
The hope-sparking gloominess in Offill's *Weather* and Greengrass's *The High House* in the perspective of Naess's theory of deep ecology

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Abstract

A man-nature relationship is as old as the existence of humanity on Earth. Obsessed by his ambitions, Man has built an inequitable relationship with nature, thinking that it exists to ensure his survival and prosperity regardless of its right to survive. The result was an apocalyptic change in the ecosystem, whose protection has become inescapable. Thus, many attempts by theorists and writers, beside scientists and ecologists, have been devoted to such a purpose. Although they sometimes vary in their premises, they have the same aim, namely the survival of the ecosystem. Cheryll Glotfelty's Ecocriticism and Arne Naess's theory of deep ecology belong to such a category. Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary movement that asserts the responsibility of literature towards the environment through the analysis of literary works about environmental issues. Notably, the diversity of approaches and multiplicity of interrelated waves are among the core features of Ecocriticism. Arne Naess represents such an ecocritical approach through his theory of deep ecology, which attempts to reconstruct the man-nature relationship from anthropocentrism into ecocentrism. Such a sense of environmentalist commitment is echoed in the Climate Change Fiction. Therefore, this paper aims to study Naess's theory of deep ecology, as a representative of the ecocritical approach, to elucidate the influence of the climate change crisis on anthropogenic fiction. In addition, it examines diverse perspectives of novelists from different settings towards such a catastrophe, showing how these perspectives vary between hope and

gloominess. The selected novels for such purposes are *Weather* (2020) by the American novelist Jenny Offill and *The High House* (2021) by the British novelist Jessie Greengrass.

Keywords: Anthropocene, climate change fiction, deep ecology, ecocriticism, *The High House*, *Weather*

1. Introduction

A man-nature relationship is as old as the existence of humankind on the Planet. Since the moment that Allah, the Almighty, said to His angels, “Verily, I am going to place (Mankind) generations after generations on earth,” He has honored Adam by telling His angels to prostrate before him (*The Noble Qur’an*, 1404 Hijri, p.7). However, the prostration of the angels was not the only sign of honor for Adam and his offspring. They were preferred to other creatures, as Allah the Almighty says, “And indeed We have honored the Children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea, and have provided them with At-Tayyibât (lawful good things), and have preferred them above many of those whom We have created with a marked preferment” (p.378).

Indeed, Man started his journey on earth by adapting to the surrounding environment, but he managed gradually to invent machines and achieve dazzling discoveries that ensured his domination of the Planet, and, later, his endless ambition led him to space discovery. Irrationally, man during his journey built unequal and inequitable relations with nature. He perceived it as a mere supplier to satisfy his needs and ensure his survival, ignoring the right of the non-human world to survive as well. The result was a change in the environmental system, especially in the atmosphere, resulting in the catastrophe of climate change that reached its apogee during the twenty-first century or the so-called ‘Anthropocene’.

As the survival of humankind and the survival of the ecosystem are inseparable, scientists, environmentalists, ecologists, scholars, and intellectuals in all disciplines found that the relationship between man and the ecological system has to be reshaped and that integration of the environmental issues into all disciplines has become inevitable. At the level of literary studies, theorists and literary writers have devoted their ideas to raising human awareness of the dire consequences of irrational human

practices towards the ecosystem through literary and cultural works that address environmental issues.

Although Ecocriticism is the first official literary theory to address environmental issues, it shares previous attempts in their focus on the preservation of the environment for the survival and prosperity of humankind. However, it differs from these attempts due to the diversity of its constituting disciplines as well as its division into interrelated phases. Arne Naess is a leading figure in this ecocritical approach, and he greatly contributed to its development through his theory of deep ecology. Naess's theory tends to change humans' attitude towards other organisms to reconstruct their relationship with the natural world based on a moral ecocentric principle instead of the anthropocentric master-slave one. Naess believes that humans have to protect other organisms because they have the right to survive as partners in the Universe and not only to satisfy the needs of the humans.

In the same vein, new literary genres have been developed from natural writings to ecological literary works to defend the whole ecosystem. The increasing deterioration of the biosphere resulted in apocalyptic consequences as embodied in the catastrophe of climate change, which reached its apogee during the twenty-first century. The Climate Change Fiction, or cli fi, is a form of literature developed in response to the increasing danger of the greenhouse effect and its unpredictable and rapid disasters. Thus, this paper aims to study Naess's theory of deep ecology, as a representative of the ecocritical approach, to elucidate the influence of the climate change crisis on the anthropogenic fiction. In addition, it examines diverse perspectives of novelists from different settings towards such a catastrophe, showing how these perspectives vary between hope and gloominess. The selected novels for such purposes are *Weather* (2020) by the American novelist Jenny Offill and *The High House* (2021) by the British novelist Jessie Greengrass.

2. The 'Anthropocene'

The term 'Anthropocene' refers to that geological epoch which witnessed radical and impactful human practices on the planet. It is the geological era in which "we humans, the Anthropos, have so greatly altered Earth's functioning," as Ellis blamefully states (2018, p.20). Notably, proposing a

certain date for the beginning of the Anthropocene is controversial. However, the twenty-first century is mostly described as its apogee because of the “negative environmental phenomena such as climate change, gradual loss of biodiversity, [...], and deterioration of the Earth system in line with the rise of technology, overpopulation, and the launch of the Space age for the exploration of life on other planets” (Baysal, 2021, p. vii).

