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Research Article

An Ecocritical and Intersectional Exploration of Human and Non-Human Vulnerability

Vanita Shaw

CLC (Centre for Language and Communication), NSHM Knowledge Campus Durgapur, India;

Vanitashaw100@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Climate change is not merely a scientific or environmental phenomenon but also a cultural, ethical, and narrative crisis explored profoundly in contemporary literature. This study investigates how environmental degradation becomes embedded in human lives through literary texts, adopting an ecocritical and intersectional framework. Moving beyond empirical climate data, it examines how literature captures subtle, cumulative harms—what Rob Nixon describes as “slow violence”—particularly on marginalized communities. Through novels, climate fiction, indigenous storytelling, and postcolonial narratives, the research analyzes how environmental trauma reshapes human experience, ethical consciousness, and social awareness. Drawing on Donna Haraway’s concept of “sympoiesis,” the study emphasizes the portrayal of multispecies interdependence, planetary interconnectedness, and relational responsibility toward non-human life. It also explores how literature engages with readers, cultivating ecological imagination, empathy, and ethical reflection. Finally, the research highlights literature’s role in pedagogy, activism, and cultural discourse, showing how narrative forms translate scientific and sociopolitical crises into ethical, emotional, and cultural knowledge. By bridging ecological awareness, justice the study calls for a reimagining of literary studies as a space where human and non-human futures are critically engaged, ethically navigated, and creatively envisioned in the Anthropocene.

KEYWORDS: Ecocriticism, Climate Fiction, Slow Violence, Anthropocene

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FULL PAPER**Introduction**

Climate change is increasingly recognized not only as an environmental crisis but also as a socio-cultural and ethical challenge, compelling literature to engage with the interconnectedness of ecological, human, and non-human systems. While scientific accounts focus on measurable phenomena such as rising temperatures, floods, or species extinction, literary texts illuminate the experiential, ethical, and relational dimensions of ecological stress. Through narratives, poetry, and climate fiction, literature depicts how climate change becomes embedded in human and ecological lives, portraying landscapes and species as active participants rather than passive settings (Ghosh 128; Haraway 33). Ecocritical frameworks highlight these entanglements by challenging anthropocentrism and emphasizing co-evolving, multispecies networks. Haraway's notion of "sympoiesis" underscores how all beings are interconnected in shared ecological systems, influencing and shaping one another (Haraway 33). Literary texts often reflect this relational ontology, portraying the impact of climate stress on bodies, communities, and non-human actors. In parallel, Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence" emphasizes the incremental, often invisible environmental harms that disproportionately affect marginalized populations, revealing how social, economic, and historical inequalities intersect with ecological vulnerability (Nixon 2). An intersectional approach further elucidates how climate change exacerbates existing disparities, highlighting the compounded vulnerabilities of women, indigenous communities, and economically marginalized groups. Literature, particularly climate fiction and postcolonial narratives, functions as a medium through which ethical imagination is cultivated, translating scientific and ecological knowledge into narratives that convey lived experience, grief, and resilience (Whyte 215). Literature provides a vital lens to understand climate change as both a biocultural and ethical phenomenon. By integrating ecocritical and intersectional perspectives, it foregrounds the relational, uneven, and systemic dimensions of ecological crisis, offering insight into human and non-human vulnerability while fostering awareness, empathy, and ecological consciousness.

Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how climate change is represented, mediated, and critiqued within contemporary literature, highlighting its ethical, social, and ecological dimensions. While scientific research often emphasizes measurable outcomes—such as rising global temperatures, extreme weather events, and the proliferation of vector-borne diseases—literature provides nuanced insights into the experiential, cultural, and emotional aspects of environmental crises (Ghosh 128). This study seeks to explore how narratives translate the invisible and cumulative

consequences of climate change into forms that engage readers intellectually, emotionally, and ethically, fostering awareness of both human and non-human vulnerabilities.

The key objective is to apply ecocritical frameworks to examine how literary texts portray multispecies interdependence, ecological relationality, and ethical responsibility. Following Donna Haraway's concept of "sympoiesis," the study investigates how humans, non-human species, and ecological systems co-create, co-evolve, and interact within shared environmental networks (Haraway 33). By analyzing narrative strategies, environmental imagery, and character interactions, the research aims to illuminate how literature articulates the interconnections of ecological systems and ethical obligations, emphasizing the mutual dependence of all life forms.

