# Everyone's watching you: The future of society in Dave Eggers's *The Every*

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Surveillance. Dystopia. Techno-capitalism. Immunology. Totalitarianism.

This article explores Dave Eggers's 2021 dystopian novel *The Every* from the perspective of philosopher Roberto Esposito's intertwined concepts of community and immunity, as put forward in his books *Communitas* (1998), *Immunitas* (2002), *Bios* (2004), and *Common Immunity* (2023). In Eggers's novel, The Every is a gigantic, world-dominating corporation which, through soft totalitarian means, seeks to create a utopian, peaceful, politically correct, and environmentally friendly world. It thus aims to immunise the world from the violent void at the heart of community by encouraging surveillance (of self and others) through a wide variety of apps. However, in its attempt to create a homogenous, peaceful world, The Every arguably suffers from an excess of immunisation from Esposito's perspective. This results in an autoimmune crisis, leading to both the exclusion of large swathes of the population, such as the poor or the technophobe Trogs, and to increased mental illness and even suicide among those subjected to constant surveillance and self-censorship.

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This article aims to explore the techno-totalitarianism in Dave Eggers's 2021 novel *The Every*, a sequel to his bestselling 2014 novel *The Circle* that depicts a world dominated by a gigantic technology corporation. Throughout his career, Eggers has produced a variety of literary works in which he explores the effects of contemporary issues ranging from globalisation, technology and capitalism to civil war, migration and racism (Galow 2014). In writing *The Every*, Eggers addresses a number of worrying current trends, including our increasing willingness to cede our free will to algorithms, the rise of AI and the domination of the global market by a few huge multinational corporations (Ulin 2023; Krantz 2021).

In the novel, a tech-corporation called The Every uses soft totalitarian means to create a world which is ostensibly peaceful, politically correct and environmentally friendly, yet ultimately stifling and intrusive. Hence, as Eggers himself explains, the corporation aims to perfect humanity by constructing a "closed ecosystem" and "24/7 surveillance" (Krantz 2021). It produces, for instance, a variety of (self)surveillance apps in an attempt to protect its workers, and the public at large, from both external dangers and the vagaries of their own psyches. Thus, The Every's supposed utopia threatens to become a stifling dystopia. On this basis, the novel is explored from the perspective of Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito's interconnected concepts of community and immunity.

As this article puts forward, The Every aims to create and control a world which, to use the language of Esposito, has become totally immunised. According to Esposito, one of the foremost proponents of a philosophical immunitary paradigm along with Jacques Derrida and Peter Sloterdijk, immunity constitutes a simultaneous exemption and protection from the potential violence of community. Community, in Esposito's view, is based on a common void or exposure, or a common duty of care, rather than a shared identity (2020, 74). For Esposito, a certain amount of immunity is necessary and inevitable – indeed no community can exist without it. However, he argues that the contemporary world is characterised by a destructive excess of immunity, in the form of a tendency to overreact to perceived or even imagined threats, which he terms autoimmunity. In *The Every*, too, the corporation's excessive attempts to protect its workers and the general public eventually leads to an autoimmune implosion, leaving the company's regime on the brink of a brutal, thanatopolitical totalitarianism.

### THE EVERY: DYSTOPIAN SETUP

*The Every* is set in an unspecified near future in which citizens are increasingly under surveillance by social media. Hereby, the novel can be considered a direct sequel to Eggers's bestselling *The Circle* (2014), which revolves around the eponymous internet corporation and the rise of the novel's antiheroine, Mae Holland (Galow 2014, 142–143). *The Circle* has received considerable scholarly attention, and been explored from a variety of perspectives, including its visions of surveillance and surveillance capitalism (e.g. Däwes 2020; Gouk 2018; Marks 2022) and posthumanism (Nayar 2022). *The Every* is set around a decade after *The Circle*, when Mae, who is described by the novel's rebellious protagonist Delaney Wells as a kind of "soulless, con-

