

وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي

MINISTRE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPERIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE

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جامعة مولود معمري تيزي-وزو
كلية الآداب و اللغات
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master in English**

Field: Foreign Languages

Specialty: Literature and Interdisciplinary Approaches

Title

*An Eco-critical Reading of Eric Barnes's The
City Where We Once Lived (2018)*

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Academic Year: 2022-2023

Acknowledgements

We are truly grateful to Allah for his guidance and blessings that have been crucial in the completion of our dissertation. We would like to express our deepest debt of gratitude to our supervisor Doctor Sarah CHABANE CHAOUCH for her exceptional guidance, support and patience throughout this dissertation journey. Her expertise and dedication have been invaluable in shaping this research. We want also to thank her for suggesting the subject. Without her constant help and advice, this dissertation would not have been accomplished. Besides, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the board of examiners for evaluating and examining this research.

Dedications

I dedicate this work to my lovely family, who has always encouraged and believed in me.

To my amazing fiancé who has been by my side. His love, encouragement and support have been the driving force behind my success.

Amel TALBI

I would like to dedicate this work to my dear family; whose unwavering presence and encouragement have fuelled my determination to complete this dissertation.

To a very special person Mr Mimeche who supported me from the early beginning. You are my source of inspiration.

To all my dear friends especially Amel.

Dalila ZIOUI

Abstract:

This dissertation investigates the abuse of nature, climate change fiction, revenge of nature and the representation of refugees in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018). This study aims first to explore the relationship between humans and nature in the novel. It scrutinizes how man's abuse of nature brought about a post apocalyptic world. The dissertation discusses the abuse of nature, climate change fiction, revenge of nature and the representation of refugees in the above mentioned novel by applying ecocriticism. It relies on some theorists and their concepts; it relies on Cheryll Glotfelty, Stephen R. Kellert and Ladelle McWorther's definition of ecocriticism. It also focuses on Adam Trexler's *Anthropocene Fictions: the Novel in a Time of Climate Change* (2015), Gregers Andersen's *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis: A New Perspective On Life in the Anthropocene* (2020) and Antonia Menhert's *Climate Change Fictions: Representations of Global Warming in American Literature* (2016). Our investigation of the issue under study has led us to some findings. Humans debase and exploit nature through activities like pollution, use of chemicals, petroleum plants, smokestacks, pipes, storage pools and different substances that have a negative impact on the world and country. These actions have caused the rise of climate change in different parts of the world as USA; the novel depicts a rise in sea levels, changes in precipitation patterns which cause heavy rainfall and cold weather. Besides, we have noticed that nature is described as an active agent that avenges itself on society through powerful natural disasters such as storms, floods and tornadoes by actively shaping their social lives and destinies. It has a negative impact on the protagonist and citizens lives since it causes the alienation of characters, rise of violence and the total absence of law to restrict people. These events push the characters in the novel to feel insecure because there is no power to insure their own protection. Consequently, we have found that natural disasters oblige people to become refugees in order to seek safety, stability, and the opportunity to rebuild their lives in the surrounding countries.

Key words: abuse, ecocriticism, refugees, revenge of nature, novel.

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I. General Introduction

In American literature the representation of the relationship between humans and nature began to take shape during the romantic period. Writers like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau emphasized the importance of nature and its connection to human spirituality and individualism. They celebrated the beauty of the natural world and encouraged a harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. Because of the rise of industrialization, people's viewpoints have changed. Therefore, they started to abuse the natural world without taking into consideration the negative consequences of their actions. Climate change is one of the outcomes that humans cannot solve; it includes global warming and natural disasters. More importantly, climate change affects humans' lives since they can become refugees owing to the rise of severe natural disasters. Several American contemporary writers describe these topics in their literary works. This study examines Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* from an ecocritical perspective.

This dissertation attempts to investigate ecocriticism in Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018). In his novel, Barnes portrays the impact of human actions on the environment. Hence, this study discusses the abuse of nature and its impact on the world since it causes the apocalypse. It analyzes human abusive actions since they use massive chemicals, petroleum plants, smokestacks, pipes, storage pools and substances that harm the natural world, disrupt the balance of biodiversity and brings about climate change. More significantly, this dissertation delves into the portrayal of the degradation of nature because the remaining citizens live in a deserted city. Therefore, Barnes depicts to what extent humans can harm nature in different ways. Moreover, this research explores the revenge of nature on human actions through powerful natural disasters such as storms, floods and tornadoes. As a result, this study demonstrates that nature is an active agent that has the intention to abuse society through

affecting social life. Furthermore, it aims to inspect the rise of refugees because of climate change. To analyze these concepts, we intend to rely on some theorists. In order to define ecocriticism, we depend on Cheryll Glotfelty, Stephen R. Kellert and Ladelle McWorther. We also depend on Adam Trexler's *Anthropocene Fictions: the Novel in a Time of Climate Change* (2015), Gregers Andersen's *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis: A New Perspective On Life in the Anthropocene* (2020) and Antonia Menhert's *Climate Change Fictions: Representations of Global Warming in American Literature* (2016).

The events of *The City Where We Once Lived* are set in the North End. From the novel, humans live in a post apocalyptic world. Post apocalyptic fiction is a genre that delves into the consequences of a catastrophic event. It presents a devastating world due to human-made catastrophe like wars and nuclear bombs, or natural disasters. Hence, citizens have to face different hardships to survive and adapt in their new environment. In this sense, in *Postapocalyptic Fiction and The Social Contrast: We'll Not Go Home Again* (2010) P. Curtis writes, "Postapocalyptic fiction has taken up the 'what if' question by imagining ends based on nuclear war, meteors, earthquakes, environmental degradation, plague, electromagnetic pulse and more nameless abstract collapses" (p.7). Curtis believes that post apocalyptic fiction offers a unique perspective on the social contrast (p.6-7). Besides, in these novels, all forms of hierarchy, laws and government that organize society have disappeared. Hence, characters' behaviour changes since they act like savages (Ibid.). Furthermore, post apocalyptic fiction describes how characters face different challenges such as scarcity of resources, natural disasters, displacement and conflict with other survivors. Post apocalyptic fiction also examines themes of survival human nature, resilience and consequences of our actions (Makawana, 2019).

A. Review of the Literature

Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) tackles different topics such as climate change, crime and violence. It has been approached by a few critics and researchers. In *Climate Change in Popular Culture: A Warming World in the American Imagination*, James Craig Holte investigates climate change in different novels such as Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived*. He considers it as an impressive and an exceptional climate change novel since it emphasizes the tragic loss of a man's life. He asserts that

The City Where We Once Lived (2018), by Eric Barnes, is a dystopian climate change novel that takes place in the near future in an unnamed American city. Unlike many other climate change novels that emphasizes dramatic disasters and chronicle the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, *The City Where We Once Lived* follows the life of one unnamed man living in an abandoned part of the city at the beginning of the wreckage caused by climate change. The result is a novel that is both realistic and hauntingly prophetic in its depiction of how ordinary people might react to a slow-moving catastrophe. (Holte, 2022, p.43)

From the above excerpt, the novel addresses the challenges and complexities individuals confront and their different responses and adaptation to these circumstances. According to Holte, the novel describes individuals' daily struggle in the apocalypse. Holte provides an insight of climate change novel, this study therefore attempts to offer a deep analysis of the novel by examining the abuse of nature, revenge of nature refugees. This research aims to elaborate so as to analyze new concepts.

In "Tracing Corruption, Crime and Violence in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) and its Prequel *Above the Ether*" (2019), Souhila Kentouche and Feriel Kaci argue that humans' exploitation of nature brought about climate change and the post apocalypse. They have examined the aftermath of the apocalypse which manifests in the fall of the government and the rise of corruption, crime and violence. In order to probe these themes, they have relied on

Claire P. Curtis's *Postapocalyptic Fiction and the Social Contrast: "We'll Not Go Home Again"*, Sheikh's concept of violence and Andersen's *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis: A New Perspective on Life in the Anthropocene*. Kentouche and Kaci claim that commissioners, remaining leaders, are corrupt since their main goal is to close the North End and South End to oblige people to leave. Besides, these novels portray several teenagers as being a threat to society since they are violent; they become criminals and violent toward civilians. They are aware of the lack of safety in a post apocalyptic world.

B. Issue and Working Hypotheses

From the above review of the literature, we noticed that there are a few studies on *The City Where We Once Lived*. They did not discuss the abuse of nature and its impact, revenge of nature and the representation of refugees. This dissertation attempts to examine the novel from an ecocritical lens. It explores the abuse of nature and its impact, climate change, the revenge of nature and the portrayal of displaced people in Barnes's novel. In order to accomplish our aim, we rely on several theorists and their theories. We rely on Cheryll Glotfelty, Stephen R. Kellert and Ladelle McWorther's definition of ecocriticism. We also focus on Adam Trexler's *Anthropocene Fictions: the Novel in a Time of Climate Change* (2015), Gregers Andersen's *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis: A New Perspective On Life in the Anthropocene* (2020) and Antonia Menhert's *Climate Change Fictions: Representations of Global Warming in American Literature* (2016) to define climate change, revenge of nature and refugees.

