

The Butterfly Effect

The Anthropocene Era began approximately 200 years BTP (**B**efore the **T**ipping **P**oint) during the Industrial Revolution when scientists first noticed that moths' wings had changed colour to match their polluted surroundings.

We don't know the exact year when the Tipping Point occurred, but the modern calendar started on the death of the Prophet Greta. From a young age Greta tried to raise awareness of the damage we were wreaking on the environment, but it was already too late. At some point during her lifetime equilibrium tipped over into decline and one by one species began to disappear, beginning with the moths, butterflies, bees and other pollinators.

After 500 years of economic turmoil, war and famine, the Global Council was established. Its aim was to ensure the continued existence of the human race and to stabilise energy and food supplies. It took a further 1000 years for geneticists, agronomists, aquaculturists and entomologists to develop species of fish, cereals and insects that could withstand the barren environment. The oceans housed fish farms numbering in their millions. All arable ground was used for cereal crops. Land that could not be cultivated with cereal was commandeered for micro-livestock farms to breed insects for food.

The year is now 2000 ATP. We live in underground cities sustained by solar power. Our diet is exclusively farmed fish, unleavened bread and powdered insects. We have enjoyed decades of peace and stability but last year there were several uprisings across the globe orchestrated by the Diversifiers – a guerilla movement that seeks to rewild the environment and return the earth to its pre-Anthropocene state. Their propagandists have tried to foment unrest and gain populist support by saying that those in power have access to fruit, vegetables and even meat, while the rest of the population subsists on a tasteless monotonous diet. Their rogue geneticists have released new strains of fish and cereals into the environment. Most disastrously they have released new breeds of insects – bees, moths and butterflies which they say are needed to pollinate their newly released crops. The call it 'Operation Pandora'.

But there are reasons why our food production is so tightly controlled and regulated. Our monocultures are vulnerable to pests and disease, they have no genetic resilience. Acre by acre we have watched our crops decimated by the grubs of the thousands of butterflies released by the Diversifiers. Swathes of fields have been burnt in an attempt to stop the spread of the pests, but the butterflies are carried on the lightest of breezes. The maps on the news programmes show the inexorable spread of the pests across all continents. Already there is rationing of fish and insect stocks. The Diversifiers believe that the earth will eventually return to her former glory. What they don't know is if anyone will be left to see it.