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### A Futuristic Capitalist Utopian Dystopia in Brenda Cooper's Solarpunk *For the Snake of Power*<sup>1</sup>

Brenda Cooper'in *For the Snake of Power* Adlı Solarpunk Eserinde Gelecekçi Bir Kapitalist Ütopya Distopyası

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#### Abstract

Brenda Cooper's *For the Snake of Power* (2018) presents a future Phoenix, Arizona, shaped by the challenges of climate change. The story's central feature is a snake-like solar panel structure that generates renewable energy while providing shade to protect the city from the desert's extreme heat. This technological innovation symbolizes the potential for human and nature to coexist harmoniously, offering a vision of resilience and adaptability in the face of environmental disasters. However, the story reveals a dystopian reality where only the wealthy benefit from the cooling system, while the poor, particularly the elderly, suffer and die due to unbearable heat. The story critiques the capitalist system, presenting a "capitalist utopian dystopia," where a society appears perfect on the surface but is deeply flawed beneath. The narrative highlights the disparities between the rich and poor in a world ravaged by climate change, emphasizing the need for fair governance to avoid further suffering. The futuristic elements, including AI and eco-friendly technology, contrast with the harsh reality of climate-induced dystopia, warning that without systemic change, even technologically advanced societies will be shaped by environmental

<sup>1</sup> The initial abstract and research concept for this article were presented by Kanan Aghasiyev at a symposium. However, the focus of the research evolved from a practopic-ecocritical analysis to an exploration of capitalist utopian dystopia. The original abstract is cited in the References section as *A Practopic-ecocritical Analysis: Exploring Capitalist Utopian Dystopia in Brenda Cooper's for the Snake of Power*.

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catastrophe and inequality. Ultimately, the story urges collective action to ensure a sustainable and equitable future.

**Keywords:** Brenda Cooper, *For the Snake of Power*, Phoenix, Solarpunk, Utopian Dystopia, Capitalism

### Öz

Brenda Cooper'ın *For the Snake of Power* (2018) adlı eseri, iklim değişikliğinin zorluklarıyla şekillenmiş geleceğin Phoenix, Arizona'sını tasvir eder. Hikâyenin merkezi unsuru, yenilenebilir enerji üreten ve çölün aşırı sıcaklarından şehri korumak için gölge sağlayan yılan benzeri bir güneş paneli yapısıdır. Bu teknolojik yenilik, insan ve doğanın uyum içinde birlikte var olma potansiyelini simgeleyerek çevresel felaketler karşısında dayanıklılık ve uyum vizyonu sunar. Ancak hikâye, yalnızca zenginlerin soğutma sisteminden faydalandığı, fakirlerin – özellikle yaşlıların – dayanılmaz sıcak nedeniyle acı çekip öldüğü distopik bir gerçeği ortaya koyar. Hikâye, kapitalist sistemi eleştirerek yüzeyde mükemmel görünen ancak derinlerde ciddi kusurlar barındıran bir “kapitalist ütopya distopyası” sunar. Anlatı, iklim değişikliğiyle harap olmuş bir dünyada zenginler ile fakirler arasındaki eşitsizliklere dikkat çekerek, daha fazla acının önlenmesi için adil bir yönetimin gerekliliğini vurgular. Yapay zekâ ve çevre dostu teknoloji gibi geleceğe yönelik unsurlar, iklim kaynaklı distopyanın sert gerçekliğiyle tezat oluşturarak, sistemik değişim olmaksızın teknolojik açıdan gelişmiş toplumların bile çevresel felaketler ve eşitsizlik tarafından şekilleneceği uyarısında bulunur. Sonuç olarak hikâye, sürdürülebilir ve adil bir gelecek sağlanması için kolektif eylemi teşvik eder.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Brenda Cooper, *For the Snake of Power*, Phoenix, Solarpunk, Ütopya Distopya, Kapitalizm