This study investigates how abuse of nature, climate change, revenge of nature and refugees are depicted in the post apocalyptic novel. In the novel we find that the reason that may lead to the post apocalyptic world is the humans' use and exploitation of their natural world

through activities like pollution, the use of chemicals, pipes, storage pools, petroleum plants, smokestacks and different other substances. These caused the rise of climate change and different natural disasters in the North End, the absence of government, and social collapse. The purpose of our study is to unveil that the exploitation of nature as dangerous since it brings about climate change, social alienation and disputes, and refugees.

C. Methodological Outline

In this dissertation, we attempt to follow the IMRAD methodology. We intend to explore Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) from an ecocritical perspective. This research opens with a "General Introduction" where we state our statement of purpose. It is accompanied with a "Review of Literature" and "Issue and Working Hypothesis". In the second part, we have "Methods and Materials". The Methods introduces 'ecocriticism' and its main key concepts. It explains Cheryll Glotfelty, Stephen R. Kellert and Ladelle McWorther's introduction to ecocriticism. It also delves into Adam Trexler's *Anthropocene Fictions: the Novel in a Time of Climate Change* (2015), Gregers Andersen's *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis: A New Perspective On Life in the Anthropocene* (2020) and Antonia Menhert's *Climate Change Fictions: Representations of Global Warming in American Literature* (2016) and their main concepts, including climate change, revenge of nature and refugees. In the section of materials, we will provide Barnes's biography and synopsis of his novel. In the section of "Results", we aim to provide the main findings. More importantly, the "Discussion" section will encompass three chapters. In the first chapter, we focus on the abuse of nature and its impact. In the second, we analyze the revenge of nature on society through climate change. In the third, we investigate the representation of refugees and their struggles. In the "General Conclusion", we present the findings of this research.

II. Methods and Materials

1/ Methods

To delve into the themes of abuse of nature, revenge of nature and the representation of refugees in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018), we will draw upon different theorists and their concepts. We will rely on Cheryll Glotfelty, Stephen R. Kellert and Ladelle McWorther's definition of ecocriticism. We will also focus on Adam Trexler's *Anthropocene Fictions: the Novel in a Time of Climate Change* (2015), Gregers Andersen's *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis: A New Perspective On Life in the Anthropocene* (2020) and Antonia Menhert's *Climate Change Fictions: Representations of Global Warming in American Literature* (2016) as they delve into the main concepts of ecocriticism.

1.1 Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism emerged in the 1990s as a response to the growing concern over environmental issues and the need for a more sustainable way of life. It can be defined as an interdisciplinary field of study that examines the connection between literary texts and the natural world. In this regard, Cheryll Glotfelty writes, "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (1996, Xviii). More importantly, in eco-critical theory, scholars like Timothy Morton, Ursula K. Le Guin, Donna Haraway and Rob Nixon investigate how nature is depicted in literature and how this representation reflects cultural attitudes toward the environment. They also scrutinize how literature can shape our understanding of the natural world and influence our behaviour toward it.

Ecocriticism is a broad approach, which includes several key concepts, especially Green Studies, eco-politics, eco-feminism, Climate Change, and the revenge of nature. It has its roots in

various intellectual traditions such as environmentalism, eco-feminism, and postcolonialism. This theory appeared to display human attitudes toward the natural world. In this sense, Stephen R. Kellert (1995) claims that “Western society confirms its superiority over the rest of creation by the presupposition of unique human capacities for reason, speech and moral choice” (105). In other words, society believes that it is superior because nature is a passive entity and inferior and it is easy to control it. Furthermore, ecocriticism discusses the abuse, exploitation, and debasement of nature because man elaborates a dichotomy that is based on binary oppositions such as man/ nature, man/ animals and culture/nature. According to Ladelle McWorther (1989), this dichotomy is the main reason that causes the exploitation and the despoliation of nature, which eventually leads to its destruction (p.612). This dichotomy is vicious because it pushes and encourages societies to further abuse and debase the natural world. This explains to what extent the Western society is hypocritical because it assumes dominance over the natural world for its economic profits.

1.2 Climate Change Fiction

Climate fiction, or Climate Change fiction, is a genre of contemporary narrative that explores the causes and consequences of climate change and the scientific consensus that humanity’s emissions of greenhouse gases cause and their consequences. In this sense, Adam Trexler explains that climate fiction is neither the result of a literary “school” of related authors nor the influence of an “idea” that connects all climate fiction (2015, p.10-11). In addition, Antonia Menhert argues that “climate change fiction is literature dealing explicitly with anthropogenic climate change” (Menhert, 2016, p.04). In the same vein, Adeline Johns Putra writes, “I would prefer to define climate change fiction as fiction concerned with anthropogenic climate change”

(Qtd, Andersen, 2020, p.09). Simply put, climate change fiction is a genre of literature that portrays current issues of climate change and global warming.

Climate change is a global issue that affects both the natural world and humans. It refers to the long-term changes in temperature, precipitation and other weather patterns that have been observed over several decades. According to Adam Trexler,

Climate change is inevitably tied to science without scientific measurement and theory, we can only experience phenomena: weather, not climate. And yet climate change is inescapably tied to the meaning of human life on earth, in ways that studies of glaciers, atmospheric carbon dioxide and global climate models climate begin to describe. (Trexler, 2015, p.22)

From the above excerpt, climate change notably challenges science as an ‘objective truth’, because it forces us to consider more clearly what is real and what is constructed. Therefore, they are related one to another. Moreover, climate change includes gradual degradation of the environment, desertification, sea level rise and natural disasters as earthquakes and floods. These changes are brought about by human activities such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation, which release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

1.3 Revenge of Nature

The depiction of the revenge of the natural world on society is a substantial subject in the contemporary American fiction. Nature is portrayed as an important factor in this world. Franca Bellarsi argues, “No societies or individuals can entirely extirpate themselves from the exchange between the human and non-human” (2009, 72). This uncovers that humans are fully dependent on their environment; hence, nature plays a major role in social lives and interactions. More importantly, nature is represented as a powerful entity due to the abuse of humans. Nature has the power and the ability to deconstruct the socially constructed human/nature discourse and the devaluation of the natural world. It also entails its power to fight back against abuse, which is paramount since it involves nature’s revenge on society. In this account, Christa Grewe-Volpp

(2006) argues that nature is “an active force capable of subverting cultural and social achievements... Nature as a trickster cannot be contained and manipulated forever; it will remerge in surprising and often unpleasant ways” (p.78). Some novels portray nature’s vengeance by rebelling and ostracizing society. It is worth noting that the relationship between society and nature is generally taken to account as ‘autonomous’ in the world (Rousse, 2002, p.12). This means that society and nature are opponents, as they cannot build a relationship with each other.

Nature’s retaliation is fierce, it seeks to reshape those who exploit and harm it. Nature does not only confine human discourse but also strives to transform characters to “bed guests” if they behave “like parasites” (Galtung, 1993, 201). This mirrors that nature abuses societies as long as it does not welcome them and its individuals making their lives unbearable; therefore, nature can have a negative impact on societies. Furthermore, in *Our Angry Earth* (2018), Isaac Asimov and Frederick Pohl consider natural disasters as “threats to human life” (30). Nature is a threat because it influences the interactions between individuals in a single society. Thereupon, novels examine the power of nature through disasters on social interaction.

1.4 Refugee

There is a debate about the definition of climate refugees. According to Oliva Dun and Gemenne (2008), it is difficult to define environmental migration since there are different reasons that might lead to migration (p.10). Some of the main environmental problems are political instability, social unrest and security. In this context, they argue, “The complexity of current migration patterns also contributes to the difficulty of finding a consensus over definitions” (Gemenne, 2008, p.10). Therefore, environmental disasters cause and activate mass migration of people. To illustrate, they can cause environmental degradation, social and political conflicts, economic problems, and further displacement and wars (Gemenne, 2008, p.10). In the same

context, in “Introducing Migrant Ecologies in an (Un)Bordered World,” Serpil Opperman (2017) argues, “defining the migrant as climate refugees or ecological migrant, is a complex issue as this kind of migration is inseparable from other factors that investigate mass displacement of people as well as animals” (p.02). Thus, the negative impact of climate change is what leads to the displacement of people and other species.

Many people are forced to move from one place to another within the country, or from one country to another due to various environmental factors such as climate change. Refugee refers to any kind of displacement, migration or movement for reasons affecting the environment. Refugees are nomads who are in search of new places to survive, because of housing and financial instability, language barriers, and loss of community mainly country and cultural connections (Nisbet Christine et al., 2022). These can be draining emotionally and physically, especially for people who have experienced trauma; they are exposed to various infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. In addition, refugees often face discrimination and hostility from the communities they move into, they may also struggle to access basic needs such as food, water and healthcare, which can lead to further health complications. Many experts like David Archer and Stefan Rahmstorf claim “many of the habitat in decline are found in isolated area, and most humans, living in supposedly protected and artificially maintained city spheres, have difficulties seeing themselves as part of the larger ecological system” (Qtd. Menhert, 2020, p.67). Displaced people who rebuild their lives in other countries are not considered as members of society owing to racism and discrimination.