Noteworthy, the term ‘Anthropocene’ has become a formal term by Eugene F. Stoermer and Paul Jozef Crutzen who assert that defining a certain date for the commencement of the Anthropocene is “arbitrary”. However, they

propose the latter part of the 18th century [...] because, during the past two centuries, the global effects of human activities have become clearly noticeable. This is the period when data retrieved from glacial ice cores show the beginning of a growth in the atmospheric concentrations of several ‘greenhouse gases’, in particular CO₂ and CH₄. Such a starting date also coincides with James Watt’s invention of the steam engine in 1784. (2000, p.17)

Thus, the beginning of the ‘Anthropocene’ is immensely associated in Crutzen and Stoermer’s viewpoint with the Industrial Revolution which proves the excessive human use of fossil fuels and its subsequent devastating emissions of carbon dioxide. Similarly, Steffen et al (2007) believe that the first stage of the Anthropocene was coincided with the Industrial Revolution, but they propose three stages for the so-called ‘Anthropocene’. Like Crutzen and Stoermer, they assign the industrial era to be the first stage, because, since this time, the human-nature relationship has witnessed a radical shift. The environment and its resources have become unable to sustain or renew, and indicators of the deteriorating ecological system have become clearer and increased persistently in the following decades:

The imprint on the global environment of the industrial era was, in retrospect, clearly evident by the early to mid-20th century ... Deforestation and conversion to agriculture were extensive in the midlatitudes ... Human transformation of the hydrological cycle was also evident in the accelerating number of large dams ... The flux of nitrogen compounds through the coastal zone had increased over 10-fold since 1800. (Steffen et al, 2007, p. 616)

This first stage ended, from their perspective, around 1945 “when the most rapid and pervasive shift in the human-environment relationship began” (p.617).

The period between 1945 and 2015, then, represents the second phase of the Anthropocene. During that time span, human impacts on earth accelerated in

an unprecedented way. Due to overpopulation, increase of the capitalist entities, technological advances, petroleum industries and expeditions for space discovery, the concentration of Carbon dioxide, nitrogen, and, most dramatically, nuclear radiation have coincidentally increased, resulting in the depletion of the ozone layer accompanied by the global warming, the catastrophe that turned man from the master of this Planet to its destroyer. The third stage of the 'Anthropocene' is thought to begin in 2015 and continue until the present time and may include the coming years/decades. This stage can be described as the stage of the outcomes of the first and second stages. Earth's system has been changing fast and unpredictably as embodied in the climate change crisis, the rising level of waves in oceans and rivers, the unpredictable raging storms, and the extinction of biota and fauna, producing apocalyptic visions that the end of the Planet seems very near.

2.1. Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism, also known as Environmental Literary Criticism and Green Criticism, is "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty, 1996, p. xviii). Likewise, Lawrence Buell defines it as the "study of the relation between literature and environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis" (1996, p. 430). Notwithstanding, the popularity of Ecocriticism as an official literary theory is attributed to the American scholar Cheryll Glotfelty who believes that it is the time "to remap the rapidly changing contours of literary studies" in light of the rapid and unpredictable environmental changes (Glotfelty, 1996, p. xv). She observed that early writings lacked unity and that "one indication of the disunity of the early efforts is that these critics rarely cited one another's work; they didn't know that it existed [...]. Each was a single voice howling in the wilderness" (p. vii). Previous to this book, Glotfelty co-founded the *Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE)* (1992). She attempted through her contributions to "heal the breach between the hard sciences and the humanities," in Carter's viewpoint (2006, p.139).

Another impactful contribution was by Lawrence Buell who started the idea of dividing the history of Ecocriticism into phases. The first phase is characterized by "nature writing, nature poetry and wilderness fiction" (1996, p. 138). The second phase focuses on "social ecocriticism that sheds light on urban and degraded landscapes just as seriously as natural

landscapes,” as Buell explains (2005, p. 22). The aim of Buell’s second phase is not only preservation of natural resources, but also examining the impact of culture on the ecosystem. The third phase focuses on the idea of “World citizenship” in an attempt to “bring people together through ‘common destiny,’ advocating against global capitalism, enlightening the world on modern world issues like climate change” (DeMott, 2018). The latest and the fourth phase is built on the idea of “Material Ecocriticism” with a focus on the “interchanges across human bodies, animal bodies, and the wider material world” advocating that humans and animals have equal rights in better environment (2018). Whatever the focus of each phase, they are interrelated.

Another remarkable feature of Ecocriticism, beside continuous development, is the diversity of approaches because “like racism, environmental crisis is a broadly cultural issue, not the property of a single discipline” (Buell, 2005, p.vi). This led Patrick D. Murphy to define Ecocriticism as “a movement with multiple aspects and theories delimiting it, particularly a drive toward multidisciplinary that bridges the humanities and the sciences” (2009, p.1). Such diversity justifies the differences between ecocritics regarding the scope and methodology of Ecocriticism as a literary theory. They, however, share the same interest in raising awareness towards the environmental crises and their apocalyptic consequences. In addition, ‘setting’ or ‘place’ is a focal element for the ecocritics, but this does not mean that the movement focuses only on nature or pastoral writings. In contrast, this movement “has distinguished itself from conventional nature writing, first by its ethical stand and commitment to the natural world and then by making the connection between the human and the non-human world”, a sincere call that “gives emphasis on th[e] eco-consciousness removing the ego-consciousness man” (Mishra, 2016, p.168). This conscious call is the core of Arne Naess’s theory of deep ecology.

It is also worth mentioning that if Ecocriticism is the first official literary theory to relate literary works to the environment, this does not mean it is the first attempt to do so. The rise of Ecocriticism as a formal movement was an accumulative outcome of previous attempts across ages. Chronologically, depicting the interaction between nature and man in literary works dates to ancient times, as in Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. With the advent of the nineteenth century, *the Romantic style* dominated the literary spheres, and

the centric theme was the celebration of nature and individualism; as evident in the works by William Wordsworth, John Keats and P.B. Shelly. Later, a transition occurred with a prominent American transcendentalist namely, Henry David Thoreau (1817 – 1862). Through his *Walden*, Thoreau managed to “produce what we should now call an environmentalist commitment”, contributing, later, to the rise of Arne Naess’s theory of deep ecology (Buell, 1996, p. 138).

Another inspiring figure on modern environmental writings is Rachel Carson through her landmark *Silent Spring* (1962). It inspired William Rueckert (1978) to assert the necessity of addressing ecological issues in the literary works. In other words, it was an attempt by Rueckert “to discover something about the ecology of literature or try to develop an ecological poetics by applying ecological concepts to the reading, teaching, and writing about literature” (Rueckert, 1978, p.107). However, ‘Ecocriticism’ would become a formal theory only by Cheryl Glotfelty who, during her participation in the WLA conference in 1989, found that the term ‘Nature Writing’ should be replaced by ‘Ecocriticism’.