### Introduction

Brenda Cooper's *For the Snake of Power* (2018) envisions a future Phoenix, Arizona, shaped to meet the difficulties of climate change. The plot revolves around a huge, snake-like structure that covers the city's canal system. Its solar-paneled scales produce renewable electricity while giving shadows that protect inhabitants from the desert's burning heat, producing in a habitable and energy-efficient environment. The snake like energy structure represents a notion the depicts the harmony between the natural landscape and the human world with its technology. The story showcases a vision in which the human world does not isolate itself from the nature but finds a way to coexist with the nature. Unlike, newly different utopian/dystopian futuristic literary works, *For the Snake of Power* represents a city that is not totally covered in glass or protected with huge umbrella-like structures from the heat of the sun. It only offers a concept that could be applied to protect people from the increasing heat of the sun due to climate change. As the city grows under this ingenious infrastructure, the story delves into themes of adaptability, resilience, and the symbiotic interaction between humans and technology in the face of environmental disasters. The plot is designed to make people think about the possibilities of renewable energy and how it could be used efficiently among the residents. At the beginning of the story, it is feasible to understand a society that lives in a system in which everyone works and seems to be happy. However, as the story develops, it is understandable that due to the lack of energy, coming from the solar panels and the government's lack of decision, only the rich can enjoy the air conditioner's pleasing chill air while the poor, mostly the elderly are left no choice but to die from the breath-stopping heat. Thus, the plot leads us to a world in which utopic world is applied for the rich while the poor live in a dystopic heat and the law of capitalism allows only the rich to survive.

Accordingly, one might state that “capitalist utopian dystopia” is a place in which the rules of utopia is controlled by capitalist fundamentals and those living in it are forced to believe that they live in a perfect society, in a utopia. However, being controlled by a capitalist system makes this so-called utopia

a dystopia. Furthermore, if the assumed-utopia is created because of the environmental or other human-made degradation, this could indicate that it is not a utopia, but a dystopic utopia. Additionally, when we state the word “utopia”, we usually understand a society where everyone lives happily, and no problem occurs. However, I claim that Phoenix, the setting of the story, is capitalist utopian dystopia because the rich of the society gets all the cooling system they want while the poor dies due to the unbearable heat. Additionally, the world outside Phoenix is a dystopia because the climate change has increased the temperature in a level that living outside the town is equal to dying immediately. Yet, the system made people believe that they live in a perfect functioning society: A utopia. However, in reality, if you are rich, you survive in the heat, and if you are poor, you die because of the heat. Thus, capitalism shows itself in a false utopia which is located in a dystopic world.

### **Theoretical Definitions of the Terms**

It is a known fact that most of the world nowadays live in a capitalist society, meaning, that those with more money enjoy more privileges while those with less money enjoy less opportunities. Nevertheless, it is also possible to state the fact that those with less money can become rich and enjoy more privileges. However, becoming rich and being able to success the privilege of the rich is not easy and many obstacles are to be overcome. Nowadays, more than 180 countries<sup>2</sup> are considered to have capitalist economic system. While capitalism gives opportunities to be richer and have better financial situation, it is not always possible for individuals to enjoy the privilege that capitalism offers. Only the lucky few can enjoy the satisfaction of capitalism while the rest try to get a certain amount of income and survive from one month to another. The economic situation of the First World countries might seem to be slightly better than those who live in so-called Third World countries. However, both “worlds” are led with the laws of capitalism and it seems pretty obvious that Third World countries that apply capitalist economic system do not seem to be as successful as some of the First World countries (for the poor). Yet, an unchanged factor, that the majority of the poor stay poor, showcases itself in all the capitalist states.

If we look at the term “capitalism”, it is possible to perceive several significantly important definitions given throughout the history. However, Louis Blanc, a French socialist, popularized the term “capitalism” to criticize economic systems that favored private capital and profit over social wellbeing. One of his major discourses on capitalism could be found in his 1850 work *Histoire de la révolution de 1848* (*History of the Revolution of 1848*): “Blanc used [the term] in 1850, and defined it critically as “appropriation of capital by some, to the exclusion of others”” (Kocka, 2018, p. 71). Blanc criticized capitalism as a system that enabled capital owners to exploit labor, resulting in massive inequities. To solve these inequities, he advocated for worker cooperation as well as state-supported social transformation. Later, other scholars such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, other used the term in both social and economic perspectives (cf. Atasoy, 2015).