2. Materials

2.1 Biography of Eric Barnes

Eric Barnes is an American author and publisher who was born on February 28, 1968, in Tacoma, Washington, United States. He grew up in a middle-class family and had interest in

literature and writing at a young age. During his college years, he was an author of a large number of short stories like *Something Pretty* and *Something Beautiful* (2012) that have appeared in literary magazines. Barnes started his studies at the University of Maryland where he obtained a degree in the English Literature. After his graduation, he moved to New York City where he worked as an editor for several magazines and newspapers. He also founded his own publishing house, and he is responsible for books that specialized in publishing experimental novels and short stories. As a writer, Barnes explores various themes such as technology, society, and human relationship. He produced many fictional writings. *Shimmer* (1994) was critically acclaimed for its evocative prose and gripping plot. *Something Pretty*, *Something Beautiful* (2012) and *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) have gained much praise. In addition, Barnes is an advocate for independent literature. He participated in several literary events and writing workshops. He is a member of a number of writers' organizations who has received grants and awards. He currently resides in Brooklyn, New York, where he continues to write and publish novels.

2.2 Synopsis of *The City Where We Once Lived*

Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) is a post apocalyptic novel that consists of twelve chapters. The events of the novel are non-linear; the novel revolves around an anonymous protagonist who lives isolated in a deserted city in the North End. In the first part of the novel, the protagonist lives in a dying North End where he spends his time observing, analyzing and recording the decay around him. It appears that what caused this decay is humans' debasement and exploitation of their environment using massive chemicals, petroleum, storage polls, substances, pollutants and toxins. Therefore, this brings about climate change in both the North End and South End. Weather change affects the environment once there are no trees, plants, grass, shrubs, and flowers. Besides, there are different natural disasters as tornadoes,

floods, and storms that further destroy the city. The protagonist portrays the absence of American commissioners and police or firefighters that can help people.

In the second and last part, the protagonist represents the rise of violent and desperate strangers who come from the South End. Hence, the citizens of the North End take control of an overpass that links both entrances. Consequently, these few citizens stop violent kids from coming and destroying the city. At the beginning of the last part, a storm hits the North End and brutally breaks a levee. This causes chaos in the city because water starts rising rapidly and floods the city. Consequently, people climb high buildings in the city to save their lives. Besides, the citizens of the South End are in danger; citizens of the North End decide to welcome them. As a result, they are displaced people whose aim is to survive. This marks to the rise of refugees due to natural disasters.

III. Results

In this study, we examined Eric Barnes's representation of humans' relationship with nature in *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018). Our study investigates Barnes's portrayal of the abuse of nature and its impact on characters' lives, climate change, nature's vengeance, and displacement. Therefore, it offers an ecocritical study of the novel under scrutiny. To achieve our aim, we rely on several theorists and their concepts. We rely on Cheryll Glotfelty, Stephen R. Kellert and Ladelle McWorther's definition of ecocriticism. It also focuses on Adam Trexler's *Anthropocene Fictions: the Novel in a Time of Climate Change* (2015), Gregers Andersen's *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis: A New Perspective On Life in the Anthropocene* (2020) and Antonia Menhert's *Climate Change Fictions: Representations of Global Warming in American Literature* (2016) to define climate change, revenge of nature and refugees. To analyze these themes, we have divided the discussion into three chapters that explore the three concepts.

In the first chapter, we focused on humans' abuse and exploitation of nature and its impact on society. Humans' overuse of massive chemicals, petroleum plants, smokestacks, pipes, storage pools and other substances have a negative impact on the world and the unnamed country. Through these actions, humans have exploited nature; therefore, they cause chaos and bring about the post-apocalypse. This study vividly shows profound impact of climate change on the protagonist and citizens.

In the second chapter, we have explored the revenge of nature on the novel owing to human exploitation. Nature is represented as a powerful and active agent through natural disasters such as storms, floods, tornadoes. These natural disasters have an effect on the protagonist and citizens' lives. We have also noticed that nature avenges itself on American

society. We have observed that Barnes describes how society has lost a sense of community since individuals live in detached and abandoned houses. They also have to face the pervasive violence that plagues their environment; hence, they look for ways to overcome its destructive influence. We have also noticed that nature avenges itself on American society.

In the third chapter, we have investigated the representation of refugees in the novel. Barnes's story sheds light on displaced people's struggles because they are forced to leave their homes. We have noticed the absence of the government to help displaced people from the South End. Therefore, the North End citizens play a major role in assisting displaced people because they provide them with shelter and food. They show a feeling of empathy towards other communities in a post apocalyptic world.

IV. Discussion

Chapter one: Abuse of Nature and its Impact in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived*

Since the last decades of the twentieth century, some American writers started to portray people's relationship with nature. American literature plays a pivotal role in describing human abuse of their environment and its consequences, which is climate change. Climate change has become a presiding theme in American literature because climate fiction emerged to tackle these issues. This chapter examines the representation of the despoliation of nature and climate change in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018). It investigates the impact of human activities such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, pollution and overuse of natural resources. It also delves into the consequences, which involve global warming, weather change, and natural disasters.

Ecocriticism is a literary theory that tackles the connection between nature, humans and literature. It includes the exploitation, debasement and abuse of the natural world. It also tackles the different changes that the natural world faces through Climate fiction. In this sense, 'Anthropocene' is a concept that revolves around how global warming is discussed as a scientific phenomenon, which is brought about because of human actions (Trexler, 2015, 04). In this context, Adam Trexler (2015) claims that

Anthropocene productively shifts the emphasis from individual thought, beliefs and choices to human process that has occurred across distinct social groups, countries, economics and generations: the whole sale emission of fossil fuels that began in the Victorian period and has intensified through the present day. (p.04)

From the above-mentioned quote, 'Anthropocene' deals with human destruction of the natural world at a social level since the rise of industrial revolution. Hence, he blames human's use of technology to destroy their environment. Hence, climate fiction emerged to represent the consequences of these actions.

Barnes's novel opens with an unnamed protagonist who lives in an unnamed country that has long been abandoned, the North End. The novel is set in a near-futuristic post apocalyptic world, where climate change has severely affected weather, agriculture and humans' lives. In this city, there are only few thousand remaining people and life is portrayed as being empty, silent and lifeless. The unnamed protagonist writes, "there are no mice and rats or roaches here, no cats and people spread across many miles" (Barnes, 2018, p.04). This uncovers that the city is devoid of any means of life since it lacks the presence of humans, animals and nature.

A. The Representation of the Abuse of Nature and the City in *The City Where We Once Lived*

The unnamed protagonist portrays the negative effect of human abusive actions on the natural world since they have caused its total destruction. He provides the main reasons that have led to climate change as the use of various adaptive strategies; he represents humans' overuse of massive chemicals, petroleum plants, smokestacks, pipes, storage pools and substances. In this sense, humanity is currently aware of its alteration of the natural world (Trexler, 2015, p.05). One day, the unnamed protagonist visits the industrial zone in the North End where different companies and industries exist; they were built before the apocalypse and were demolished during or just after the apocalypse. He says,

There are massive chemical and petroleum plants in the industrial zone to the west. You can't help but think this is part of what's driven away all life. Smokestacks and pipes raised to the sky. Beveled tanks and rusted cylinders. Storage pools now dry but coated in a substance somehow rubbery and wet and very faintly green. Substances you wouldn't ever want to touch. (Barnes, 2018, p.04)

The above-mentioned quote exhibits that the industrial zone was built in the western part of the North End. It played a major role in humans' exploitation of nature because they used chemicals and petroleum, which are destructive and brought about the loss of life. The protagonist also

mentions other pollutants used in the natural world. As a result, these activities harm nature because they have been used for a long period. The quote also refers to the dangerous substances that can kill every living natural element since humans cannot use them. Through this quote, the protagonist shows to what extent humans can be unsafe to the natural world since they abuse nature for their economic benefit.

The unnamed protagonist works as a journalist in his abandoned city; subsequently, he has to collect data on different topics. One day, he decides to write about the different toxins and substances used in the North End. He makes research about herbicide and pesticide plant for his upcoming article. The protagonist describes the use of chemicals; he writes,

I use my camera to take pictures of a few old photos from the 1930s, portraits of men and women and small children among the piles of dry, dusty chemicals being loaded into railcars and onto barges along the docks on forgotten bay the borders the far edge of the North End. (Barnes, 2018, p.39)

The despoliation started several decades ago; it dates back to the rise of the twentieth century when people carry dirty chemicals depending on railcars and barges. The transportation of chemicals can be dangerous, but humans neglect its consequences. These chemicals have an impact on both humans and nature. The protagonist shows first their effect on human health as long as people complain about different illnesses as “migraines”, “constant flu”, “asthma”, and “endless cough” (Barnes, 2018, p.39). Owing to the use of chemicals and pollutants, people harm themselves as they suffer from diseases and infections.