scienceless, world-ending secular antichrist" (Eggers 2021, 28), has become the CEO. In the sequel, the corporation was renamed into The Every, "hinting as it did at ubiquity and equality" (12). Indeed, The Every has grown exponentially after absorbing the huge e-commerce site "the Jungle", a veiled reference to Amazon.com, Inc., along with a myriad of smaller companies to become "the wealthiest, most powerful and, subsequently, most dangerous monopoly of all time" (Marsh 2021). This paves the way for the "totalitarian nightmare" already foreshadowed in The Circle (Eggers 2014, 486). In this context, Wells, a humanities graduate with a childhood history of internet addiction, seeks to infiltrate the corporation in order to end its "malignant reign on earth" (2021, 19). Thus, in contrast to Mae, she can be read as a dystopian heroine in that she rebels against the totalitarian status quo, albeit unsuccessfully (Atchison and Shames 2019, 133–134).[1]

The Every, like many dystopian regimes both real and fictional, is founded on "an explicitly utopian ideology" (Galow 2014, 149) based on principles such as "perfect democracy, transparency and knowledge" (Linklater 2013). However, its utopian rhetoric merely strengthens its monopolism (Docx 2013) and, arguably, its eventual totalitarian hegemony. In The Every, then, the corporation, with broad public support, attempts to immunise its workers and consumers from uncertainty and danger primarily via a variety of surveillance apps, many of them biopolitical or psychopolitical in nature, in that they aim to exert control over minds and bodies. As Eggers's narrator points out: "The Every, with the wholesale complicity of humanity, wanted a different world, a watched world without risk or surprise or nuance or solitude" (Eggers 2021, 260). In other words, the company has now come close to achieving Mae's dream, that of "closing the circle" (2014, 246–247) or completing the corporation's drive towards hegemonic sovereignty, leading it towards a devastating autoimmunity.

As Meera Agarwal, a staunchly anti-Every professor, suggests in the novel, the success of authoritarianism in general, and of The Every's regime in particular, resides in its ability to immunise people from the unknown, "feeding the urge to control, to reduce nuance, to categorize, and to assign numbers to anything inherently complex" (Eggers 2021, 146). In her view, through its use of "technoconformity" (146), The Every poses "an existential threat to all that was untamed and interesting about the human species" (13).

Meera's former student Delaney obtains employment at the tech-corporation and, together with her friend Wes Makazian, puts forward a series of ideas for increasingly oppressive surveillance apps which, they hope, will cause a public outcry and lead to the corporation's collapse. However, while three routes of resistance are evident in The Every – political resistance (represented by presidential candidate Tom Goleta), protest (represented by Agarwal), and sabotage (represented by Delaney and Wes) – none of them are ultimately successful in toppling its rule (Wrobel 2023, 25).

Notably, contrary to Delaney and Wes's expectations, their ideas prove to be hugely popular, and they unwittingly infuse new life into a corporation which, unable to produce significant new ideas due to a stifling workplace atmosphere, had been on the verge of an autoimmune collapse. Thus, their increasingly intrusive apps sim-

ply lead to the strengthening of the company's monopolistic, quasi-totalitarian immunitary regime. Indeed, Wes himself, who eventually becomes a key player, comes to believe in The Every's utopian ideology due to what he sees as its potential to prevent violence: "I'm beginning to like the idea of a world […] without violent death or the possibility of it. And to get there, we need a streamlined decision-making process. Coordination. We can't have a multilateral mess" (Eggers 2021, 224).

In this context, therefore, this article focuses on various episodes from the novel to shed light on The Every's catastrophic attempt to create a peaceful world order from the perspective of Esposito's intertwined concepts of community and (auto)immunity, which are explored in greater depth in the following section.