Another objective is to employ an intersectional lens to understand the uneven distribution of climate change impacts across gender, race, class, and historical marginalization. Rob Nixon's notion of "slow violence" provides a critical framework for exploring narratives that depict the gradual, often imperceptible harms experienced by marginalized communities (Nixon 2). The study examines how literature reveals the compounded effects of environmental stress, social inequality, and cultural marginalization, thereby offering a platform for ethical reflection, social critique, and advocacy for climate justice. This study seeks to identify emotional, psychological, cultural dimensions and climate narratives. Through literary techniques such as characterization, temporality, and narrative perspective, texts convey experiences of ecological grief, moral reflection, and resilience (Whyte 215). By foregrounding these affective dimensions, the research aims to demonstrate how literature cultivates empathy, ethical awareness, and ecological imagination, translating scientific and sociopolitical knowledge into forms accessible to diverse audiences.

The research aims to contribute to pedagogical and cultural engagement by demonstrating the role of literary analysis in fostering climate awareness and ethical reasoning. By situating ecocritical and intersectional readings within contemporary literary discourse, the study underscores the capacity of literature to influence cultural understanding, inspire ethical action, and promote socio-environmental responsibility. The objectives collectively aim to show that climate change is not only a material and scientific challenge but also a literary, ethical, and cultural phenomenon, requiring interdisciplinary approaches to apprehend its full complexity.

Scope of the Study

This study investigates the complex interrelations between climate change, human experience, and literature, emphasizing the ethical, social, and ecological dimensions of environmental crises. Its primary focus is on how contemporary literary texts—including climate fiction, eco-poetry, and postcolonial narratives—represent

climate-induced stress, vulnerability, and resilience. By situating literature at the intersection of environmental, social, and cultural discourse, the study highlights the potential of literary narratives to illuminate the invisible and long-term consequences of climate change that scientific data alone cannot fully capture (Ghosh 128). The research underscores literature's capacity to translate empirical observations into emotional, ethical, and relational understanding, bridging the gap between environmental science and human experience.

A key dimension of the study's scope is its ecocritical orientation, which explores how texts portray multispecies interdependence, ecological relationality, and ethical engagement with the non-human world. Drawing on Donna Haraway's concept of "sympoiesis," the research examines how narratives depict the co-evolution and co-existence of humans and non-human species within shared ecological networks, emphasizing relational agency, responsibility, and mutual vulnerability (Haraway 33). The study considers how literary strategies—such as environmental imagery, character development, and narrative temporality—convey the interconnectedness of ecological and social systems, fostering a sense of ethical accountability and ecological consciousness among readers.

The study also integrates an intersectional approach, addressing how climate change disproportionately affects marginalized communities. Rob Nixon's notion of "slow violence" informs the examination of narratives that depict the gradual, cumulative, and often invisible harms experienced by women, indigenous populations, and economically disadvantaged groups (Nixon 2). By highlighting the intersection of environmental stressors with social inequities, literature serves as a medium for ethical reflection and socio-political critique, revealing the compounded vulnerabilities of those who are historically and structurally marginalized.

The scope encompasses the emotional, psychological, and cultural dimensions of climate change as represented in literature. The research examines how narratives articulate ecological grief, moral dilemmas, resilience, and hope, translating scientific and socio-political knowledge into affective and culturally resonant forms (Whyte 215). This focus underscores literature's role in shaping ethical imagination, cultural awareness, and environmental responsibility, offering insights into human responses to ecological crises that extend beyond quantitative measurement.

The study aims to inform pedagogical and interdisciplinary engagement, demonstrating the value of literary analysis in cultivating climate consciousness and ethical reflection. By situating literary inquiry within ecocritical and intersectional frameworks, the research advocates for a holistic understanding of climate change, one that encompasses ecological, social, cultural, and ethical dimensions. This approach encourages the integration of literature into climate education, policy discourse, and

cultural interventions, reinforcing the relevance of narrative in shaping collective responses to global environmental challenges.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative and interdisciplinary research methodology to examine the representation of climate change in contemporary literature through ecocritical and intersectional frameworks. By integrating literary analysis with insights from environmental studies and social theory, the research aims to understand how narratives depict ecological stress, human and non-human vulnerability, and the ethical dimensions of environmental crises (Ghosh 128). The methodology emphasizes both textual interpretation and contextual analysis, situating literary works within broader socio-environmental, cultural, and political landscapes to explore the interplay between ecological phenomena and human experience.