This desolate city lacks clean water because it contains various chemicals and toxic wastes. The protagonist depicts the current state of water in the North End especially the industrial zone. He thinks that citizens are unable to find potable water because it tastes bad and there is “something that isn’t supposed to be in it” (Barnes, 2018, p.61). Simply put, humans have

caused the pollution of water; hence, they are suffering in the post-apocalypse. In addition, he writes,

The water is still and in another city it'd be murky with algae and other unidentifiable substances. Even in the North End. Even in their decrepit state, the canals are... keeping the water here from stagnating but taking with it unknown quantities and types of chemicals and pollution, toxins seeping down from the limitless factories around me. (Barnes, 2018, p.64)

The above passage denotes the cleanliness of water since it contains unknown pollutants as chemicals and toxins. It also displays humans' debasement of nature because they dispose of their industrial waste in the canals. Therefore, the water in these canals is dirty. Barnes dramatizes the portrayal of humans' abuse to uncover to what extent they are dangerous to their environment. Through this fictional narrative, Barnes is realistic while showing human actions towards their environment.

In different chapter subsections, the unnamed protagonist refers to the outcome of the abuse of nature. He lives in a polluted world where he can smell dangerous substances. In this regard, Serpil Opperman (2018) argues, in "Storied Matter" from *Posthuman Glossary*, that "Chemicals substances... or plastic bags invading the oceans and choking marine life, are as expressive as bacteria and more complex organisms such as plants, animals and humans" (p.412). Simply put, human activities harm nature, particularly due to the hazardous components of industrial activities. In this context, the unnamed protagonist writes, "The smell of sulfur stays with us for weeks. This happens, sulfur or chlorine or a rotten egg scent that blows across the North End has hours or even days...the wind inevitably finds a source of chemicals in the industrial zone" (Barnes,2018, p.61). Because of the use of sulphur, chemicals and chlorine in the past, a terrible smell spreads from the factories. He refers to different things that stink in the industrial zone. Hence, humans harm the environment as long as they pollute it. They also affect

human health since citizens are “diseased and decrepit” (Barnes, 2018, p.62). In other words, human actions cause the destruction of nature and the rise of a post apocalyptic world.

In other subsections, the protagonist depicts the present post apocalyptic world to display the impact of abuse of nature. In the industrial zone, the debasement of the natural world has led to the decline of companies and the emergence of chaos. He writes,

One more history of economic boom and eventual decline. The decline of a company that made engines for which there was no longer any demand. The decline of people who could not manage the wasted by-products of industrial success. (Barnes, 2018, p.63)

The above quote uncovers the impact of human abuse in the industrial zone. They have caused economic recession in the city as there was no order for engines in the industrial zone. This brings about the loss of economics; therefore, people have lost both products and money.

The protagonist does not only portray the loss of industry but also the loss of life in the post apocalyptic world. His world is divided into the North End and South End. Besides, he lives in a demolished city by natural disasters where there are only few people and animals. The protagonist writes, “These houses are distinguishable from one to another, the land-scaping around them barren, barren even before everything died” (Barnes, 2018, p.203). Put differently, there are several abandoned houses in the North End because there are only a few people owing to the death or displacement of citizens. These houses are described as being empty and separable from one another. The remaining citizens prefer to live either alone or with some relatives because they are afraid. Besides, the emptiness of the city may entail that scavengers have cleared the deserted houses since they search for useful items and resources that can be used. They look for food, water, clothing, tools or anything else that can be of value.

The protagonist exhibits the lack of biodiversity in his world. He refers to the loss of trees, plants, grass, shrubs, and flowers. From the opening of the novel, he portrays a barren city,

which is devoid of a beautiful nature. In this sense, he writes, “There is no vegetables, no fruits, no drinks, no milk or cheese” (Barnes, 2018, p.13). By so doing, he shows the negative consequence of the abuse of nature. People have caused the loss of biodiversity once they cannot find something to eat from nature. As the novel develops, the protagonist argues that there are only “dead trees” in the city (Barnes, 2018, p.184). In the same vein, the protagonist meets the missing woman by chance inside an abandoned building while searching for a blanket to cover himself from the cold weather; he recognizes this woman because police officers inform him about her absence in the South End. The reason that pushed her to escape with her son is the commissioner’s mistreatment and abuse of individuals; these commissioners declare people unsuitable for parenting. They decided to take her; so, she escapes to break free from her circumstances. She says, “The way the trees die and the grass dies and the animals all go elsewhere, it is spreading across the South End. It’s spreading very rapidly” (Barnes, 2018, p.190). This displays the loss of the natural world as long as people cannot find trees or animals elsewhere. This marks the beginning of human impact on nature; this can be considered as the main cause of climate change.

B. Climate Change and its Impact in *The City Where We Once Lived*

The City Where We Once Lived is a climate change fiction because it depicts changes in weather. The protagonist provides a thorough representation of the consequence of the debasement of the natural world. He portrays different storms, floods and rain that people have to face. He also focuses on a cold and gloomy weather, rain, clouds, and fog that cover the city. In this sense, Antonia Menhert (2016) claims, “Climate change is a phenomenon that occurs on a global scale. Furthermore, its impact plays out on a range of timescales, with its most detrimental describes global warming and weather change (P.09). This entails that climate change is a worldwide occurrence that happens over extended periods. Its effects, like global warming and

weather changes, are highly powerful and damaging. For instance, the protagonist writes, “Storms come like hurricanes but they are shorter, more sudden, lasting only half an hour or less, with wind blowing rain said ways so hard that the drops hurt your face, and thunder bursts come frantically” (Barnes, 2018, P.67). In other words, storms are powerful since they look like hurricanes. The protagonist emphasizes on how they come abruptly and shock the remaining citizens as they are not informed about natural disasters. These storms destroy what remains in this destroyed city because there is no government that can fix demolished things or help the remaining citizens. The absence of the government is problematic since storms cause dramatic changes. Post apocalyptic Therefore, citizens can be considered as being victims of climate change.

Fiction is a literary genre that envisions a world that is completely wrecked by some natural disasters. It follows the journey of individuals who face challenges, find hope, and fight for survival. In post apocalyptic *Fiction and the Social Contract: We'll Not Go Home Again*, Claire P. Curtis writes,

I define post apocalyptic fiction as any account that takes up how humans start over after the end of life on earth as we understand it. The apocalyptic event or events cause a radical shift in the basic conditions of human life; it does not require the destruction of all humans or even the destruction of all potential conditions of human life. The end may occur either through natural or human made causes. (2010, p.16)

The above quote uncovers that writers rely on the post apocalyptic genre to reflect characters' lives after the catastrophe. They also highlight how natural disasters like floods, storms and earthquakes can lead to an apocalypse. Consequently, in the post apocalyptic world, individuals may confront a scarcity of human presence and struggle to survive in an isolated and perilous environment.

Additionally, scavengers suffer and work hard to earn money. In this context, the unnamed protagonist writes, “There aren’t many ways to earn money here besides scavenging. It is hard for anyone to make or sell anything that the rest of us can’t get for free” (Barnes, 2018, p.23). This entails that there is no economy in the North End; hence, people face poverty and limited access to resources and services. This increases the vulnerability of citizens. However, the remaining commissioners never address the economic downturn or implemented measures to support the affected individuals. Furthermore, scavengers, including men and women, scavenge abandoned houses to eliminate harmful substances from the environment. They dismantle remnants and sweep the streets, roads, factories and warehouses. Once they finish scavenging, they give what they have scavenged to the brokers, who are supposed to sell with profits. The main problem with scavenging is that it is brutal and risky. Subsequently, people’s aim in the postapocalyptic world is to survive. In addition to this, the unnamed protagonist is one of the citizens who work as a journalist; he writes about different topics and earns a few dollars. He plays an important role in his city since he informs citizens about current issues as food and objects sold to help the functioning of the economy in the city.

In the novel, Barnes depicts the effects of climate change on the city and citizens’ lives. He also portrays the citizens’ struggle to cope with rising temperature, extreme weather events, and the loss of natural resources through its characters and their challenges and experiences. The unnamed protagonist mentions the unemployed people and their struggle to find jobs and gain benefit. They often work as vendors who sell cooked food, liquor, cigarettes, coffee, books, clothes and containers of beads in order to support themselves financially and meet their basic needs. Even though they do not earn too much money, they sell things because earning substantial income in the city is hard and challenging.