## ROBERTO ESPOSITO: COMMUNITY AND IMMUNITY

Esposito's conception of community varies considerably from its dominant understanding in contemporary political philosophy, where it is frequently framed as based on a common attribute, definition or predicate "originating from and reflecting individual identity", and whose members are perceived as owners of "a good, a value, an essence" which is common to them all (2009, 2). For Esposito, in contrast, rather than bolstering a common identity, community deprives its members of identity, or at least puts it at risk (2023, 17). His view of community can be placed in the context of a wider exploration of non-identitarian conceptions of community in continental philosophy towards the end of the 20th century, including Giorgio Agamben's *The Coming Community* (1993), Jean-Luc Nancy's *Inoperative Community* (1999) and Maurice Blanchot's *The Unavowable Community* (2006). Esposito bases his argument on an etymological exploration of the Latin term *communis,* signifying *cum* (with) *munus*, with *munus* referring to an obligation, a burden or a duty of "mutual care" (2020, 74; 2023, 15).

In this sense, then, community can be understood as "a totality of persons united not by a shared property but by a shared lack, a debt or an obligation" (2009, 3–8). In other words, community is sharing "nothing in common" (2023, 18), and its constitutive void also reminds us of "our constitutive alterity with respect to ourselves" (2009, 6–7). On this basis, community is thus inherently related to violence and death, reflected in mythological depictions of communities founded on battles or on fratricidal violence (2013, 123–124), so that community's "heart of darkness" is found in the fact that it is essentially limitless, with neither an inside nor an outside, and therefore nothing to protect its members from each other (125–126).

In contrast to community, immunity implies exemption from the *munus*; it is the "purely negative right of each individual to exclude all others from using what is proper to him or her" (2011, 25). Thus, while *communitas* at its widest can encompass all human beings, and its members share a donative obligation towards others, *immunitas* implies both exemption and protection from the common *munus* (2023, 16). Therefore immunity, a concept whose roots lie in judicial discourse, and which was much later expanded to the biomedical domain, refers to any situation where there is a protective response in the face of a risk, particularly a risk of trespassing or the violation of borders. Once the community is identified with a specific people,

CATHERINE MACMILLAN

territory or essence, so that it is marked with "patriotism and local and factional interest" (2009, 16), then, it becomes walled in within itself and separated from the outside, effectively immunised. Immunity, consequently, has a potentially exclusionary effect as it "cuts through the community along lines of inclusion and exclusion that, by qualifying its members socially and politically, make them different from each other" (2023, 18).

Esposito emphasises, however, that no community can survive without a certain amount of immunisation (2023, 18–19); community and immunity are therefore "so tightly bound together that they can never be thought of separately" (15). Esposito, like Peter Sloterdijk, views the roots of humanity's drive to immunisation from a potentially hostile external world as ancient, indeed timeless. For Sloterdijk, for instance, we have always created a variety of immunitary spheres ranging from "the maternal womb to contemporary metropolises" (Esposito 2023, 151) which protect us from "the outside, the unfamiliar, the unfaithful, the strange and far away" (Sloterdijk 2011, 28). For Esposito, however, the immunitary paradigm really becomes dominant with the development of modern political thought (2020, 74), particularly with the work of Thomas Hobbes, where the attempt to "eliminate and control conflicts and contradictions in life by setting limits to human behaviour" effectively depoliticises society in favour of artificial formations such as the sovereign or institutions (Dişci 2023, 4). Here, like Agamben, Esposito diverges from Michel Foucault's account of biopolitics, which Foucault locates in a supposedly post-sovereign modern period of governmentality (Prozorov 2014, 94; Foucault 1990, 143).

On this basis, Esposito emphasises that, while the immune response is necessary, it can also become excessive, with potentially disastrous consequences. This can be seen in autoimmune disease, the *horror autotoxicus*, where the immune system itself turns against and attacks the very body it is supposed to protect. In this context, in Esposito's view, and echoing Derrida (Borradori 2003), we are currently experiencing a "global autoimmunity crisis" which has overtaken the world since September 11, 2001 (Esposito 2008, xiii). For Esposito, then, while Nazi Germany constitutes the prime example of a (thanatopolitical) autoimmunity crisis (136–144), immunitary measures in the contemporary world have again become excessive, leading to a decline in tolerance, and the diffusion of excessive individualism and alienation (2008, 148; Mutsaers 2016, 101–102), a tendency which was only exacerbated during the recent pandemic (Esposito 2023; 2020, 73).