In the same vein, Arne Naess’s theory of deep ecology attempted to rebuild the human-nature relationship on ethical and philosophical bases. Naess was greatly interested in environmental justice and equality between humans and other organisms, and he devoted his approach to criticizing any form of oppressive dominance as the dominance of advanced and capitalist countries over the poor nations, injustice practiced by some racist nations/ groups against others, and masculine dominance practiced against women. In addition, his theory resonates the impact of the previous environmental approaches represented in the American transcendentalist works as *Walden* (1854) by Henry David Thoreau, *Silent Spring* (1962) by Rachel Carson, and other works by some ecocritics that called for the shift from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism.

2.2. Climate change fiction

The Climate Change Fiction, or cli fi, has been growing immensely within recent decades to keep pace with the rapid and unpredictable climate change witnessed by the Planet. Like scientists, novelists believe that they have a significant role along with scientists and climate activists towards the environmental concerns that have increased over the past five decades. Thus,

they developed climate change fiction to raise human awareness of the dire effects of the greenhouse effect. It can be said that this type of literature is a global call to unite global efforts to save humans before it is too late. Prominent contributors to the Anthropogenic literary fiction, for example but not limited to, are Doris Lessing, Margaret Atwood, Cormac McCarthy, Ian McEwan, and Barbara Kingsolver.

Chronologically, the beginning of the climate change fiction returns to the 1970s with the publication of *Heat* (1977) by Arthur Herzog, and since then it has largely developed and is now receiving great interest in academia. Notwithstanding, environmental crises were depicted earlier in science fiction that used to present a fantasy or futuristic anticipation of other worlds plagued by devastating environmental phenomena. The worlds depicted in science fiction, however, were exposed to ecological catastrophes caused by natural environmental or meteorological reasons with no reference to human intervention. Relating global ecological crises to human practices has started in the second half of the twentieth century due to the increasing global interest in inescapable urgent issues. For instance, ozone depletion caused by the increasing amount of carbon release from factories and machines into the biosphere, increasing numbers of storms and hurricanes that cause floods and threaten large areas around the world of extinction, and other fast and unpredicted apocalyptic consequences caused by the global warming phenomena. Such issues necessitated the rise of climate change fiction and made it distinguished from science fiction.

A prominent feature of this literary genre is the complexity and intensity of its structure. This complexity stems from the complexity of the phenomenon itself. As a global catastrophic phenomenon, climate change encompasses deeply interrelated dimensions: ecological, political, cultural, psychological, etc. Thus, when the cli fi novelists “represent climate change as a global, networked, and controversial phenomenon, they move beyond simply employing the environment as a setting and begin to explore its impact on plot and character, producing unconventional narrative trajectories and innovations in characterization” (Trexler & Johns-Putra, 2011, p.185). If ‘place’ and ‘setting’ are focal literary elements for the ecocritics, the complex and multidimensional nature of the climate change crisis enforce ecocritics “to move beyond comfort zones”, and this explains why “familiar

notions [of] setting, place, and nature ... are being revisited and renovated in response to climate change and climate change fiction” (2011, p.186).

Noteworthy, the complexity of the climate change crisis brings other elements to light, including a history of climate change, political agendas, and social dimensions. Such complexity necessitates a specific literary structure that does not only focus on setting or adopting science fiction techniques, but also depicts the psychological and social dimensions of the crisis and how it has “filtered through our inner and outer lives” (Trexler & Johns-Putra, 2011, p.196). Although ‘cli fi’ rises, sometimes, pessimistic feelings inside the readers, it was created “to make us love the world rather than to make us fear for the end of the world;” the message for which the selected novels for this paper, *Weather* and *The High House*, are devoted to conveying (Murphy, 2009, p. 115).

3. The theoretical framework: Naess’s theory of deep ecology

Deep ecology is an environmental philosophical theory originated by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess and presented in his article, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary” (1973). In this article, Naess criticizes the ecological perspectives towards the environmental issues during the 1970s describing them as shallow and restricted. They “are concerned only,” in Naess’s opinion, “with pollution and resource depletion, [while] there are deeper concerns which touch upon principles of diversity, complexity, autonomy, decentralization, symbiosis, egalitarianism, and classlessness” (1973, p.95). The traditional approach examined human-nature relationship in terms of the dominant and the dominated, on one side, and the utility of natural resources for humans regardless of their own value as well as their role in the integration of the ecosystem. Such ‘Shallow Ecology Movement’, as Naess calls it, is concerned with environmental issues such as pollution and depletion of resources only to ensure good health and prosperity for the advanced nations. The focus of this Shallow Movement on the “Master-Slave role” between humans and the non-human beings “has contributed to the alienation of man from himself” causing “detrimental effects upon the life quality” (Naess, 1973, p. 96).

Naess’s ‘deep ecology’, instead, tends to reconstruct the relationship between humans and other co-existing beings and non-livings from a

utilitarian anthropocentric relation to an ecosophical, ethical and ecocentric one. For this reason, his theory consolidates *Holism* to assert that humans and their behavior are an integrated part of the universe. Another related term to Naess's deep ecology is 'Ecosophy': "a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium," as he defines (1973, p.99). Unexpectedly, when Naess was asked in an interview about 'Ecosophy', he stated that it is a term that he "[does] not like to use" (Naess, 2021, 00.04- 00.43). He does not want people to deal with Ecosophy as a new philosophical discipline at the time that philosophy in the West is taught as a mere academic discipline irrelevant to real life. Indeed, the core of Ecosophy is philosophical, but it "has to do with practice" and cannot be a mere discipline isolated from reality (00.55). Humanity no longer has the luxury of time because "ecosystem's atmosphere and everything getting worse ... in the beginning of the 22nd century," as Naess predicts (03.16 – 03.22; *italics added*).