Barnes represents citizens' hardships and misery because they cannot have a stable life. The absence of a government leads to the emergence of a few commissioners who prioritize their interest over the needs of citizens. Therefore, there is an inadequate provision of essential services such as healthcare, infrastructure, law and protection. Moreover, these commissioners abuse and exploit citizens just to push and force them to leave the city. They close off power and electricity. The protagonist writes, "I shower in cold water, in the high-ceilinged bathroom in my hotel. The room is dimly lit, with only a small lamp on the floor near the sink. It's often like showering in the dark, the cold water source less, just a spray, wet and nearly icy all around me" (Barnes, 2018, p.46). Thus, the protagonist represents commissioners' cruelty and unkindness because citizens live a harsh life. The protagonist is obliged to bathe in chilly water because commissioners try to oblige people to leave the North End through shutting electricity. These commissioners are irresponsible because they do not bother themselves with the deserted city where only few people live.

As the events develop, these commissioners push these citizens to leave the North End. However, they are imprisoned owing to their dishonesty and manipulation. Once these citizens fail to feel safe, they leave their homeland. In this context, he states, "And the city government that allowed all this to happen, that made decisions that drove more and more people away, some members of that government ended up in jail for their corruption" (Barnes, 2018, p.125). In short, the protagonist believes that the city government's choices result in the erosion of the community's trust and the departure of many residents. Consequently, some government commissioners' decisions highlight a lack of accountability and disregard for the well-being for the community and environment. To illustrate, they tear down the main train station and put up a big parking lot, which is divided by a highway. They also have a community center which is situated close to the overpass. However, in the North End, there are small houses and brick

buildings; the street markets have already disappeared. These leaders made sure that homes were demolished and replaced with duplexes, and schools were left empty (Barnes, 2018, P. 124-125). Through his description, the protagonist unveils the hypocrisy of commissioners in the post apocalyptic. Instead of helping citizens, they demolish the city and close it to ensure that they do not have responsibility.

The protagonist describes several natural disasters that occur in the North End. He depicts the power of tornadoes when he is inside his building when he is standing close to the open windows of the hotel. These natural disasters reflect the rise of climate change. One day, he represents the kind of tornadoes that hit his city. He writes,

Small tornadoes spawn within the storms and I see them touching down, to the north, black cones inverted and now bending, lifting water from the canals and levees, water spraying out and water lifting upward, funnelling and spraying into the air, and eventually the rain is so thick and blowing so hard that I won't be able to see more than twenty feet out my windows. (Barnes, 2018, p. 67)

The above quote shows that tornadoes come along with storms; hence, these natural disasters are puissant because they are destructive. These tornadoes come with violent winds and hard rain that lift everything and make his vision blurry. This suggests that weather change can have an effect on citizens since the protagonist is stuck in his house. Constant tornadoes are phenomena of climate change; by representing them, the protagonist displays human impact on their environment.

Barnes dramatizes the strength of natural disasters in the novel. After the above mentioned disasters, there are new natural disasters that occur from time to time to emphasize human destruction of the environment. The protagonist depicts the destruction that the tornadoes cause. For instance, he writes,

Destruction will begin. Long pieces of wood and wide sheets of metal and it's impossible to understand the size of the area being damaged until you see an old pickup truck being thrown upward, out, like a child's toy flicked away, and

the roof of factories are split open, bursting upward, a ceaseless hammering, a relentless cutting through the guts of an already dead and disintegrating zone. (Barnes, 2018, p.68)

The protagonist is sure that these tornadoes will cause harm in his city. It will break infrastructure as wood, metal, truck, and factory roof. He is aware of the coming damage because he has already witnessed previous natural disasters. These tornadoes destroy infrastructure from manufacturing facilities and enormous warehouses, homes, and power lines. They can also demolish levees, which can cause chaos in the city. The protagonist is unable to identify the impact of tornadoes on citizens because there are only few people. Subsequently, the protagonist demonstrates the immense harms caused by these tornadoes.

The unnamed protagonist usually roams the city to search for necessary things. One day, he needs a blanket in order to cover himself from the cold weather; accidentally, he meets the missing woman and her son inside a deserted building. He recognizes this woman because police officers report her absence in the South End. This missing woman escapes because of the commissioners' abuse of people; consequently, they decide to take her child because she is declared unfit. She takes her child and escapes. When he finds her, she says, "This was supposed to be a place where we could hide" the woman says (Barnes, 2018, p.98). She adds, "Right? A place where we'd be safe?" (Barnes, 2018, p.98). The missing woman and her boy feel unsafe in both places because they keep hiding from commissioners and police. This unveils that parenting in a post apocalyptic world is difficult. She tries hard to remain alone with her child without company to avoid being exposed to violence. Therefore, women cannot trust strangers because they are afraid of violence or to be considered unfit.

One day, a tornado hits when the protagonist is in the industrial zone with the missing woman and her son. These characters have to face the outcome of climate change such as temperature change, floods, tornadoes, and storms. Andersen explains, "The human impact on the

climate change has grown to such an extent that it is today an essential part of the understanding that we are now living in the Anthropocene” (Andersen, 2020, p.03). In other words, since humans are responsible for climate change, they have to face it in the contemporary world. Tornadoes are described as powerful since they start with heavy rain and steady noise, which frighten them. In this sense, the protagonist states, “We turn, the woman and me, see the black clouds pushing toward us, a thick and monstrous mass so tall it seems to reach too far into the air, blinking with lightning and swirling down to the ground not far from us” (Barnes, 2018, p.86). The unnamed protagonist encounters the missing woman and her child; they experience the different changes in the weather. This quote uncovers how these storms hit the North End and their strengths. The unnamed protagonist describes tornadoes as ‘monstrous’ to unveil the immense power of nature and its destructiveness. It is also portrayed as monstrous because it frightens people like the protagonist and his companions. The sight of those dark clouds rolling in their immense size and the flashes of lightning create a feeling of danger and unpredictability. Overall, the words effectively capture the intensity and awe-inspiring nature of a storm.

As the tornadoes get stronger, the characters hear a dreadful noise beneath the dock. The protagonist, therefore, represents the different changes in the air when the noise gets louder. The protagonist argues,

But all I hear is the noise of that wind swirling so fast on top of us and beginning to lift the water from the canal, the surface of the water bending upward as if the domed head of a monster were emerging just ten feet away and still that water lifts, bending upward until it breaks, spraying up into the air lit bright by constant lightening. (Barnes, 2018, p.87)

From the above excerpt, the protagonist provides nature with agency since it is both powerful and destructive. He opens his portrayal with the noise of the wind that affects water. The shape of water is frightening for the protagonist. He compares water to a monster’s head relying on personification. Personification is defined as giving a human identity to an object or something

that does not move (Melion W.S and Ramakers B. 2016, p.01). The water is monstrous because it is powerful since it has the ability to move and make people afraid. The unnamed protagonist describes the rapidity of the wind by saying that it is 'swirling fast' and it has the power to 'lift the water' (87). Hence, nature is an active agent rather than a passive entity that can be abused by humans. Therefore, the protagonist refers to destructiveness of natural disasters because people are in danger.

These tornadoes have a negative effect on the city since they have destroyed different buildings. Due to a collapse of a ceiling in an explosion of tile, several parts inside the houses are demolished. The protagonist portrays the dismantled houses in the surrounding. In this regard, he writes,

From the outside, the walls at the base of tall apartment buildings and massive churches bow outward, soaked through with the weight of so many years of this rain, the buildings seem to be sinking in upon themselves, the first floors absorbing the water and weight and the slowly descending flow of matter from the floors steadily, down upon themselves, until someday each structure will finally begin to burst. (Barnes, 2018, p.93)

The above quote exhibits the impact of rain on buildings throughout the years. They have caused the frailty of walls and different floors; hence, they start to ruin the first floor. The verb 'soaked' emphasizes the saturation of the building with rainwater, 'sinking' conveys a sense of impending collapse and decay, 'absorb' captures the buildings taking in the water and weight contributing to their eventual deterioration and vulnerability. These emphasize the potential danger posed by water on structures. Consequently, this means that excessive rainfall can weaken buildings because they start to decay until they collapse. The unnamed protagonist reflects the effect of rain on human construction because it can cause their homelessness.

Storms can negatively affect people's lives. In this context, Ursula k. Heise believes that Anthropogenic Global warming's latest appearance as a scientific framework and cultural force

poses various difficulties and complexities due to its impact on the environment, specific locations and human beings (Andersen, 2020, p.08). Therefore, the effects of climate change can vary across different places and people. For instance, in the novel the protagonist portrays canals as risky for citizens since they can be destroyed by natural disasters. The protagonist writes, “In places the canal is nearly blocked by debris. A sunken truck, trees that have fallen partway into the water, utility poles that have fallen from one side to the other and that I have to duck underneath to get past” (Barnes, 2018, p.164). Simply put, the protagonist depicts the impact of storms on canals where trees, trucks, debris have fallen inside the water. He is conscious that if canals are destroyed, they will cause a disaster. They can destroy the entire city and kill citizens.