However, Esposito proposes an alternative, more optimistic conception of immunity where it can potentially form the basis of a politics of life rather than death (Lemm 2013, 11). It is here where his conception of biopolitics diverges from that of Agamben, in that, while Agamben sees biopolitics as essentially death-driven and thus as something which it is necessary to overcome (1998), Esposito arguably provides for a potentially more positive approach to biopolitics, one which, as Catherine Mills points out, "does not rest on the oppressive and exclusionary presumptions of the modern West" (2018, 3–4).[2] Esposito notes that, while the immune system has traditionally been described in military terms as a "war" between pathogens and soldier-like immune cells, it has more recently been suggested that the immune sys-

tem is also characterised by tolerance*,* so that the body is understood as "a functioning construct that is open to continual exchange with its surrounding environment" (2011, 17). Rather than a strict delimitation between self and other, then, the newer model of immunity suggests the genuine possibility of a community based on an intertwining of self and other which remains open to difference (Lemm 2013, 12). It thus becomes a question of articulating community and immunity not in terms of an opposition but "in a sustainable form that does not sacrifice one in favour of the other" (Esposito 2020, 78), or as a "single common immunity, a co-immunity meant to protect human beings – not some *from* others but some *with* and *for* others" (2023, 156). As explored below, however, the immunity sought by The Every is far from being a co-immunity built on openness to the Other; it is, instead, a stifling, exclusionary immunity which ultimately tends towards an autoimmune destruction.

## CLOSING THE CIRCLE? THE EVERY'S (AUTO)IMMUNITARIAN REGIME

The Every campus, described as a kind of "human zoo" (Wrobel 2023, 20), can itself be understood in terms of an attempt to immunise its inhabitants from the outside world. Indeed, the campus, known as "Everywhere", resembles one of Sloterdijk's immunitary spheres, "immune-systematically effective space-creations" (2011, 28) in which human beings attempt to find shelter from a hostile outside (Esposito 2023, 151). Notably, the corporation seeks to protect its campus from the vicissitudes of contemporary life, including exploitation and environmental degradation; as Delaney quickly learns, "unsustainable or improperly sourced goods", plastic packaging, processed or factory farmed foods and non-biodegradable toys are not allowed on campus (Eggers 2021, 2).

The immunitary isolation of The Every workers, known as "Everyones", later increases further when they, including Delaney herself, are pressurised into moving onto campus dormitories to reduce their negative impact on the environment. The strictly regulated, minimalist dormitory "pods" (2021, 41) themselves resemble smaller bubbles inside the larger immunitary bubble of the campus. Whereas Sloterdijk connects the creation of immunitary spheres to "the artificial, social construction of the incubating sphere found in the mother's womb" (Couture 2015, 57), Delaney herself compares her dormitory bed, a tube measuring eight by three feet where AI monitors her sleep, to a coffin (Eggers 2021, 148), perhaps the excessive, autoimmunitary equivalent of the protective maternal uterus.

The extent of the Everyones' attempts to immunise themselves both from the excesses of 21st century "culture" and from the natural environment are satirised in Eggers's depiction of Delaney's Welcome2Me event intended to introduce her to a group of her co-workers. Delaney chooses a visit to a beach to observe an elephant seal colony; the seemingly innocuous trip, however, turns out to be a disaster from the perspective of the Everyones, who later refer to it as the "Playa 26 Debacle". While still on the bus, they protest at everything from Delaney's non-politically correct choice of delicatessen and music to the vegan-unfriendly sight of farm animals. However, it is the encounter with the seals themselves that overcome the Everyones'

sensibilities, accustomed as they are to effectively living within an immune bubble, "the hermetic seal enveloping so many now" (132). Feeling exposed to the large mammals, an Everyone complains that "There should be clearer boundaries", and many, unable to cope with the cruelty of nature, feel traumatised when they learn that most of the seal-pups will not survive (119–126).