Accordingly, utopia can be considered a place, a society, or a community in which everyone lives happily with almost no problem or problems with the ultimate and fastest solutions ever. The citizens of a utopic society do not struggle with daily challenges, like working for many hours or fight with each other (or with other countries) to gain more profit. Additionally, a utopia is a place where everyone is equally treated, and no discrimination finds its way towards the residents of this society. The earlier versions of utopian literature dates back to the Ancient Greek times:

[T]he first example of utopian literary heritage that was passed down to us in written form is Plato’s “Republic” that dates back to 360 B.C. Utopian thinking gets away from

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<sup>2</sup> Based on the report given by World Population Review, titled: “Capitalist Countries 2024”

the philosophical ideas and attains self-sufficiency only in 16th century. The climax of utopian genre comes in the 17-18th centuries, when utopian works get greater social thematic range (Zhurkova & Khomutnikova , 2019, p. 186).

The term was initially used in Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, which was released in Latin under the title *Libellus...de optimo reipublicae statu, deque nova insula Utopia* (1516; *Discussing the Ideal State of the Republic and the Newfound Island Utopia*). More uses two Greek words to create the word *utopia*: "not" (ou) and "place" (topos), the word signified "nowhere". While on his diplomatic mission to Flanders in 1515, More penned *Book II of Utopia*, depicting a pagan and communist city-state where reason governed all institutions and policies. This ideal state aimed to starkly contrast the chaotic politics of Europe. The portrayal of Utopia is narrated by a mysterious voyager named Raphael Hythloday,<sup>3</sup> who argues that communism is the sole remedy for egoism in both personal and societal realms.<sup>4</sup> To have an understanding about the word "utopia", we might consider the following quote:

A good general definition of utopia appears to be that of Moritz Kaufman (1879 [...]): "What is a Utopia? Strictly speaking, it means a 'nowhere Land', some happy island far away, where perfect social relations prevail, and human beings, living under an immaculate constitution and faultless governments, enjoy a simple and happy existence, free from the turmoil, the harassing cares, and endless worries of actual life" (Ertuğrul & Parlas, 2015, n.p.).

Thus, the given quote above clarifies that utopia is a place that is located in an unreachable island in which everyone lives happily. One may argue that utopian literary theory or criticism investigates literature, especially works that portray ideal societies or universes, through the lens of utopian concepts and ideals, despite the fact that there is no one exact definition of this field. As a critique or reflection on contemporary social, political, or economic structures, it explores how literature imagines and portrays perfect or idealized civilizations. The study of utopian literary criticism looks at how these works depict utopian societies, the beliefs they uphold, and how their ideals affect actual civilizations. It also explores how utopian literature reflects contemporary cultural values, wants, and worries: "Utopian texts [...] present a specific form of internal critique, demonstrating what it might mean for the unfulfilled values of actually existing society to be fully realized and highlighting the repressed possibilities for a better world residing within familiar social relations" (Davidson, 2020, p. 11).

On the other hand, dystopia is the total opposite of utopia, though, like utopia, it is set in future. Dystopia is a fictional or real-world civilization characterized by oppression, hardship, and, in many cases, dictatorial control. It paints a bleak picture of the future in which social, political, and environmental crises have turned out of control. Typically, dystopias examine issues such as loss of individual liberty, widespread injustice, and the abuse of technology or power. Unlike utopia, "[d]ystopia, shows the society enormously miserable and wretched where inequality and injustice prevail. In dystopia most motives are turned over and showed in a grotesque distortion" (Zhurkova & Khomutnikova, 2019, p. 186). Thus, unlike utopia which shows "flowers" and "butterflies", dystopia tries to be more realistic and showcases the real obstacles that might happen in human societies. The dystopian themes are not alien to the human history and those themes are the representation of humans' ancestral mis-achievements throughout the history of mankind: "Dystopian narrative warns the society against the potential perils of absolute power and of an unbridled rule" (Atasoy, 2019, p. 247). Hence, dystopian literature helps people to understand the fact

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<sup>3</sup> To read more about the ideas of the character:

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/more/works/utopia/ch2a.html>

<sup>4</sup> To read more about the story: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/utopia>

that utopian dreams can easily turn into dystopia, just like wars, ecological disasters promise (cf. Atasoy, 2021a, 2021b).