Additionally, the unnamed protagonist refers implicitly to the fall of the city government to maintain infrastructure, ensure public safety, and promote the well being of its citizens who can fall victims to their destruction. These citizens need help but commissioners refuse to provide them with necessary help because they want to get rid of them. To illustrate, when citizens face natural disasters, they do not have any help. The protagonist says, “And at some point in the night, some sixty hours since the storm first hit, I realize that it’s not just that no one from the South End has come to help. I realize that no one, from anywhere, has come to help” (Barnes, 2018, p.227-228). This uncovers that nobody interferes; they cannot find assistance from people or commissioners. The protagonist shows to what extent life can be dangerous in a post apocalyptic world because their goal is to survive.

The protagonist describes levees as dangerous because they can cause a disaster in the North End. If a natural disaster hits, it can break levees. In this sense, the protagonist explains,

I cross through breaks in the levees every few minutes. The water is still and flat and I can’t tell how deep it is. There are more buildings now. Brick. Stores and offices and low apartments built along the edge of the water and I realise that probably the buildings were once along the edge of canal, but the water from the

levee flooded the area, breaking down one side of the canal, so that now the buildings seem to be built alongside of a small lake. (Barnes, 2018, p.165)

In the above excerpt, the protagonist depicts to what extent climate change can be dangerous. Floods can bring about the destruction of canals and levees. Hence, the whole place will be drowned. He also unveils that natural disasters can harm the city infrastructure while nobody can interfere and make changes. Subsequently, levees are considered as being a threat and unsafe to citizens.

Many people decide to remain in their city even though they struggle with climate change. The protagonist is one of the citizens who decide to stay in the North End. He writes, “Now, though, here, I realize I can’t go any farther. Because this is where I grow up. And this is where we later lived. This is where they all died” (Barnes, 2018, p.166). Even though climate change is risky and dangerous, the protagonist lives in his city. Furthermore, the unnamed protagonist and the few citizens of the North End choose to stay there because they have a deep and meaningful bond with their city. They feel strong attachment to their home and don’t want to leave. They value their connection to the community and the place they call their own. It is special connection that makes them decide to remain in the North End. They do not want to move because the city encompasses their memories, history, and sense of identity. Leaving would mean disconnecting and breaking off these profound bonds, and giving up an essential part of their identity.

To conclude, this chapter is divided into two parts, which are debasement of nature and climate change. It examined Eric Barnes’s *The City Where We Once Lived* portrayal of humans’ abuse of nature through their different activities in the North End. In the industrial zone, humans used chemicals, petroleum, and pollutants as smokestacks, pipes, tanks, cylinders and pools. These activities have a negative effect on the natural world since it causes the apocalypse. This

causes the loss of trees, plants, shrubs, flowers grass, and spread of infections. They cause environmental imbalance and harm the ecosystem. Barnes portrays climate change and its danger on the North End through different storms and tornadoes that hit. Barnes's protagonist provides a detailed description of natural disasters in the city as storms and tornadoes. He also uncovers their destructiveness because people struggle to live there. People, subsequently, struggle with severe health issues and do not find food or water.

Chapter two: The Revenge of Nature in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived*

Society has a substantial part in the exploitation and debasement of nature through its abuse of nature because society believes that nature is a passive entity. In this context, Elizabeth Ann R. Bird (1987) claims that “environmental problems represent situations in which some segments of society engage in practices that adversely affect other members of society and have the potential to injure the future quality of the survivability of the planet” (261). Simply put, society is blamed for its debasement of the natural world. Its harmful actions and practices result in the destruction and degradation of the natural world. In some American novels, nature is portrayed as an active entity that has the intention to avenge itself on society through natural disasters. Therefore, climate change reflects the power of nature to control society's destiny through its negative influence on social relationship. In fact, the revenge of nature is a significant theme in contemporary eco-critical fiction. This chapter explores Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* representation of nature's power to counter society's harm. It also examines the description of the revenge of nature on society.

Climate fiction delves into the impact of human actions on nature; hence, it describes global warming and natural disasters. In this sense, Andersen argues, “anthropocene lie a string of events that led to the establishment of anthropogenic global warming as a scientific paradigm and hence its creation as a cultural force” (2020, p.03). Put differently, human actions have a negative impact on the climate because of the different changes in nature. Nature can be considered as an active agent that strongly influences the destiny of society. Therefore, climate fiction is a genre of literature that portrays nature as a powerful entity. In this context, Val Plumwood (2002) writes, “Breaking the hold of the subject/object division is a big help; to begin with, we can turn to certain kinds of imaginative literature which write nature as agent, re-subjectivizing and re-intentionalizing the nonhuman as an ethical and intentional subject of

narrative” (P.53-4). In other words, eco-critical literature deconstructs the binary opposition of man versus nature and culture versus nature by showing that nature can be represented as an active agent that has an intention.

Since nature has the intention to avenge itself, Andersen is one of the eco-critical theorists who coins the concept of the revenge of nature. In this regard, he argues that the natural world judges and punishes society because of its exploitation; nature’s aim is to defend itself (Andersen, 2020, p.42). This means that nature’s vengeance appears because it cannot bear human actions. Furthermore, writers may use either natural disasters or monstrous animals to threaten characters or control the destiny of a given society. Peter Quigely (1999) points out, “[t]here is a way to think about how social meaning is generated, how it is contoured, raised, given shape, how it is undermined, and what role ‘nature’ plays in such a dynamic” (199). This uncovers that nature can shape society and influence social relationships.

A. Nature’s Revenge on the City through Natural Disasters

In *The City Where We Once Lived*, Barnes represents nature’s revenge and its negative impact on society. Nature’s revenge on society appears through different natural disasters. Livingstone (1995) argues, “Nature certainly sets limits on what we can say about it” (371). In other words, nature has the power to restrict people’s ideas and discourse that nature is inferior and passive recipient of human actions. In the novel, the unnamed protagonist portrays several natural disasters such as tornadoes, storms, and floods that hit the North End. These disasters are dangerous because they threaten people’s lives. They also frighten the few remaining characters. These natural disasters play a significant role in controlling the destiny of society since it has an impact on their safety and destroys social relationships.

The unnamed protagonist portrays the power of a storm that hits the North End. It causes damage in the abandoned city since it destroys buildings and smokestacks and creates cracks. Moreover, this storm is dangerous since it may increase the risk of harm; individuals may suffer from both mental and physical illnesses. It can also cause serious injuries due to strong winds, flooding or structural damage. In this context, the protagonist states, “More than five thousand people are killed by the storm. All in the South End” (Barnes, 2018, p.90). Therefore, nature is represented as a powerful entity that has the strength to transform the world into a risky and dangerous environment. From this example, it causes total destructions and murders in a post apocalyptic world. Besides, it destroys buildings and cities; this unveils the power and agency of the natural world since it defies human power and creativity. Nature’s strength and intention appears from the beginning of the novel since the protagonist represents its destructiveness of human technology and infrastructure. Hence, humans struggle to survive. This may entail that Barnes demonstrates the revenge of nature through deconstructing and subverting man’s discourse of Man versus Nature and Culture versus Nature.

Barnes describes the importance of water and its impact. He highlights its positive and negative sides. Water can be used for cleaning, drinking and bathing. At the same time, the presence of excessive water demolishes cities and causes several deaths. Rain is portrayed as menacing mainly when it hits heavily and lasts for hours. In this sense, he writes,

It rained hard last night. This is tenth or fifteen floors. The rainwater, even hours later, still find its way through the cracks and seams of this old structure. The buildings here bleed water when it rains, perforated as they are cracks and breaks and holes, the water coming down from the roofs, in some places rushing, in some places dripping, the water for days after the heavy rain still making its way through ceiling and stairwells and the walls themselves. (Barnes, 2018, p.26)

In other words, rain uncovers the power of nature because it is represented as an active agent that can demolish houses, buildings and cities. Therefore, natural disasters are unsafe for Western

society. People cannot find a place to live as one unified community because they no longer have a safe infrastructure. Characters, therefore, have to live apart and alone in this desolate city. One can assume that nature is an active entity that has a voice and agency to oppose and counter characters' debasement and abuse.

The revenge of nature can have a devastating impact on greenery and food resources. Climate change and natural disasters cause the disruption of ecosystem that contributes in the loss of plant and animal species. In the deserted city, the unnamed protagonist and citizens of the North End get food from a small corner store where a manuscript list of what is obtainable for the week is captured in the window. To illustrate, the protagonist writes, "Cans of food most of the time, bread some weeks, just two or three slices in a small plastic bag" (Barnes, 2018, p.13). The citizens of the North End struggle because they cannot eat whatever they want because it is unavailable. For instance, they cannot eat vegetables and fruits because they do not exist; society suffers because of food shortage. Nature's destructiveness influences food production and availability. Barnes, therefore, displays the revenge of nature through addressing its impact on the scarcity of food.