Later, one of Delaney's co-workers, Joan, explains that the Everyones become unsettled by any kind of uncertainty, particularly when outside the protective sphere of the campus: "The Every is a closed ecosystem, and a closed ecosystem is wary of, or even hostile to, anything that might upset that equilibrium" (134). It quickly becomes clear, however, that The Every also aims to immunise the Everyones – and the population at large – from the inconstancy of their own and others' psyches. It does this through a series of apps which carry out biopolitical and/or psychopolitical surveillance and control of their users, such as OwnSelf, which plans its users' time while selling their data to advertisers (41), or TruVoice, which polices speech and messages for political incorrectness, and informs human resources of inappropriate language use (44–45).

Such apps, therefore, curb their users' animal tendency to aggression and procrastination. Based on Esposito's reading of Sigmund Freud, they can be understood as part of an immunising *dispositif* which aims to protect us from "the chaos of instinct" (Duque 2023, 3) and, more broadly, can be linked to what Esposito calls the immunitary *dispositif* of the person, according to which "a human being is a person if, and only if, he or she is the absolute master of the animal that dwells inside" (Esposito 2012, 25). This atmosphere of surveillance also encourages self-censorship, particularly among the Everyones: "There was with each of them, a line that was not crossed […] some subject, some sentence would go too far" (Eggers 2021, 16). Thus, as Esposito points out, immunitary logic seeks to protect life by "subjecting it to a constraint that diminishes its vital potency, channelling that power within certain borders" (2023, 20). In the interests of transparency, for instance, the Everyones are also required to wear a cam, and Delaney notes its inhibitory effect on her behaviour: "She was less interesting, surely, and less funny – for humor does not easily survive the intense filtering that the twenty-first century made mandatory – but she was also kinder, more positive, more generous and civil" (Eggers 2021, 51).

Indeed, Delaney and Wes, in an attempt to provoke a public backlash which would destroy The Every, promote many of its most aggressive surveillance apps including the notorious Friendy, which supposedly evaluates sincerity. As Delaney explains: "We inject the place with poisonous ideas, the corporation adopts them, promotes them, and pushes them into the collective bloodstream of the world's people" (86). However, their ideas, contrary to their expectations, prove extremely popular. In this sense, Delaney and Wes inadvertently act as a kind of *pharmakon*, as a cure as well as a poison (Esposito 2020, 77) for the company, which had been unable to produce significant new ideas due to an atmosphere of excessive immunity which stifles creativity, "an involuntary reaction to the frozen atmosphere there" (Eggers 2021, 112). Mae in particular is notable for being "intellectually celibate" (112 and 145), which puts her leadership position at risk. Thus, rather than killing the corporation, the new

ideas produced by Delaney and Wes seem to vaccinate it, preserving life through a taste of death (Esposito 2020, 77).

However, perhaps unsurprisingly, this constant (self)surveillance has negative consequences for mental health, exemplified, for instance, in Delaney's frazzled colleague Kiki, who is eventually hospitalised for anxiety and insomnia (Eggers 2021, 238). Therefore, while this neo-Freudian immunitary *dispositif* helps to control the animal instincts, it also "provokes neuroses", and "tends to liquidate life, precisely through its control" (Duque 2023, 3). In many cases, however, the consequences are even more serious, leading to a precipitous rise in suicides, both among the Everyones and the population at large. Professor Agarwal, for instance, notes that "The Every offers the world the fruit of a poisoned tree" and blames the "inexorable rise" in suicides on the manic internet use and surveillance encouraged by the corporation (Eggers 2021, 111–112). This, then, resembles an autoimmune collapse, when "the immune system reacts so powerfully that it turns against the very body it should defend, destroying it" (Esposito 2020, 77).