Therefore, it is possible to define a “capitalist utopian dystopia” as a civilization where the rules of utopia are governed by capitalist principles and its inhabitants are thought to live in a utopian society. But this so-called paradise is actually a nightmare, since it is governed by a capitalist system. Furthermore, it may be a dystopic utopia rather than a utopia if the assumed-utopia is the result of environmental or other man-made degradation. Furthermore, when we use the word “utopia”, we typically think of a society in which there are no problems and everyone lives contentedly. However, I assert that Phoenix, the setting of the story, is capitalist utopian dystopia since the rich of the society obtains all the cooling system they want while the poor perish due to the oppressive heat. Furthermore, the world outside of Phoenix is a dystopia due to climate change, which has raised the temperature to the point where it is now immediate death to live outside of the town. However, the system led individuals to assume that they are living in a utopian society with flawless functioning. In actuality, though, if you are wealthy, you can withstand the heat, and if you are financially poor, the heat kills you. As a result, capitalism manifests itself in a dystopian environment that is a false utopia.

Accordingly, solarpunk is a relatively new literary movement and it started with “science fiction, [which] has been fundamental to thinking about how the world will be in the future. This literary place was the birthplace of [s]olarpunk” (Reina-Rozo, 2021, p. 53). Being a futuristic element, the term “solarpunk” comes from two different words: “Solar” referring to sun, and “punk” referring to a particular type of literary or artistic movement. It is also assumed to be a sub-theory of ecocriticism and environmental studies. Initially, the punk subculture originated in the mid-1970s, with its roots traced back to New York in 1974 and the United Kingdom in 1976.<sup>5</sup> Some theories propose that the term “punk” was adopted from prison slang. Punk literature, also known as *punk lit* or *punklit*, related to literary works associated with the punk subculture. Additionally, solarpunk fights for a sustainable future and the way that we can go there: “[W]hat does a sustainable civilization look like, and how can we get there?”<sup>6</sup> It is popular with its optimism about future though its optimism is being criticized. Jennifer Hamilton from University of Sydney writes: “Perform an online “image search” for the term “solarpunk” and you will find colorful, leafy metropolises, flowing neo-peasant fashions and, perhaps, a small child standing next to a solar panel in front of a yurt” (Hamilton, 2017, n.p). Thus, solarpunk is all about a perfect future in which everyone will live happy and in harmony with nature and sustainable energy.<sup>7</sup> Though our story, *For the Snake of*, lacks that harmony and equality among people, it represents a positive ending where people fight against the system and achieve their goal (cf. Atasoy, i. 2023a, 2023b).

## **Discussion**

Brenda Cooper's *For the Snake of Power* (2018) depicts a world in which humans coexist with nature rather than isolating themselves from it. Unlike many futuristic literary works that portrays cities entirely closed in glass shaped structures or protected by massive umbrella-like constructions, *For the Snake of Power* offers a practical concept to protect people from the extreme heat caused by climate change. It invites readers to dwell upon the potential of renewable energy and its effective use in addressing environmental issues. The narrative also investigates the dynamics of human agency and governorly control within the system it establishes. At the beginning, society appears to be harmonious, with almost everyone working and seemingly happy. Yet, as the plot unfolds, energy shortages from the solar panels

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<sup>5</sup> Read more about punk rock and subculture:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20210114105315/https://www.britannica.com/art/punk>

<sup>6</sup> You may read more about the concept: <https://www.re-des.org/es/a-solarpunk-manifesto/>

<sup>7</sup> To read more about the genre: <https://www.re-des.org/es/a-solarpunk-manifesto/>

due to the recent damage of the storm and governmental negligence expose huge inequalities. The wealthy population enjoy the luxury of air conditioning, while the poor, especially the elders, are left to cope with and bow to the oppressive heat. The story ultimately presents divided worlds, where the rich thrive in a utopian setting, while the less privileged, the poor, suffer in dystopian circumstances, showcasing how capitalism commemorates survival for the elite at the expense of the poor (cf. Tekin 2024a, Tekin 2024b).