The protagonist further describes nature's destruction of society through climate change and natural disasters. Nature transforms characters to 'bed guests' if they behave like 'parasites' (Galtung, 1993, p.201). In other words, once society abuses and exploits nature, the latter will systematically look for a way to oppose it. Nature does not accept society and its individuals, making their lives unbearable. Consequently, nature is an active agent that has destructive powers because it disrupts human communication and aims to transform individuals to 'bed guests' (201). This implies that society is no longer welcomed in this world. The protagonist portrays citizens of the North End who have to face different hardships because of climate change. They have to struggle with cold weather. In this account, he writes, "Often, at night, I find myself

wanting another blanket near my feet, a second pair of gloves on my bare hands. I am looking for blankets today. Searching through apartments in a building a few blocks from mine” (Barnes, 2018, p.25). In other words, the protagonist feels cold; he cannot bear this weather. This weather usually worries the protagonist because he is unable to sleep or do anything else. From the opening of the novel, it appears that the protagonist lives alone without any family relatives or friends. He does not communicate with other people as long as he lives in a hotel room and works alone in an office to earn a few dollars. Subsequently, natural disasters have a negative impact on social relations.

The remaining citizens have to struggle with the same problem, which is climate change as natural disasters and cold weather. Their main goal is to find different ways to survive in the North End; hence, they do not care about having any social relations with each other. These citizens live isolated from each other; every person is content with a relative or a friend. The unnamed protagonist portrays the general atmosphere saying, “Not everyone here sleeps with their tall windows open to the wet and freezing night. Not everyone here sleeps in their clothes, sprawled out on a heavy couch right near those same tall windows. Not everyone here denies themselves all connection to the outside world” (Barnes, 2018, p.71). This entails that the cold weather shapes citizens’ lives because they cannot have a normal life. It changes their behaviour since it affects their behaviour and social connections. The protagonist’s last sentence denotes that people vary in terms of their relationship with others; some people prefer to have some relations. The protagonist implicitly refers to the impact of climate change on society since it determines their general atmosphere and interrelations.

B. The Revenge of Nature on Social Interaction

The revenge of nature divides this society since it affects people’s relationship with others. The protagonist represents the total absence of social trust, belief and dependence on

others. Thereby, nature deprives people from their feeling of honesty towards others and intensifies their difficulty in creating a meaningful relationship. The best example is the unnamed woman and her child who escape from the South End to the North End because of the mistreatment and abuse of commissioners.

The remaining commissioners want people to leave the city; hence, they look for problems as shutting electricity, closing schools and hospitals and increasing an insecure environment. Once parents cannot provide money and education for their kids, they are considered as being unfit. The missing woman is the best example because she is declared unfit to take her son. Once he is taken from her, she takes him and escapes to the North End. Therefore, she does not trust individuals. When she comes to the North End, she avoids people and wants to remain invisible to the community. She hides in deserted buildings and does not talk to the unnamed protagonist at the early beginning. In this sense, the unnamed protagonist writes, "My son, she says. She's walking to him, glancing at me over her shoulder. Nervous, protecting. Instinct here, safety. Let nothing bad now happen" (Barnes, 2018, p.27). Barnes depicts the missing woman's protective instinct toward her son, emphasizing the importance of ensuring his safety and well-being. Barnes also describes the mother's fear of taking away her son from her, as they did in the South End. This entails the mother's desire to shield her son from harm and negative influence of society and suggests that the missing woman does not trust people around her. Her experiences have caused her to become wary and cautious, prioritizing his safety above all else.

Some American literature works describe the strength of the natural world and its intentionality. In this respect, nature is often seen as an active participant as it has the intention to engage in harmful actions (Latour, 2005, p.10). This entails that nature is not passive because it does not accept the harmful actions and mistreatment inflicted upon it by humans' actions.

Instead, nature responds and reacts to these actions in different ways. Hence, this suggests that nature has agency and power to harm. Barnes affirms that nature negatively influences people's lives through climate change. Natural disasters and cold weather can alter their lives because they cannot bear the post apocalyptic world. The unnamed protagonist writes, "Something in the ground is killing us. No one knows this for sure. But it's what people think" (Barnes, 2018, p.4). This may show social fear of the unknown world because they can never predict what they can face. They might be afraid of natural disasters that can kill the few remaining citizens in the city. The protagonist adds, "We thought there was something in the ground that was killing us. But what's killing us is ourselves" (Barnes, 2018, p.277). In other words, humans' abuse of nature has led to its vengeance on society. Hence, they have caused their destruction through the dangerous climate change. The protagonist refers to social fear and anxiety because they are killing themselves.

Nature is described as a powerful agent that has the ability to alter society's destiny. Its revenge appears through its influence on social relations after the fall of human civilization. The unnamed protagonist represents the absence of social relations in the North End because characters and small families live alone. They are afraid of the danger that surrounds them. This denotes the loss of community and unity in the post apocalyptic world. In this sense, the protagonist argues, "I can say I find comfort in the isolation. I can say I find comfort in my removal from the world" (Barnes, 2018, p.30-31). The protagonist is an alienated character since he lives alone in a deserted house. He does not have friends or family members. Besides, he does not communicate with other people; thus, he is not connected to his community. Different incidents exhibit the protagonist's loneliness from others. In the beginning of the novel, a passage shows and confirms his isolation; he sits underneath his building when he unexpectedly sees a police car with three officers, two men and a woman. Once they check the surrounding area, the

protagonist decides to inform them about the current situation. In this sense, he writes, “Both police officers jerk their bodies, turning around me, hands on their holstered guns” (Barnes, 2018, p.15). In other words, he does not communicate because he can neither find people nor have friends or family relatives. It also shows the disconnectedness of people from each other. Natural disasters have a negative impact on society since it alienates and separate characters of a single society. Hence, nature’s revenge appears through its impact on people and their social relationships.

As the novel develops, the unnamed protagonist has only a few characters to talk to such as some scavengers and the missing woman. One day, the missing woman comes to his office to look for a newspaper that discusses the murder of a man in the North End. The missing woman and the protagonist talk for a while; once they finish, the protagonist feels exhausted. He writes, “I feel the fog of tiredness come over me. The weight of conversation, of navigating her words and mine, it takes all the energy I have” (Barnes, 2018, p.82). Simply put, the protagonist cannot engage in a conversation with others because it consumes his energy. Hence, he feels tired and exhausted. Barnes uses a metaphor to show the weight of a short conversation on him. He employs the word ‘fog’ to express his exhaustion, which means that he cannot remain focused because his vision becomes blurry. As a result, the unnamed protagonist does not communicate with others because of the general post apocalyptic atmosphere.

The protagonist describes the remaining citizens, who live in different parts of the city. They live either in the abandoned detached houses or in hotel rooms. The protagonist writes, “The few who did remain, they simply closed their doors in silence” (Barnes, 2018, p.38). The citizens of the North End do not live as a community. People do not communicate with each other and remain in their houses. They are unable to establish a sense of community in a post

apocalyptic world. This might entail that they struggle with trust issues. Therefore, the revenge of nature appears through demolishing the Western society.

By the end of the novel, a flood hits both the North End and the South End and causes chaos. The government is absent and nobody can save citizens. Several people from the South End have become refugees because they have to travel to the North End. Once people are forced to leave their homes and land due to the flood, we can consider nature as an active agent and a powerful force that has the intention to retaliate against society. It is like nature is taking action and taking revenge for the harm inflicted upon it. This means that the flood is not just a natural disaster, but a response from nature itself. Even though the North End was closed before the flood, its citizens became helpful from a humanitarian perspective. Moreover, the revenge of nature appears through different conflicts between refugees. While being displaced, they face numerous challenges as they try to climb up ladders to reach the rooftops of high buildings. Their main goal is to survive and seek a safe place. In this context, the unnamed protagonist writes, “And the refugees keep climbing. Gathered in a massive group on the highway floor. Pressing inward toward the ladders” (Barnes, 2018, p.223). This quote vividly portrays the urgency and determination of the refugees despite the challenges they face, their struggle for survival and desire to escape to find a way for a better life. Furthermore, these refugees dispute while climbing the ladders. These disputes uncover people’s fear of water and selfishness since everyone tries to save his life. Put differently, the absence of social safety conducts people to distrust each other and encourage their abnormal behaviour. In this regard, the unnamed protagonist writes, “A fight breaks out at the base of a ladder. There is screaming there, and pushing, two men shoving their way to the front of a group” (Barnes, 2018, p.228). Climate change has a negative impact on society since characters become selfish; some individuals become savage and cruel because they

do not think about social safety. Therefore, Barnes portrays the lack and disappearance of the sense of humanity and conscience in a post apocalyptic world.