The hyper-immunised world of The Every contrasts with that of those who, either by choice or sheer poverty, fall outside its scope. Notably, the development of a makeshift city of tents just outside the campus, "providing the starkest reminder of what happens when a society has a threadbare safety net and no plan for those who fall through it" (Eggers 2021, 133), can also be read in terms of the exclusionary nature of immunisation, which creates a division between "those who possess it and those who do not" (Esposito 2023, 186). This improvised community thus resembles Esposito's *communitas*, in that its members have nothing in common except for their exposure to the void of poverty, hunger and violence. Here, the immunitary regime of The Every appears to take the form of a "privilege" for the Everyones, who are protected from the risky, "common situation" of devastating poverty (186) faced by the shanty-town dwellers. Thus, as Esposito points out, once communities are immunised they "are always determined by boundaries, external and internal, to structure their populations in groups based on different ranks, power and wealth" (18).

Those excluded by choice are the tech-skeptic Trogs, possibly a contraction of troglodytes, a slur which they had proudly adopted themselves, and which eventually came to refer to "anything resistant to tech takeover" (Eggers 2021, 25). Like the prole area in *1984*s London, Trogtown is comparatively colourful and lively, the only area of the city where people live in relative freedom from the regime's surveillance. However, for the corporations' supporters, such as Wes following his conversion, trog living is "anarchic […] anti-community […] anti-social, anti-human" (223), and the trogs' freedom is to be short-lived, as children are already prohibited from living in trog homes (166). For the time being, however, Trogtown provides a space of relative reprieve from the immunitary regime of the Every, allowing Delaney and Wes to speak freely, and Gabriel Chu, an echo of Orwell's O'Brien, to approach and attempt to entrap Delaney with the offer of joining an imaginary resistance movement (282–285).

However, The Every's influence gradually encroaches on all kinds of resistance, eventually putting an end to political freedom too. As Delaney notes, the corpora-

tion has effectively provided every country with a "digital secret service police", enabling "the end of American democracy and the rise of illiberalism here and abroad" (63). Perhaps most worrying, however, is the extension of its online voting software, Demoxie, to most of the world's democracies. Demoxie, first developed in *The Circle*, allows voters to directly submit online votes on a variety of subjects ranging from healthcare to international relations. Thus, described as "100 percent participation. One hundred percent democracy" (Eggers 2014, 32), Demoxie is proposed as a way of rendering democracy more direct and transparent (Maurer and Rostbøll 2020). However, it also undermines democracy, highlighting what Derrida refers to as the suicidal autoimmune tendency inherent in democracy itself, democracy's tendency to suspend itself in the name of self-protection (Derrida 2005; Esposito 2023, 56). Demoxie effectively removes the right to vote from those unable or unwilling to open an Every account (Eggers 2021, 100), and does not allow for the institutionalisation of the conditions necessary for voters to make informed judgements (Maurer and Rostbøll 2020). Moreover, Demoxie undermines the electorate's right to a secret ballot, as voters' personal and electoral backgrounds only remain private "unless a government or Every strategic partner wanted that information, in which case it was readily sold" (Eggers 2021, 100).

In this context, the only serious political opposition to The Every comes from an anti-monopoly presidential candidate, Tom Goleta. Invited to give a speech on the campus, the homosexual Goleta's campaign is derailed by his inability to keep his eyes, recorded by eye-tracking technology, from "the bulbous regions" of the Everyones displayed in their tight bodysuits (175). However, the ensuing global spread of this technology and the consequent "eyeshaming" of vast numbers of people leads to a wave of "tens of thousands" of suicides, as well as a few hundred "Oedipals" who blind themselves. The spread of the technology also encourages increasing numbers of people, already accustomed to social isolation during the pandemics which preceded the novel, to retreat into the immunitary bubbles of their homes (176).