The story starts with the description of the “greatly damaged—solar snake that covered the canals of Phoenix swam” in Rosa’s, the protagonist’s, vision (p. 43).<sup>8</sup> As the story unfolds, the readers learn that there had been a huge dust storm in the city and the “snake” was greatly damaged due to storm. To repair certain damage, the readers are told that some types of robots are used to repair particular sort of damages. Thus, the readers are presented to experience not only a utopic and futuristic eco-friendly city, but also robotics that do the most difficult jobs instead of humans. It is also described that even though the damage is great, the robots are able to fix the damage though they are tiny. As the story develops, the readers see a new character, an AI (Artificial Intelligence), whose name is HANNA<sup>9</sup> (p. 43). Rosa, the protagonist, asks Hanna, the AI, if she has figured out the source of the problem with the power, as Rosa’s responsibly is to solve the problem with the power that is generated by the solar panels which are greatly damaged after the storm. Brenda Cooper, the author of the work might try to bring the readers’ attention to the recent developments in technology by showcasing tiny robots and an AI Character.

Considering the fact that, the work was published in 2018, and for that time AI was not as developed as today (in 2024), the writer already knew that soon AI would have its momentum in public and government areas. In research carried in 2020, it is stated that “artificial intelligence is going to be our partner. If we misuse it, it will be a risk. If we use it right, it can be our partner” (Yadav & Pandey, 2020, p. 1336). This research was carried out just two years after the publication of the story. And today, the perspective on the usage of AI has not changed much expect for major advancements, but the aims of using it still remain the same; using it either for good or bad purposes. Even, the name of the AI is presented in an ambiguous shape. The narrator states that Rosa has chosen an old woman’s voice for the AI as it sounded calm. That is why, the readers cannot be sure if the name of the AI (Hanna) is a given name by Rosa or it is a name that the state chose to use. However, it is worthy to mention the fact that Brenda Cooper’s method of using an AI character who is not seen but only heard is a revolutionary and fundamental act in postmodern literature, even though it might be controversial to state on the opinion that if, it is a utopian or a dystopian step in literature. Yet, it is going to be an inevitable step in contemporary literary arena.

The writer does not forget to lack the human emotions of the AI character. We experience this approach in the conversation between Hanna and Rosa. Rosa asks the AI to “[l]ook beyond the engineering. If [the AI has not seen] a problem there, then the problem [might be] somewhere else. Power storage? Legal?” However, the AI cannot understand the type of the question that Rosa asks. That is why, it answers if that is “a question” and accordingly Rosa answers “yes” (p. 44). It is possible to state the notion that the writer might want to state on the fact that AI is not a human being, but a robot-alike machine which is invisible, and unlike humans it cannot understand human emotions deeply. As the dialogue between them continues, the AI shows her worries about Rosa and states that she has “worked 14 hours today” (p. 44). Thus, the writer may try to show that the AI may not easily understand humans’ emotion and the types of speech alongside emotions, however, they could be useful to remind humans about good and bad things, such as having a good health condition. Hence, at one point, the readers

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<sup>8</sup> All the “p” numbers are from *For the Snake of Power*. Other sources are cited with the authors names, publication years (if available), and the page numbers (if available).

<sup>9</sup> “HANNA” in the original text. However, I will be stating it as “Hanna” throughout the article.

experience the dependency on AI where it cannot understand human notions, which could be a sign for dystopia, while the good features of AI can improve our life conditions, such as health, - which could be feature of utopia. To make the story more futuristic and utopian, the writer uses “hoverboards and bicycles” (p. 44). Perhaps the notion of bicycle riding is not a futuristic element, however, if we are to imagine an eco-friendly society, then the room for large wheels and petroleum-drinking cars should not be given. However, hoverboards are relatively new and though theoretically it was invented in decades ago, it was not created until recent years. Even in films, it was possible to see hoverboards. Thus, it has always been an example of a utopic future and Brenda Cooper perfectly uses this concept to add a utopic futuristic element to her work.