In an attempt to enable everybody from a different cultural, religious, or philosophical background to understand deep ecology, Naess defines eight basic principles for it as follows:

The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes [...]. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves [...]. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs [...]. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening [...]. Policies must therefore be changed. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality [...] rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. (Naess & Sessions, 1984, pp. 3-6)

The first principle is about the "intrinsic value" of other creatures. Humans have to recognize that the non-human livings and non-livings have their own congenital value regardless of their usefulness to humans. They are co-partners in the universe due to their significant role in preserving equilibrium to the ecosystem. Thus, humans have to reshape their relationship with organisms from a "Master-Slave" relationship to a moral ecocentric one (Naess, 1973, p. 96). Secondly, respecting the "diversity" in nature is essential for both the human and the non-humans to survive. In other words, humans have to adopt the "Live and Let to Live" principle

which enables biodiversity instead of the destructive principle of “Either you or me” (1973, p.96). This principle of ‘diversity’ depends on human’s recognition that other organisms have peculiar values.

Thirdly, humans’ influence on such diversity is allowed only in urgent cases to meet the “vital needs”. For example, humans use wood for paper and furniture industries (i.e., a vital need), but the excessive and irrational interference in the biodiversity in forests has caused deforestation and the extinction of some species. However, such damage can be treated by finding alternatives to continue such industries and increase green lands to enable biodiversity again (even if it takes time). Fourthly, the richness and biodiversity of non-human nature is related to population decrease. The dazzling global increase in population stands as a barrier to the sustainability of natural resources. The ecosystem has become unable to satisfy the needs of humanity due to the inequitable relation between population increase and available natural resources, which threatens the future of the next generations with the depletion of resources.

Fifthly, “human interference” in the ecological system has caused severe damage to the environmental resources, in addition to overpopulation. Sixthly, serious actions are required to achieve the aims of deep ecology. As current policies are inefficient for treating the environmental crises, so other effective policies must be enacted to reshape the principal ideological and technological structures in a way that ensures sustainability and survival of human and non-human life. Seventhly, changing policies must be done for the quality of life and not for achieving a high standard of living. The mistake that humanity committed across the ages was the search for higher standards of life; the purpose for which machines were invented, fossil fuels were used, and natural resources were excessively consumed.

The utilitarian perspective of human beings towards nature has caused a great and increasing damage to the ecosystem, mainly the biosphere and its apocalyptic consequence of climate change. The eighth principle is the “obligation” of action by the deep ecology proponents. They have to implement the aforementioned principles and make the required changes. It is wisdom, embodied in the deep perception of the ethical relation with non-human world, which will enable humans to recognize the rights of other creatures to survive and to sustain the ecosystem that is apocalyptically

threatened by the climate change crisis; the message that climate change novels as *Weather* and *The High House* seek to convey.

4. Textual analysis: Echoes of Naess's deep ecology in Jenny Offill's *Weather* and Jessie Greengrass's *The High House*

Weather (2020) is the third novel by Jenny Offill, an American writer and the author of *Last Things* and *Dept. of Speculation*. Offill's *Weather* addresses the apocalyptic consequences of climate changes on the globe in general and New York City in particular. Through the daily life routine and fragmented episodes of her narrator Lizzie Benson, a Ph.D. dropout student living in Brooklyn, Offill presents an alarmist perspective to the world concerning the bleak future waiting for humankind if they continue damaging the ecological system. Lizzie is the wife of Ben, an educational video games designer who finds in reading history and following the news a solace from his gloomy present, a mother of a lonely child, Eli, and the protector and advisor in the life of her brother, Henry. At the professional level, Lizzie is a librarian and an assistant for Sylvia, a climate activist and Lizzie's old college professor. Being responsible for answering the questions sent to Sylvia's email and her companion in her lectures and workshops, Lizzie feels depressed due to the shocking facts on climate change. Alarmingly, through Lizzie's narration about the content of Sylvia's emails and lectures, Offill portrays how the climate change crisis is getting worse in the 21st century, foreboding the end of the world.

Similarly, *The High House* (2021) by the British novelist Jessie Greengrass presents a post-apocalyptic scenario of the crisis from the perspective of various narrators. It is about an ordinary family consisting of a teenager daughter called Caro, her father, her stepmother, Francesca, and her half-brother, Paul (or Pauly, as Caro prefers to call). Like Sylvia in Offill's *Weather*, Francesca is a climate activist and a scientist who genuinely devotes her life to climate issues until the last moment in her life. She is a woman with a deep sight that enables her to see that the future does not bode well with climate change and the increasing frequency of floods. Thus, she devotes her life to raising people's awareness. Having such a sense of responsibility towards humanity prevents Francesca from enjoying her family life or fully nurturing her young baby. To protect Caro and her son Pauly from any predicted danger, Francesca prepares a refugee for them

called the High House, located in an English county called Suffolk. Unfortunately, her predictions come true, and she and her husband drowned in Florida flood, leaving Caro and Pauly behind to start a new life with Sally and her grandfather, Grandy, (both were hired by Francesca to take care of the children) at the High House.

Thematically, *Weather* and *The High House* depict the apocalyptic consequences of the climate change crisis because of the globally dominating anthropocentric attitude and the lack of the holistic and ecosophical relation between humans and the non-human world. Being climate activists, both Sylvia in Offill's *Weather* and Francesca in Greengrass's *High House* represent Naess's deep ecology supporters. They devote their lives to addressing people's conscience of their ethical responsibility towards the ecosystem. Although they belong to different settings, one in New York City and the other in an English region called Suffolk, and vary in their mode between hope and gloominess, both novels assert that the survival of humankind is connected to the survival of the environment. As a result, there must be a radical change in the global environmental policies (the obligation of change that Naess refers to).