When a terrorist attack takes place on campus near the homeless encampment, security and intelligence are stepped up, leading to further bolstering of the immunitary space. The perpetrator, however, is never discovered, and life on campus grows more anxious, although it still appears safer than exposure to the common life outside the campus (191): "Between the chaos of Nowhere, the sporadic animosity expressed toward Everyones there, and Impact Anxiety, Everyones were now unwilling to leave campus ever – and conveniently, they never had to" (192).

The Every's surveillance also goes a step further with the development of HereMe, SaveMe, a project to prevent domestic abuse via cams installed in private homes, which, despite attempts on the part of the corporation's lawyers to block it, proceeds to become hugely popular. The public quickly acquiesces to the constant domestic surveillance, until the cameras "become ubiquitous and beloved in most every corner of the globe, giving humanity a new sense of control and safety", although they encourage a certain amount of self-censorship at home, leading to people growing quieter and more cautious (210), and arguably less vital.

Delaney is then seriously injured in a second bombing on campus, in which several Everyones are killed. While it is generally assumed that the attack was carried out by anti-Every trogs, Delaney herself considers it was an attempt on the part of the corporation's leadership itself, having discovered her subterfuge, to get rid of her (241–243). If its management has indeed attacked its own resources in an attempt to protect itself, then, the bombing can be read as autoimmunitarian, resulting from "an excessive demand of protection […] whose only finality is to enable more powerful means of preventive defence" (Esposito 2013). The attack results in increased immunisation, in the form of a further Every surveillance project, KnowThem, designed to notify users when they are near a convicted criminal, and the expansion of Friendy to identify potential malefactors (Eggers 2021, 238–241).

Following her recovery, Delaney goes to visit Agarwal, who is in remission from cancer, and is shocked when Agarwal reveals that she has been employed by The Every. However, on a hiking trip with Mae, where she is won over by Mae's seemingly sincere friendliness, Delaney herself begins to question her own opposition to her employer. Delaney pitches Mae some ideas which, she thinks, have a chance of bringing down The Every, but also risk closing the circle by potentially increasing the corporation's power to such an extent that it would "make the Dutch East Indies company look like a lemonade stand" (266). The first of these ideas, SumNum, is a single number which evaluates a person's behaviour from cradle to grave, effectively allowing or denying them access to, for instance, employment or marriage, while the second, the Consensual Economic Order, is designed to limit the variety of goods produced, in order to curb environmental damage while freeing the consumer from excessive decision-making (267–269).

Softening her opposition, Delaney begins to envision a more inclusive Every-led order: "Certainly the Everyones could see their way to allowing humans to exist apart from their quest for order? Yes. There would be room to co-exist" (270). Arguably, then, Delaney's more inclusive view of The Every resonates with Esposito's more optimistic vision of immunity, immunity as an inclusive "co-immunity" (Esposito 2023, 156) which opens itself, as Derrida also argues, to "something other and more than itself" (cited in Esposito 2023, 150). Delaney's dream of a more inclusive Every is, however, interrupted as Mae, fully aware of Delaney's plans to sabotage the corporation, murders her, pushing her off a cliff (Eggers 2021, 271), in a manner arguably reminiscent of the death of the newly converted Winston at the hands of the regime in *1984* (Orwell 2000, 300).

Thus, Delaney's death merely strengthens the tech-corporation's autoimmunitarian regime, as her murderer Mae appropriates and announces her devastating ideas, SumNum and the Consensual Economic Order, before an audience of "wonderfully compliant" Everyones (Eggers 2021, 273). On the implementation of these ideas, The Every would come close to fulfilling Mae's dream of closing the circle, creating a totally immunised totalitarian regime, so that, in Mae's words: "the world's last bits of chaos and uncertainty would evaporate like dew in sunlight. Where there had been din and disorder there would be the quiet hum of a machine that saw all, knew

CATHERINE MACMILLAN

all, and knew best – that was committed to the perfection of the people and salvation of the planet" (273).

This peaceful, protected world promised by The Every must, however, come at a cost, that of the loss of freedom and vitality, and the purging of undesirables, as Wes suggests: "This is another purging […] the improvement of the species, its perfectibility, is only possible by shaking off all our frailties and deviances […] the brash or incautious are eliminated, and the species moves on, only tamer" (167).