Later in as the plot unfolds, the readers learn about the organization in which Rosa works, The Association of Solar Power, which increases the rates of solar energy due to the problem caused by the storm. Additionally, it is stated that brownouts are scheduled by The Association of Solar Power, as there is no enough energy to share with people. Rosa, clenching her fists remembers that “[i]n summer, brownouts killed” (pp. 44-45). For the first time, the readers are introduced to possible causes of dependency on solar energy; energy shortages causing deaths. However, the readers are not introduced to the direct cause of deaths, one may only assume that it is/was due to the energy shortage as it is too hot. As the story develops, we come to a conclusion that the deaths happened because of the energy shortage which led to the less usage of air conditioners, and eventually people died because of the unbearable heat. However, only the poor suffered these consequences, not the rich (in the following paragraphs, these matters will be discussed). Later, Rosa visits a neighborhood to check the damage on the solar snake. From the description of the place, we understand that it is a neighborhood of ordinary people: “Two young men stared at her, and suddenly she wished she had changed out of her SRP shirt. As she passed, conversations lowered or changed tenor, although no one approached” (p. 45). Thus, it is feasible that the ordinary people (poor people) do not like the system, SRP.<sup>10</sup> The thought that was in Rosa’s mind regarding her work t-shirt on her spreads a notion that people are not happy with the energy organization. Cooper masterfully states people’s dislike of SRP after mentioning that some people died in the brownouts. However, Rosa ignores all possible dangers she might face due to the anger in people towards her company, and continues to do her job. For the first time, while Rosa is looking for the damage, the writer describes the shape of the snake in a detailed way:

She [Rosa] reached the break and stopped under it, staring up. The snake undulated throughout the city, sometimes only 20 feet above the canals and sometimes the height of a tall building, the design part art and all function. The taller loops reached for sun that buildings or bridges would block. This break was near where a segment began to rise. Three supports had come down. Solar scales had shattered on the pathway and, almost certainly, into nearby backyards. A few still dangled, askew, edges connected to the wire scaffolding that managed the panel’s tilt (p. 45).

As Rosa detects the problems on the snake with Hanna’s help, we understand that the damage on the power snake only affects the poor, while the rich have precautions to protect themselves from the heat when there is no electricity. It is described as “[t]he rich often had their own systems. If not, they had cool places to go, and transportation to power if they needed it for oxygen tanks or powered wheelchairs. The poor wouldn’t even be able to run a fan” (p. 45). This is an example of pure capitalist society in which only the rich can enjoy while the poor is destined to lack even the smallest privileges. As one may state from the given quote above, the rich of the society have their own power systems and when crisis such as the one in the story happened, they can protect themselves by using their own power system. They even

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<sup>10</sup> Short for The Association of Solar Power.

have oxygen tanks and cool places to run if the weather is extremely hot. Even for the elderly and the disabled, they own wheelchairs. However, when it comes to the poor, they cannot even afford to have a fan that could blow some air in the hottest days of the summer. And once the power is gone, the poor suffer, since they do not own any preventive tools to protect themselves from the heat. However, when the power is there, the air conditioners help them to cope with the heat.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the writer demonstrates the class difference in a futuristic world where utopian eco-centric values are appreciated while the basic need for any civilization, human life, is ignored when it comes to the poor. Later, as the story unwraps itself, we learn that Rosa's grandmother was one of the victims of such social class discrimination and died due to the heat:

Rosa had held her grandmother's hand when she died of heat in the power wars of '32. She had been just seven years old, sweating and miserable, her head afire with heat and dehydration, singing to her grandmother. She'd felt her grandmother's hand go limp, had seen the life fade from her smile, her cheeks, her eyes (p. 46).

As it is apparent from the given quote above, Rosa's grandmother died in the heat, however, if she had been rich, she would have had her own power supplies and survive like the rich people do. The mentioning of "power wars" showcases that the writer tries to show a foreshadowing to the future where energy will be too valuable for nations to obtain and wars will happen to control the energy. Hence, her grandmother became a victim of the futurist capitalist utopia – a dystopia in which only the rich can survive, even in wars. Because of the deaths happened in the past due to energy and SRP's lack of support for the poor, ordinary citizens lost their hope to the regime and the SRP's management. In the same neighborhood where Rosa tries to determine the damage on the solar snake, she meets her old friend with whom she has not talked for a long time. Her friend, Inez does not hide her shock seeing her friend wearing the SRP uniform. She states that she "didn't think that [Rose would] become..." (p. 46), and she does not finish her sentence while Rose says "[t]he enemy?". Inez even states that she came to inform Rose to be careful as there are people who do not like SRP. Thus, the readers can easily read the minds of people and what they think about the regime that only supports the rich. Later, the narrator states the fact that the snake was designed to make power available to everyone, wealthy and poor, as long as they desired it. Since the rich had their own systems, the snake was an aid for the poor. The cheap power and internet access that ran down the snake let Rosa compete in high school, secure college grants, and help her with everything for five years. Thus, even though the narrator does not mention it, we could feel the gratitude in Rosa's emotions. However, she feels aware of the fact that the rich are more privileged and the snake does not mean much for them while it is a matter of life for the poor. When Inez states that "[n]ine months old" boy died when the power went down, Rosa feels a shock and only nods that she is sorry (p. 48). The narrator adds that this news was not in regular news. Hence, Cooper might try to depict the usage of media in the hands of wrong people. Media is a powerful tool and its controlled or the desire of the powerful while the facts of the poor are put in shadows.