In addition, the seriousness of the topic urged Offill and Greengrass to adopt certain structures. Offill's *Weather* is told through fragmented episodes and Greengrass's *High House* is characterized by its complicated structure and multiplicity of narrators. Such structures technically represent a prominent feature in the so-called 'Climate Change Fiction' and functionally exemplify the climate chaos that threatens the Planet. Another prominent feature in both novels is the setting or the place with all its peculiar details that warn of certain occurrence of a climate catastrophe. Offill's *Weather* occurs in New York City and depicts the impact of the American culture as well as political and social circumstances on the nation towards the ecosystem in general and the crisis of the greenhouse effect in specific. For *The High House*, it includes various settings, but the majority of actions occur in the High House, which stands as a mirror of the environmental changes that forebode devastating floods in the near future. Francesca, in turn, prepares it to be a refuge for the family in case horrific predictions come true.

A deep ecological analysis of both novels shows that the crisis of climate change is an outcome of the global-pervasive anthropocentric utilitarian

attitude, lack of a holistic relationship with the environment, indifference to the significance of biodiversity, overpopulation, and human destructive interference to the environmental system. These causes, for which Naess developed his theory and set his eight principles, are depicted ingeniously through the daily and family life of the protagonists in both novels. Lizzie is a mother who helps her son pack his backpack, a sister who assists her recovering-addict brother, a dog breeder who feeds and takes care of her dog, and a good American citizen who tours with Sylvia around the country to raise awareness concerning the global crisis of climate change. Although she knows through Sylvia's lectures that "the invisible horsemen galloping toward us", she never gives up helping her son complete his imagined world through the Minecraft game (Offill, 2020, p.11).

Notably, not all characters in *Weather* have such an ethical relationship with the environment or the holistic belief that their survival is fatefully related to the survival of the ecosystem. At the time that Sylvia and Lizzie are entirely sucked in such concerns, other characters have their own concerns under the political anxiety that dominated Donald Trump's regime, as well as the social problems. Sylvia helplessly expresses that to Lizzie that "she feels like she is in a car, trying to accelerate. Some people she works with are trying to get in the car. Some are throwing themselves in front of it to prevent her from leaving" (Offill, 2020, p.67). Such divergent attitudes among Offill's characters symbolically reflect the difference in awareness degree and perspectives among the peoples of the world towards the catastrophic consequences of climate change. Some nations, for example, have started to enact laws to reduce the problem of global warming and thus limit the destructive effects of such a crisis, while others are still controlled by capitalism and do not care about the crisis at all, or deal with it superficially. However, the seriousness of this problem does not stop at the borders of a particular country, but it is like a hurricane that comes to destroy everything.

It can be said that Offill's adoption of the intensive and fragmented structure in her novel was intentional to reflect the heterogeneous feelings towards the crisis. Togetherness should be the slogan of all nations to cope with such crisis because "everyone here has done everything to everyone else"(Offill, 2020, p.70). The crisis of climate change is the sin that everyone has committed against each other and against other creatures. At the very

beginning of the novel, Offill preludes to the devastating impact that humans have caused at the ecosystem when Henry tells Lizzie

a story about his NA meeting. A woman stood up and started ranting about antidepressants. What upset her most was that people were not disposing of them properly. They tested worms in the city sewers and found they contained high concentrations of Paxil and Prozac. When birds ate these worms, they stayed closer to home, made more elaborate nests, but appeared unmotivated to mate. (Offill, 2020, p. 9)

Such irrational behavior of disposing of antidepressants into water has caused serious damage to the ecological chain.

Actions then develop gradually to prepare the reader for the main topic of the novel and to prelude the cooperation between Sylvia and Lizzie in this regard. On her way home, Lizzie listens to Sylvia's new podcast that warns about "the invisible horsemen galloping toward us" (Offill, 2020, p.11). Sylvia's words are shocking enough to make Lizzie, unconsciously, "look out the window *and observes* something in the distance, limping toward the trees" (p.11; *italics added*). Preoccupied by Sylvia's words, Lizzie accepts Sylvia's offer to be her assistant to handle her podcast email inbox. Apparently, Lizzie accepts because of her feeling of gratitude to Sylvia that she once helped her to get that job as a librarian, but she may also accept to find an answer to all questions about how to survive this disaster. Remarkably, Lizzie's descriptions of the unfamiliar phenomenon she observes in nature, human mistreatment of the ecological system becomes obvious. For example, spring used to be the best season of the year and a symbol frequently used by poets and artists to refer to beauty and vitality. In contrast, the climate crisis has changed all signs of beauty associated with the spring: "It's the first day of spring, weird clouds, hazy sun," as Lizzie sorely describes (Offill, 2020, p.18).

Man erred when he arrogantly thought that the advances he had achieved in science and technology would guarantee his domination over the environment forever. Unfortunately, the future predicts "one day those machines are going to come and crush all of us" and "it'll just be like a big claw coming" (Offill, 2020, p.23). Such horrific predictions are uttered on more than one occasion in the novel. For example, when Sylvia invited a famous futurist to her lecture and asked him "what was coming next?", "he repeated his best-known prediction: Old people, in big cities, afraid of the

sky” (p.29). Offill depicts the impact of such depressing predictions on people that “everyone goes around with their heads down these days,” as Sylvia notices (p.55). Lizzie, like others, thinks of searching for another colder land to be saved with her family from the predicted dramatic change of temperature in New York by 2047. Unexpectedly, Sylvia asks her, “do you really think you can protect them? In 2047?” (Offill, 2020, p.63). Sylvia’s inquiry obviously reflects the inner panic that scientists and deep ecology supporters have because “everything is happening much faster than expected” (p.41). As a result, some people want to escape to Mars. Life in a big city like New York is no longer safe, the feeling that “[m]any of us subscribe to ... as our colleague Sherwood Rowland. He remarked to his wife one night after coming home: ‘[t]he work is going well, but it looks like it might be the end of the world,’” as Lizzie narrates (p. 41).

The problem with climate change is that its consequences are faster than expected; something that scientists and ecologists have warned against since last decades. Such predictions by the scientists in the past about the danger waiting for humanity in the future have become more frightening and threatening concerning the future of big cities like New York which is expected to “experience dramatic, life-altering temperatures by 2047” (Offill, 2020, p. 54). The present unfamiliar phenomena witnessed by our planet indicate the sincerity and logicity of those predictions. As the ecologists predict the extinction of many plant species, the present shows that “the leaves are nearly gone” and such prediction may come true one day (p.55). It seems that Offill attempts through her novel to accentuate that it has become difficult to underestimate these future warnings or consider them as mere speculation based on exaggeration.