## CONCLUSION

As this article has tried to demonstrate, The Every aims to construct a totally immunised world, an apparently Utopian society in which the corporation, its workers and the world at large would be protected from all kinds of uncertainty and danger, including environmental catastrophe. As Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga, for instance, notes, Eggers's dystopia is complex in that it explores how the noble aim of averting environmental collapse can be hijacked by platform capitalism, resulting in a new despotism (2024, 10–11).

However, the seemingly virtuous aims of the corporation and the novel's frequently humorous, satirical tone (Wrobel 2023; Caine 2021), do not detract from the gravity of The Every's message. By the novel's end, the corporation's discourse becomes, effectively, totalitarian, in that it is "the declaration of the absence of the Other who establishes community", the creation of "a new form of enforced harmony" based on the belief that "it can immunise itself against the Other, difference, everything it sees as dangerous" (Dişci 2023, 15). As Mae chillingly suggests at the close of the novel, The Every's critics and opponents should be "excised" like a "small tumour" (Eggers 2021, 272), reflecting, in the context of Esposito's discussion of the autoimmunitary, thanatopolitical Nazi regime, "the tragic aporia of a death that is necessary to preserve life, of a life nourished by the deaths of others" (2008, 39).

In this context, like many dystopias, The Every can perhaps be understood not as a devastating prediction of our near future, but rather as a thought experiment, the construction of an alternate, imaginary world in which current trends are taken to an extreme. Such exercises of the imagination, as Terentowicz-Fotyga argues (2024, 1–2) are particularly necessary in the case of the contemporary development of digital surveillance capitalism as, due to its unprecedented nature, conventional and familiar experience and concepts are unlikely to prove sufficient or even useful to fully comprehend its implications (Zuboff 2019, 12).

Thus, rather than a simple prediction of disaster to come, or, conversely, a fantasy disconnected from reality, The Every can arguably best be read as a warning. The novel warns, extrapolating from current trends, of the development of a society based on excessive (self)control and isolation, which as Eggers and Esposito both note, are on the increase in today's world. Hence, Esposito's theory of (auto)immunity helps to shed light on how excessive moves towards isolation and insulation from the myriad threats, real and imaginary, posed by existence prove to be the greatest danger of all.

However, as Esposito suggests with his concept of co-immunity, based on a more inclusionary model of immunity, while we appear to be headed for the world of *The Every*, it does not have to be our fate. For him, then, while the protection of life is paramount – there is no freedom without life – it is necessary to distinguish "between systems designed to protect our individual and collective experience, making it safer, and apparatuses that excessively reduce our freedom, our sociability, our curiosity towards others" (2020, 78). It is  precisely thought experiments like *The Every* which can help us to recognise the difference, providing us with at least a faint glow of hope. As Eggers explains, he wrote *The Every* in the hope that its readers would say "I don't want to live there. I don't want that to be our reality" (Krantz 2021). Therefore Eggers, like Esposito, is ultimately, and perhaps surprisingly, an optimist (Krantz 2021), as he battles against the algorithmification of culture in the hope of creating small pockets of freedom.

## NOTES

1  In a way, Wells is an echo of D-503, the protagonist in Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1920–1921), and Winston Smith of George Orwell's *1984* (1949). Tricked by a double agent, Smith rebels against the ruling party Ingsoc's totalitarian dictatorship. After ensuring prison and torture, Smith is killed right in the moment when he has come to love its leader, Big Brother. Orwell's plot, as he himself admitted, is closely modelled on that of Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, whose protagonist D-503, a spacecraft engineer, also attempts to rebel against the regime, the One State, but is eventually caught and subjected to a surgical removal of the imagination.

2  While there is not enough space to go into a detailed comparison between Foucault, Agamben and Esposito's views of biopolitics here, Mills's book (2018) provides an excellent overview.

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CATHERINE MACMILLAN

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