Climate change is a central theme in the story and it is the main reason that the city has extremely high temperature. Because of the heat, people use the snake's power to generate electricity and use it against the heat by producing cool air. However, even the snake belongs to the people, mostly to the poor, the governor of the city has signed an agreement with another state to "give away 20 percent of their power" without considering its own poor population (p. 49). The decision of the governor showcases the fact that they do not care about the poor even in the most difficult circumstances. Considering the fact that the snake has lost much of its power and due to that the energy is given with brownouts, the poor suffer the most, even die. However, the case does not impact the rich as they have their own power system

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<sup>11</sup> Possibly provided by the government. Perhaps a ventilation system in the buildings.

unlike the poor. When Rosa talks about governor's decision, her colleague Susannah says that "[t]his is not our problem. We support maintenance, not contracts" (p. 50). Thus, Susannah shows that she does not care about anything else and she is loyal to the regime of the city. She blindly follows the system's unfair capitalist approach and does not even consider to change her perspective in the time of difficult cases. This shows the obedience of people towards the regime. Susannah is an obedient worker and a citizen, and any decision made by the system is right to her mind. Even when Rose's another colleague Callie states that "[t]here's nothing [they] can do" (p. 51). Hence, Susannah is not alone and the supporters are always the majority while Rose is a single fighter trying to fight for her people, poor people. Perhaps her insist approach comes from her past, as her grandmother was one of the victims of the regime while we are not given any background about the past of both Susannah and Callie.

However, Rose does not seem to be pleased with Collie's answer and she states that "[i]t's 118 degrees<sup>12</sup> already (...). People will die, to give power to Chicago, where's it's only 92 degrees<sup>13</sup>. There's nothing fair about that!" (pp. 51-52). 118 degrees is too hot for humans to live and it is considered to be dangerous temperature while 92 is quite livable. Nevertheless, the state does not seem to be concerned with this fact as the decision makers are of the rich and again, it is not necessary to state the fact that they do have enough energy to protect themselves. Callie responds back that she "can't change it. Policy. [She] can get stuff done, but only to support SRP or the workers (...). [M]ess with this, you might get fired" (p. 52). Thus, Callie is worried about her position in SRP. Her concern of her position shows that the state is a radical anti-democratic and it is against those who question its decisions. Callie's careful attitude illustrates that such cases happened before and people has been fired. Nevertheless, Rosa does not concern herself with stepping back. She states that "[t]hree people died already. Old people. In one day of brownouts. It will get worse" (p. 52). Callie, hearing the facts from Rosa, seems to be a bit concerned and a shift happens with her attitude. Yet, she pressures herself to hide her true feelings about the governor's carelessness regarding the poor. Rosa, being not satisfied, stares into her colleague's eyes and says that maybe she "can do better" to help the people (p. 52). This line is very important as we can see a decisive decision of Rosa. The narrator describes Rosa's mind change as in the following lines:

She had felt pride in her work until yesterday. Not now. She worked for the power company, and she knew what it was to die from lack of power. Her hands shook, so she clenched her fists. She turned and walked fast back toward her old home. She could lose her dream, her job. But if she could save a grandmother somewhere... (p. 53).