In the same vein, Greengrass depicts through the life of Francesca how irrational practices against the environment forebode a bleak future. The holidays that Francesca spent with her family at the High House and the condition of the beach there bring to the reader a detailed picture of the devastating impact of humans on nature. This, in turn, explains the reason beyond Francesca’s gloomy vision that the Planet is coming to its end because of those people who “act as though it’s a myth to frighten them ... instead of the imminently coming end of our ... planet” (Greengrass, 2021, p.15). Obviously, the High House is more than a resort for the family during holidays because it functions as a bridge between a world oblivious to the

danger threatening human existence and a frightening future. Prepared as a refuge for the family in case the horrific expectations come true.

Notably, the location of the High House enables the reader to realize the scary changes in weather, which have resulted in rising of water level more than it was in the past. The water blockade of the house is no longer seasonal as it was but has become frequent and familiar in a way that raises fears about the occurrence of severe floods. Greengrass, further, enables the reader to see the dangerous impact of climate change through “the early springs and too-long summers, the sudden, unpredictable winters that came from nowhere and brought floods” (Greengrass, 2021, p.24).

To deepen the message of her novel, Greengrass also leads the reader from the horrific changes occurring at the regional level to the global one by shedding light on the environmental disasters caused in some regions of the world, resulting in displacement of thousands of people and extinction of the entire biological worlds, as Caro narrates:

One afternoon, while Pauly had his nap, father and Francesca and I sat on the living-room sofa and watched an island in the mid-Pacific sink. We saw the storm arrive, the cameras picking up the rain, the swelling wind ... Next morning ... there was nothing now but bare earth ... The people who had lived there were now in temporary shelters ... a thousand miles away from where, a week earlier, they had been at home. (Greengrass, 2021, pp.25 -26)

The readers hardly catch their breath from the tragic fate of that island to find themselves informed by other disasters: “in Bangladesh [where] rains had failed. In Japan, there were floods. ... Fires raged through the Centre of Australia, and in parts of China the summer was now so hot and humid that it was incompatible with life” (Greengrass, 2021, pp. 34-5). Back to England, readers face continuity of the deteriorating conditions of the ecological system where “the waters, refusing to recede, had made a new fen, covering homes and fields, roads, schools, hills rising from it like islands. In York, the river had burst its banks and the city center was gone, walls which had stood for nearly two millennia washed halfway down to Hull” (p.41). Francesca views these signs as “a final warning and if we fail to do *something*, if we fail to act, the consequences will surpass anything we have previously seen, and we will have missed our chance” (p.24; *italics added*). Masterly, Greengrass conveys her message through Francesca’s words that humans have to act quickly and seriously before it is too late.

Grandy is another character that Greengrass uses to intensify the horrific depiction of the environmental changes. Grandy, Sally's grandfather, is an old man who devotes his life to taking care of his granddaughter, Sally (or Sal). His conversations with Francesca reflect his keen observation of environmental changes across the years. In the past, he used to swim in the river "when the weather was fine [and] the water was so clear that you could see the bottom through it" (Greengrass, 2021, p. 68). Unfortunately, climate change has replaced such beauty of nature and ruined human and non-human life due to the frequent attack of floods across the last few years.

The climate change crisis, with its related catastrophic consequences, asserted that "the sea wouldn't stop gnawing at the place until there was nothing left of it, or at the very least that they would have become resigned to their eventual displacement" (Greengrass, 2021, p. 102). This tragic replacement in the ecological system is reflected in another setting when Caro takes Pauly into the forest to play, she sorrowfully narrates:

in the long grass of a deer park we searched for grasshoppers and there were none. The hum of bees was missing. The birds were quiet. I took Pauly to a place I remembered going to with father, once, where there was a greengage tree – but now the tree was bare, its branches brittle, its leaves a brown carpet across the dry ground. (p.46)

Nature has become unable to restore its primitive balance and ruin dominates its system.

On another occasion, while talking to Sally, Grandy asserts his belief in Francesca's predictions; a matter that increases his fear day after another that

Next time *the flood* will not be the same. The sea is rising. The dunes are shrinking. When the next big flood comes, it won't go down again. We were left with less than we had, last time, but it was not nothing, and there were other places to go for anyone lucky enough – but I think that when next time comes there will be no coming back, and not much leaving, either. (Greengrass, 2021, p.116)

Symbolically, Offill and Greengrass' portrayals of the difference in people's attitude towards the catastrophic consequences of the climate change represent the different global attitudes of nations towards the disaster. At the time that some nations enact laws to reduce the destructive effects of climate change, others think in a capitalist manner. Unfortunately, the danger of this crisis does not stop at the borders of a particular country; it is like a hurricane that comes to destroy everything. Survival of humanity depends, therefore,

on reshaping the relationship with the environment from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism, as Naess calls for through his deep ecology. This can be done through the sincere efforts of what Naess calls ‘deep ecology supporters’. Characters like Sylvia and Lizzie in *Weather* and Francesca in *The High House* represent Naess’s deep ecology supporters who struggle to save humanity, asserting the holistic relationship between humankind and the environment, and that peoples’ survival and the survival of the ecosystem are correlated. Togetherness, faith/spiritual serenity, resilience and sustainability, and optimism are depicted as survival methods in both novels, as well.

As for togetherness (i.e., unity), it is a significant step for survival at all levels. In *Weather*, Sylvia’s persistent activities are fueled by the need for such togetherness to transcend the crisis peacefully. In one of her lectures, for example, she confirms that the difference between a good man and a monster appears during times of crisis: “Suppose you go with some friends to the park to have a picnic. This act is, of course, morally neutral, but if you witness a group of children drowning in the lake and you continue to eat and chat, you have become monstrous” (Offill, 2020, p.16). You cannot be a good person if you think of yourself only, especially if selfishness and thinking about self-interest have been the main reasons for the disaster. At the global level, the growth of Capitalism and desire of the advanced countries to dominate at the expense of other countries have caused such ecological ruin. Ironically, advanced technology did not protect such capitalist countries from the climate change crisis because the crisis has an increasingly devastating impact on the entire globe, and the only hope is then in the global togetherness (i.e., cooperation and unity).