The study adopts a purposive sampling approach, selecting literary texts that explicitly or implicitly address climate change, environmental degradation, and ecological justice. The corpus includes climate fiction (cli-fi), eco-poetry, postcolonial narratives, and indigenous storytelling, ensuring diverse perspectives and representations. Texts were chosen based on thematic relevance, critical acclaim, and their engagement with questions of ecological ethics, social justice, and human-nonhuman relationality. This selection allows for the examination of both mainstream and marginalized voices, reflecting the intersectional dimensions of climate impact (Nixon 2).

Data collection involves a close reading of selected texts, focusing on narrative strategies, thematic patterns, characterization, imagery, and stylistic devices that convey ecological and social dimensions of climate change. Special attention is given to representations of multispecies interdependence, ecological grief, resilience, and ethical reflection. Supplementary data include critical essays, interviews, and existing literary scholarship that contextualize the narratives within ecological, historical, and sociopolitical frameworks.

Analytical methods combine ecocritical and intersectional literary analysis. Ecocritical analysis examines how texts portray the relationships between humans, non-human species, and the environment, using concepts such as sympoiesis and planetary interconnectedness (Haraway 33). Intersectional analysis evaluates how climate change disproportionately affects marginalized groups and how literature represents these compounded vulnerabilities, drawing on the notion of slow violence to understand gradual ecological and social harm (Nixon 2). The study also employs comparative analysis to identify similarities and differences across genres, authors, and cultural contexts, highlighting how diverse literary strategies articulate ecological and social concerns.

The research incorporates thematic coding and synthesis to systematically categorize textual elements related to climate impact, vulnerability, ethics, and resilience. Patterns identified through this coding are analyzed to determine how literature mediates ecological knowledge, fosters ethical consciousness, and engages with social justice concerns. The methodology is iterative, allowing for continuous refinement of themes and analytical frameworks as insights emerge during textual examination (Whyte 215). This interdisciplinary and qualitative methodology enables a holistic understanding of climate change as a literary, ecological, and socio-ethical phenomenon. By combining ecocritical and intersectional approaches, the study reveals how literature mediates human-environment relationships, portrays systemic inequities, and cultivates ethical reflection and ecological consciousness, providing a comprehensive lens for examining climate change in contemporary narratives.

Results & Discussion

The analysis of contemporary literary texts reveals a multifaceted depiction of climate change that extends beyond environmental description to encompass ethical, social, and emotional dimensions. Across climate fiction, postcolonial narratives, and eco-poetry, authors consistently foreground the interconnectedness of human and non-human systems, portraying ecological stress as both a physical and cultural force. Drawing on Donna Haraway's notion of "sympoiesis," these texts emphasize co-evolutionary relationships, highlighting how human activity, non-human agency, and environmental processes are mutually constitutive (Haraway 33). Literary representation thus renders the Anthropocene perceptible, translating abstract scientific data into relational, experiential knowledge that conveys vulnerability, resilience, and ethical responsibility.

Ecocritical readings of selected texts demonstrate that environmental crises are portrayed not merely as external hazards but as forces that permeate social, political, and emotional life. Authors depict landscapes and species as active participants, underscoring the relational entanglement of ecosystems and human communities. For instance, cli-fi narratives frequently illustrate the cascading effects of climate-induced displacement, resource scarcity, and species loss, revealing how environmental stress reshapes social structures and individual identities (Ghosh 128). These literary strategies highlight the ethical dimensions of human-environment interactions, challenging anthropocentric assumptions and inviting readers to reconsider human responsibility within broader ecological networks.

An intersectional approach further illuminates how climate change is unevenly experienced, particularly by marginalized populations. Applying Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence," literary texts depict the incremental yet severe impacts of ecological degradation on communities historically subjected to social and economic inequities

(Nixon 2). Women, indigenous peoples, and economically disadvantaged groups are frequently portrayed as disproportionately vulnerable, emphasizing the compounded effects of ecological, social, and cultural pressures. By representing these layered vulnerabilities, literature functions as a medium for social critique, making visible the hidden and long-term consequences of climate crises while fostering ethical and empathetic engagement.