The provided quote above states the fact that Rosa loved to work for the system until recently. However, now she wakes up from the dream of supporting her energy company and remembers her late grandmother who died due to the discrimination done by the system. She does not want anyone to suffer, die anymore and with that she even takes the chance of losing her job by going against the regime. In her old neighborhood, she talks about the contract that the governor made to a local show (for the poor) hosted by Penélope López, another resident in the poor district (p. 54). Again, here, it is possible to see the power of news and media. Until today, Rosa always listened to the news presented by the state and never heard any news of death. However, to spread the truth, she understood that she had to fight by the side of the poor. That is why, she uses the media of the poor. After spreading the truth about the system, it is described that "the paths were full, and rumors that other neighborhoods had joined reached her. Even middle-class neighborhoods, ones that had their own power" (p. 55). Hence, we see the unity of

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<sup>12</sup> Possibly it is 118 Fahrenheit, not Celsius, as it the US Fahrenheit is the most used temperature measurement. With Celsius, it makes almost 47 degrees which is quite high.

<sup>13</sup> Again, it is possibly Fahrenheit, not Celsius. It makes 33 degrees with Celsius and it is doable and considered as a habitable temperature.

people to support one another against the unfair capitalist approach of the governor. Even, higher class member joins poor people and support them. This very part of the story shows the solidarity among people. It shows that, people can be solider if there is a right call though they might be from different social classes. Thus, our protagonist unites people with her speech. People start shouting slogans such as:

POWER TO PHOENIX

THE SNAKE IS OURS

POWER FOR ALL

(...)

THE SNAKE FEEDS US ALL

GET THE SNAKE OUT OF OFFICE

FOR THE SNAKE OF POWER (p. 55 – 56).

Thus, thanks to Rosa, people start demanding their rights from the regime. Even, her colleague Callie joins them. Here, the writer might have wanted to state that people do not always obey radical regimes and Callie is an example of this. She was scared to lose her job, however, seeing the truth, she could not stop her humanist side to help the poor in need. By the help of someone with a backdoor to Hanna, the AI, Callie stops the transmission of the energy to other states. Eventually, the government decides to stop the brownouts and Rosa tries to hide herself among the crowds of people in the shadow of the snake.

### Conclusion

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The story depicts a world in which humans do not isolate themselves from nature, but instead find a way to cohabit with it. Unlike numerous diverse utopian/dystopian future literary works, *For the Snake of Power* depicts a metropolis that is neither completely encased in glass or sheltered from the heat of the sun by massive umbrella-like structures. It simply provides a notion that could be used to protect humans from the sun's growing heat as a result of climate change. The story is intended to encourage the readers to consider the potential of renewable energy and how to use it efficiently. The story depicts people's will and control over the system/governments, as well as the definitions it creates. At the start of the story, it is possible to comprehend a society that lives in a system in which everyone works and appears happy. However, as the story progresses, it becomes clear that due to a lack of energy from solar panels and the governor's inaction, only the wealthy can enjoy the air conditioner's refreshing cool air, while the poor, primarily the elderly, are forced to die from the excruciating heat. Thus, the plot transports us to a world in which the rich live in a utopian environment while the poor suffer in a dystopic heat, and capitalism's law permits only the wealthy to survive.

The futuristic element of the story is that it is set in future and it matches with the concept of unusual (for now) technological developments. *For the Snake of Power* contains utopic robots, AI named Hanna, and most importantly a snake-like solar panel line on the water canal of the city. The snake produces power by using the solar energy. This element of the story makes the plot utopian and futuristic in which both nature's heat and human technology are co-existing. On the other hand, climate change is one of the main concerns of the story. Climate change is the dystopia of the human world and future societies are going to suffer due to our careless acts. The dead people in the story are the victims of today's increasing high temperature. If humans do not put any steps forward, no matter how utopian the future societies are going to be, the factor of climate change will be the dystopic monster of future generations. To this list, the current capitalist system must be added; a system that provides for the rich while ignoring

the poor as in the story. If there is no fair ruling, the system will be corrupted and the poor will suffer even in most utopic and futuristic eco-friendly societies. In order to avoid any further damage to our future generations, the story provides a good instance in which Rosa, the protagonist, unites people and stops the regime's wrong decisions. Thus, we may understand the fact that the biggest responsibility is on the shoulder of simple people and people need to demand their rights in order to have a better future and better live and not end up like those poor grandmothers who died in the heat of desert.

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