Likewise, Francesca asserts through her conferences, summits, and campaigns that the only way to survive is to take action as there is no time either for rhetorical speeches or grandiose slogans, because “floods will come. There’s no doubt on that score. All we can do is protect what might be saved. It’s no good waiting for the government to intervene” (Greengrass, 2021, p.94). All disasters, witnessed by various parts of the globe, emphasize the fact that the ecological system will never be able to restore its primitive balance and humans have to give up their arrogant fantasy that things can be compensated or be back again. Thus, everybody has to abandon passivity and neutrality because “neutrality has become a fantasy. The time for it is past” (p.28). These words by Francesca infer the

importance of collective efforts to save what can be saved. Working together has become inescapable in light of the deteriorating conditions of the ecological system.

At the familial level, togetherness enables characters in both novels to transcend their traumatic feelings. In *Weather*, for Lizzie to be always together with her brother Henry is very important in the life of both. She is always there to support him to be fully recovered from addiction, to help him take care of his infant daughter and be a good father, and to assist him with ideas in his work. Such a sense of brother-sister togetherness, in turn, helps Lizzie vent her worries and endure many troubles in her life. Being together enables both of them to overcome weaknesses. Similarly, the sense of togetherness functions as a survival technique in *The High House*. This case of togetherness is portrayed in various forms: between Caro and Pauly, generational togetherness between Grandy and Sally, and then all of them together at the High House which represents a communal togetherness.

As for Caro and Pauly, being together with her younger brother helps Caro transcend the traumatic loss of her father and Francesca, and to acclimatize to the catastrophic results of climate change. Like the relationship between Lizzie and her brother Henry in *Weather*, Caro-Pauly relationship in *The High House* is reciprocal. The bond between them “was as simple as a question and its answer” (Greengrass, 2021, p.35). Apparently, he is a child who needs Caro’s care, but, in fact, it is Caro who is in bad need for his presence in her life, as she admits: “It is I who need him, now. I need his solidity and his certainty” (p. 36). After the death of her father and Francesca, life seems meaningless for Caro, but it is the existence of Pauly in her life that ignites her desire to survive because there is someone who needs her in this life “and to be needed is to be held in place” (Greengrass, 2021, p.36).

In addition, this sense of togetherness between Caro and Pauly is genuinely utilized by Greengrass to present two parallel and contradictory worlds. In the outside world, Caro “would catch sight of the front page of a newspaper and be surprised by photographs of people knee-deep in mud, of children lying in rows on mattresses, their eyes huge in their skulls, and I would feel a sudden sickening terror” (Greengrass, 2021, p.38). In contrast, when Caro is with her brother in the inside world, she feels that she is safe and has the

power to face any danger. When this integrated relationship between Caro and Pauly is contemplated, it becomes obvious that Greengrass presents the appropriate conditions for its success. Caro is responsible for Pauly for a long time enough before the death of her father and her stepmother Francesca. The peculiarity of Francesca's work as a climate activist forces her to be away from the house and her infant Pauly for long hours and sometimes for days due to her tours. At first, the husband was there to take care of the children, even partially due to his work at the university, but later he decides to accompany his wife until they both die in the Florida flood. After this traumatic loss of her father and Francesca, life has become meaningless for Caro, but she has to pursue her struggle because there is still someone who exists with and for her (i.e. Pauly).

Similarly, Grandy and Sally have the same reciprocal role in each other's life. Grandy devotes his life to keeping his granddaughter safe and happy. As Caro's father was the source of happiness and an advisor in her life, Grandy plays the same role in Sally's life. He taught her swimming when she was a child and brought her a laptop when she joined the secondary school despite of his low economic potentials. When she joined the university, he used to send her letters to make sure that she was safe. Through his letters to Sally, Greengrass depicts a lively image of the consequent devastating changes that Grandy notices:

I walked along the dunes today ... and I see that in many places the grass is thin The tides are getting higher. ... The new season's garlic is starting to sprout, which is a little before expected and I am afraid that with this mild weather ... at least half of it will rot. (Greengrass, 2021, p.87)

Due to the sudden deterioration of Grandy's health that leaves him unable to move without wheelchair, Francesca calls Sally to come back as her Grandy has become in bad need of her help. The character of Grandy can be described, then, as a symbolic character of nature or the ecological system. A few decades ago, Grandy was a powerful man with a great ability to plant, catch fish, fix the roof of his cottage, and deal with any emergent conditions. He is now a weak old man who needs help because of the deterioration of his health. Like Grandy, the ecological system, centuries ago, was powerful and balanced. It had a great ability to renew its sources and to deal with any changes. Unfortunately, humans' irrational and greed behavior has turned the natural forces into a miserable condition until the ecological system became

unable to restore its primitive power or balance. It has become in bad need of humans' help.

The second significant mechanism for survival is faith or spiritual serenity. In Offill's *Weather*, spiritual serenity is associated with the concept of togetherness as exemplified through Lizzie's attendance at religious services as well as meditation courses. Attending such religious services and courses is not only to feel inner peace but also to gain spiritual strength through such a feeling of togetherness. Human beings must return to the belief that Allah, The Almighty, created them and favored them over all other creatures to populate the earth, not to destroy it. Offill masterly expresses this idea in her epigraph from the "NOTES FROM A TOWN MEETING IN MILFORD, CONNECTICUT, 1640": "*Voted, that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; voted, that the earth is given to the Saints; voted, that we are the Saints*" (Offill, 2020, p. 6). Only true believers know that the preservation of the planet is a commitment and its destruction is a betrayal. Sylvia in *Weather* and Francesca in *The High House* are examples of these "saints". Both characters devote their life to raising people's awareness concerning the crisis to save the Planet. They believe that God created everything in a precise system, and thus humankind has to be thankful for His blessings by preserving this system.

