistic relationship and 'betrayal' of his own native heritage/culture.
	Has made a deal with the Zantoroland government to pay two thousand dollars for each 'Illegal Returned Before Landing' (for assimilation and resettlement costs), and ten thousand for 'Information Leading to Deportation' of each Zantoroland dissident hiding in Freedom State – in return, Zantoroland would accept the vast amount of immigrants that Freedom State wants to deport	321	

ABSTRACT

Publication of Lawrence Hill's *The Illegal* in 2015 coincided with headlines being dominated by the global migration crisis, which has seen over fifty million people displaced worldwide, and an unparalleled wave of migration to Europe and other western countries. As a dystopian novel that takes on the plight of immigrants and refugees, Hill aims to confront readers with the uncomfortable truths concerning the current migration crisis. This thesis attempts to uncover how *The Illegal* relates to the current migration crisis, and how content and form contribute to this representation.

The first part of this thesis presents a theoretical background in which recent studies concerning the social novel, immigrant narratives and critical dystopias are expounded. It situates *The Illegal* in the long tradition of social problem novels which tackle social issues in the hope to not only create social conscience, but also to inspire social reform. In order to determine how content and form may contribute to this objective, recent theories on migrant narratives and identities, as well as postmodern ideas on culture are examined, before analysing several of the most fundamental methods and techniques the (critical) dystopia makes use of in order to successfully achieve its principal objective of social critique.

This theoretical framework forms the basis for the second part of the thesis, in which the concepts and theories discussed are applied specifically to Lawrence Hill's *The Illegal*. It shows how Hill makes an abstraction of the current immigration crisis in which the very worst of social injustices and human rights abuses faced by immigrants and refugees are presented as an agglomeration in a fictional society. It also illustrates how content and form of *The Illegal* are shaped by various strategies and techniques which serve to continuously subvert hegemonic sensibilities concerning migration: the prevalence of transmigrational characters challenges hegemonic concepts between culture and identity, and by extension migration; whilst formal strategies (defamiliarization, language appropriation, genre blending and the use of concrete dystopias) not only expose the oppressive and suppressive forces that immigrants and refugees face in our society, but also underscores the importance of personal accountability and the need for social reform on the part of both the western individual and, surprisingly, also of the migrants themselves.