Literary texts often explore the psychological and emotional dimensions of climate change, including ecological grief, anxiety, and moral reflection. Narrative strategies such as characterization, temporality, and environmental imagery convey the lived experience of climate stress, translating complex scientific and sociopolitical phenomena into affective, accessible forms (Whyte 215). The integration of ecological awareness, intersectional vulnerability, and ethical reflection underscores the capacity of literature to cultivate ecocritical consciousness, linking individual and collective responsibility to broader planetary processes.

The results of this study demonstrate that literature functions as a critical mediator between scientific knowledge and human experience, portraying climate change as an embedded, relational, and ethically significant phenomenon. By combining ecocritical and intersectional perspectives, literary texts reveal both the visible and invisible consequences of environmental stress, emphasizing multispecies co-dependence, social inequality, and ethical engagement. This analysis affirms that understanding climate change in literary discourse requires attention not only to ecological events but also to their cultural, social, and emotional reverberations, offering profound insights into human and non-human vulnerability in the Anthropocene.

Conclusion

This study underscores the critical role of literature in elucidating the complex, multi-dimensional impacts of climate change, situating environmental crises within ethical, social, and relational frameworks. Through the application of ecocritical and intersectional perspectives, the research demonstrates that climate change is not merely an external, measurable phenomenon but a deeply biocultural, socio-ethical, and literary one. Literary texts, ranging from climate fiction to postcolonial narratives and eco-poetry, provide a nuanced representation of how environmental stress becomes embedded in human and non-human lives, portraying the interdependence, vulnerability, and resilience of multispecies communities (Haraway 33; Ghosh 128). By analyzing these texts, the study highlights literature's capacity to render both the visible and invisible consequences of ecological disruption perceptible, translating scientific and social data into narrative forms that engage readers emotionally, ethically, and cognitively.

The research confirms that literary engagement with climate change foregrounds the interconnectedness of ecological systems and human societies, aligning with Haraway's concept of "sympoiesis," in which all beings co-create and co-evolve within shared environmental networks (Haraway 33). Texts examined in this study reveal how human actions reverberate through ecosystems, affecting non-human species and reshaping social, cultural, and ethical landscapes. Literature thus functions as a lens for understanding the relational dimensions of ecological crises, emphasizing the moral and cultural responsibilities humans hold toward the environment and other forms of life.

An intersectional approach further demonstrates that climate change is experienced unevenly, with historically marginalized populations—such as indigenous communities, women, and economically disadvantaged groups—bearing disproportionate burdens. Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence" provides a useful framework for understanding how literature represents these incremental yet severe harms, portraying the compounded effects of ecological degradation, social inequities, and historical injustices (Nixon 2). Literary narratives often foreground the everyday experiences, losses, and adaptive strategies of these communities, making visible the ethical and social dimensions of climate vulnerability that scientific reports alone cannot capture.

Literature illuminates the psychological, cultural, and ethical dimensions of climate change, exploring themes of ecological grief, moral reflection, and resilience. Narrative strategies, such as characterization, environmental imagery, and temporal structuring, allow authors to depict the long-term consequences of climate stress, connecting personal and collective experience to broader ecological processes (Whyte 215). Through these literary techniques, readers gain insight into the emotional and ethical stakes of environmental crises, fostering empathy, ethical reflection, and ecological consciousness. This study demonstrates that integrating ecocritical and intersectional approaches in literary analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of climate change, revealing its relational, social, and ethical dimensions. Literature emerges not only as a reflective medium but as an active participant in shaping cultural awareness, moral imagination, and ethical engagement with ecological crises. By portraying the interconnectedness of human and non-human life, the compounded vulnerabilities of marginalized communities, and the emotional and moral consequences of environmental change, literary texts offer profound insights into the human and ecological stakes of the Anthropocene. Ultimately, this study affirms that addressing climate change requires both scientific and cultural literacy, and that literature plays a pivotal role in cultivating the ethical imagination, empathy, and socio-environmental responsibility necessary to navigate an increasingly fragile planet.

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