Resilience and sustainability of resources have become obligatory for survival. The changing environmental conditions enforce humans to adopt sustainable methods by finding alternatives for the depleted resources and sustaining the existing ones. This is exemplified in Greengrass's *High House* when Francesca starts to prepare the High House as a refuge for the family in case horrific predictions come true. It has a mill to generate electricity, a tide pool, a garden for vegetables and fruits, a barn prepared to store food supplies, and a coop for hens. She tries to find alternatives to satisfy family needs in case of emergent circumstances. Grandy adopts the same way of thinking. He is a man who can do everything and knows a lot about everything. When Caro and Pauly came to stay with him and Sal after the death of their parents, he starts to instruct all of them how to plant, store food supplies, and enjoy being together. Despite the monotony of life, forced residence in a place for an indefinite period, and the inability to imagine what the future holds, staying together in this space consolidates them psychologically to pursue her mission. Consisting of people with different

backgrounds and different ages, the High House symbolically represents the Planet. These four people realized that in order to survive, they have to be resilient to any conditions, to sustain what they have even if they have very limited supplies, and, most importantly, enjoy life together. Hope and unity are, and will always be, the lifeline in any catastrophe.

The fourth technique for survival is optimism. Maintaining optimism intermingles with the aforementioned survival methods. It is inspired by deep faith, consolidated by being together with others, and empowers individuals to achieve resilience and sustainability. Notably, children are the inspiring word for optimism in both novels. At the time that Lizzie in *Weather* feels panic because of the shocking facts about climate change, she still encourages her son to complete his imagined world and still helps him pack his backpack. Likewise, it is Pauly's birth in *The High House* that motivates Francesca to pursue her mission. Although she did not want to have a baby in this unsafe world, now she has "to protect what she had found to love" (Greengrass, 2021, p. 23). Pauly's birth stands as the spark of hope that comes from gloominess and uncertainty about the future of the Planet. Having Pauly in the family presents a "space between two futures, fitting our whole lives into the gap between fear and certainty," as Caro describes (Greengrass, 2021, p. 23). Humankind cannot survive without hope. If some trees lose their leaves, "there are still a few leaves on others" (Offill, 2020, p.55). Thus, Sylvia works persistently to raise public awareness of the crisis but, at the same time, her lectures and articles inspire hope. Maintaining hope for Sylvia is obligatory as she always prescribes for people through her "obligatory note of hope" (p. 37). In spite of all horrific predictions that "the world continues to end", Sylvia continues "water[ing] her garden" (p.95). Even if the world goes to an end, the environmentalist commitment has to continue until such an end.

5. Conclusion

Man erred when he perceived the environment as a mere supplier to satisfy his needs. Through the ever-increasing population, excessive consumption of environmental resources and fuel-based inventions, humankind caused a radical change to the balance of the ecosystem, ignoring the right of non-human organisms to survive. These irrational practices have resulted in the depletion of resources, deforestation, pollution, fatal pandemics, increasing emission of fatal gases and the related catastrophe of climate change. Thus,

surviving the ecosystem has become everybody's inescapable responsibility. Admittedly, theorists and literary writers adopt this environmental commitment across ages. Depicting the eternal relationship between man and nature dates to the past centuries in works by Homer, Wordsworth, Thoreau, and Carson, just to name a few. The more destructive human impact on the ecosystem, the greater is the entanglement of the environmental crises.

Thus, the development of an official literary theory based on the integration of all disciplines became a necessity. The result was the rise of the Ecocriticism movement in the 1970s until it has, later, become a formal theory at the hand of Cheryll Glotfelty. Ecocriticism is marked by diversity of disciplines and continuity of its development. Arne Naess's theory of deep ecology exemplifies such development. Naess developed his theory to reconstruct the human-nature relationship on a holistic and ecosophical bases. Thus, the theory is built upon certain principles that tend to admit the inherent value of other organisms as partners on the Planet, respect the 'diversity' of the ecosystem, relate human interference only to 'vital needs', assert the balance between population growth and ability of the environmental resources, and call for 'policy changes' and obligatory actions to preserve the ecosystem. In the same vein, the inseparable relationship between literature and life necessitated development of a certain literary genre that addresses the climate change crisis. The result was the Climate Change Fiction, which is mainly devoted to raising awareness of the globe about the apocalyptic consequences of the climate change crisis.

As noted through the analysis of Jenny Offill's *Weather* and Jessie Greengrass's *The High House*, both novels present alarmist calls about the devastating consequences of climate change. Offill and Greengrass attempt to warn the world of the danger our planet is exposed to, but their messages vary between hope and desperation. Offill presents a pre-apocalyptic scenario to raise awareness that there is a global crisis and serious actions are obligatory. However, her work, *Weather*, still provides the reader with a glimpse of hope that through sincere collective efforts, the world can, at least, reduce the speed of the rapid impactful consequences caused by the crisis. Greengrass adopts a gloomy mode that suits the post-apocalyptic scenario she portrays. It seems that this desperate mode is employed to address the global consciousness and arise feelings of regret of the pathetic conditions suffered by the ecological system because of human irresponsible

practices. *The High House* can be described, then, as a blameful narrative directed to the supposed to be a wise master of the planet.

However, Greengrass's novel does not lack the spark of hope that Offill presents. Both novels present a deep ecological call to rebuild our relationship with the non-human world. The climate change crisis is not a temporal storm in a cup of tea, but a spark from a crater of volcano; either the world takes it seriously or the volcano will swallow up the so-called human race. Unity, faith, resilience, and optimism are the lifeline for survival. Concisely, *Weather* and *The High House* are literary attempts devoted to reshaping human-nature relationship from a master-supplier relationship to a friend of nature. Both assert that hope still sparks out of gloominess, so it is the time to be, again, the creature that Allah, The Almighty, has honored and preferred to all other creatures.

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