C. The Revenge of Nature and the Rise of Violence

Climate change brings about the rise of violence in the North End. Several dangerous teenagers come from the South End to abuse and threaten people. Once they are not stopped, they think that they can steal and break things, kill people, and consume drugs. Citizens of the North End decide to build an overpass to prevent them from entering the city. In other words, North End citizens prefer to increase safety measures to feel secure. This is the first time that citizens act as one community to stop further abuse from outsiders. However, these teenagers do not stop their threat. Once they find the overpass closed, they become aggressive and fight. Citizens of the North End have to defend themselves because these strangers are a threat. The unnamed protagonist says, “We are innately violent here. The violence fled with the last of the city’s government and people and the structures that once defined how we should and should not live” (Barnes, 2018, p. 171). Simply put, the absence of the government in the city means no police or law that defends them. Nobody can punish this group of strangers. The rise of violence shows the absence of a sense of community between the citizens of both cities in the abandoned world. Hence, climate change destroys not only the city but also society. Citizens of both cities cannot agree on necessary things such as unity, community, love and safety.

The protagonist further portrays the rise of violence since it is out of control. In this vein, nature is regarded as a location where violence takes place (Alford 1985, p.20). In the novel, there are only a few commissioners who rule both cities; they show that they symbolize order and law in a post apocalyptic world. However, they do not care about citizens’ problems such as suffering, safety or order. To illustrate, they want to turn the light off and do not care about the endangered citizens when they face climate change or violent teenagers. Hence, they are careless

because they want to ensure that these citizens will leave both cities as soon as possible. By the end of the novel, the protagonist recounts these teenagers' violence and abusive actions towards the guards to assert their dominance and express their frustration, create chaos and disrupt the peace and stability in the city. In this regard, he states, "The kids scream, honk their horns, throw bottles from their car toward the gate" (Barnes, 2018, p.181). The quote captures these kids' violence. This depiction highlights the negative impact of their behaviour on the community. Hence, the protagonist, gardeners and a minister beat them. This means that the absence of law and police to maintain order and ensure safety of the community creates a sense of lawlessness and the rise of violent behaviour due to the collapse of civilisation and the rise of barbarism.

In a post apocalyptic environment, characters become criminals and violent. Violence disrupts societal norms and legal regulation. In *The City Where We Once Lived*, Barnes describes the collapse of social order and commissioners which results in the increase of violence and lawlessness among people since they do not find safety and there is no law and order to restrict them. In the novel, teenagers are viewed as a source of danger to the North because they consider their aggressive and harmful actions and behaviour towards others a way to assert their authority and establish a sense of superiority. On this basis, in *The History of Sexuality*, Michelle Foucault defines power as "The multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organisation" (Foucault, 1978, p.92). This suggests that power is not just a single force, but rather a combination of various force relations within a specific sphere. These force relations are inherent to the sphere and have their own structure. Power is not external or imposed but rather emerges from within the sphere itself. In this sense, in the novel, one of the ministers says, "There's something about it that becomes appealing. The violence. Hitting someone. It's not the hurting. It's the power. The control you think you have" (Barnes, 2018, p.179). This minister criticizes teenagers' violence because they are powerful and

look like monsters in the post apocalyptic world. Citizens of the North End cannot remain as one community.

The governing system in the North causes the instability and chaotic state of the city and its citizens. In this context, Michel Foucault argues, “We are the subjects, the victims and perpetrators, of a disciplinary society, a society in which discipline operates as a widespread, familiar, and fundamental form of coercion” (qtd. Hass, 1996, P.61). In other words, people pay the consequences of social collapse. *The City Where We Once Lived* describes to what extent violence intensifies. To illustrate, men come to the North End to threaten citizens; they wear black clothes and have blond baseball bats in their hands. Besides, they hit people and destroy everything. The presence of gangs means that there is no government that can impose law. Violent kids always look for trouble in the North End; hence, they block traffic. In this sense, the protagonist argues, “The same kids and same gangs who wreak havoc in the South, they are coming over here, causing trouble. And we, this commission, did nothing to stop that. Nothing to help these people here” (Barnes, 2018, p.182). Put differently, the same teenagers come over and over to cause devastation. Consequently, the remaining commissioners have lost their ability to impose laws and protect citizens from violence; this leads to a state of lawlessness and potential chaos. Nature’s revenge on society in the post apocalyptic world is shown through dividing it and separating people. Climate change pushes people to create conflicts, turn violent, attack each other and stop their normal human relationships.

To sum up, the revenge of nature is one of the themes in contemporary American fiction. Eric Barnes’s *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) tackles the revenge of nature on society. Barnes portrays nature as an active agent through natural disasters that have the intention to avenge itself on the entire society. Hence, nature threatens social life. Because of these natural disasters, the remaining characters do not live as one community. Usually, they are alienated and

live in detached houses or abandoned hotel rooms. Therefore, people struggle with alienation because of the danger that surrounds them. Besides, people cannot interact with others owing to the rise of violence. Violent teenagers from the South End steal beat and kill people; they are regarded as a threat. More significantly, displaced people also struggle to communicate with others. These examples are different illustrations of the revenge of nature on society and social relations. One can notice that Climate fiction can be viewed as the reminder of the immense power of nature.

Chapter three: The Representation of Refugees in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived*

Throughout history, people might voluntarily or involuntarily become displaced people; they might flee their homelands because of natural disasters, poverty, and economic or political problems. There are different words used to define displaced people, which are refugees, nomads and migrants. Literature is a crucial means that represents the problem of the refugee crisis since it revolves around the main cause and consequences. Ecocriticism is an earth-centered approach that consists of several concepts such as the abuse of nature, climate change and refugees. This chapter inspects the result of environmental catastrophes, which is the mass migration of people. It emphasizes the depiction of refugees in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived*.

Ecocriticism, as a literary theory, tackles current ecological problems such as climate change and refugee crisis. The latter refers to the various challenges humans face since they have to leave from their cities or countries. Ecocriticism approaches literary criticism from an earth-centered perspective; its main focus is how literature engages with and contributes to the entire ecosphere (Opperman, 1999, P.2). Ecocriticism explores how nature is represented in literary works and the interconnection between humans and nature. Due to the problem of refugees, literature describes refugees' experiences including the impact of environmental degradation and displacement on vulnerable populations. These narratives focus on the interconnectedness between human migration, environmental crises and the need for sustainable solutions. In this regard, Opperman (2017) writes, "Defining migrants as climate refugees, or ecological migrants, is a complex issue as this kind of migration is inseparable from other factors that instigate mass displacement of people, as well as animals" (p.2). In other words, climate change is a significant driver that contributes to the mass displacement of people, rising sea levels, and extreme weather events make certain areas uninhabitable and unsafe, but it is important to recognize that this type

of migration is often intertwined with other factors. In this context, Antonia Menhert coins the concept of riskscape to refer to people's escape from one place to another (2016, P.78). Put differently, people seek safe places and more sustainable living conditions where they can be protected from climate change.

In *The City Where We Once Lived*, Barnes portrays the aftermath of natural disasters on Western population. The citizens of the North End have closed the main overpasses, gates, which link the city with the South End at the early beginning. They are afraid of dangerous teenagers who come to threaten them while the government is absent. To illustrate, the unnamed protagonist represents these dangerous kids; he writes, "they are not interested in the North End anymore than then are the South. All they want is trouble. Wherever they can most easily find it" (Barnes, 2018, p.181). The protagonist demonstrates the reason of the closure of the overpass. Hence, the absence of the government and law brings about the rise of violence and disorder. Indeed, these teenagers are violent because they want conflicts in the North End. Subsequently, these teenagers are considered as being a danger since their aim is to disrupt peace and safety of the community.

Closing the overpass does not stop the kids from coming to the North End. They come several times to threaten the guards and the citizens; however, they are not let in. For example, one day the kids, teenagers, come and ask to open the gates; once the guards refuse, the teenagers become insane. The protagonist says, "The kids scream insults, honk their horns, throw bottles from their car toward the gate" (Barnes, 2018, p.181). Hence, this explains that teenagers engage in suspicious behaviour and disregard law. Their presence can create a sense of unease and insecurity among residents that is why guards refused to let them move to the North End as a measure to ensure the well-being of residents. The North End citizens do not like outsiders due to their intentions based only on making disagreements and disputes.

The North End remains closed for a long period. By the middle of the novel, people started to witness the consequence of natural disasters. In this sense, Trexler writes, “Anthropocene fiction hopes to contribute to a wide body of literary scholarship that investigates environmental concerns” (Trexler, 2015, p.16). In other words, Anthropocene literature depicts the consequences of human activities on the earth. The unnamed protagonist portrays the power of the storm that hits the North. He says, “Lit and lightning and filled with rain, thick and swirling sheets of rain, the storm rides on a base of dirt and debris and rainwater spraying back up from the ground” (Barnes, 2018, p.212). Hence, the protagonist portrays storms as powerful, unpredictable, perturbing and awe inspiring. This suggests that weather changes can have profound impact on people’s lives. Storms can cause property damage and displacement.

The unnamed protagonist depicts the collapse and the failure of the governing system in the North End because it is absent during times of crises. When natural disasters hit such as storms and fires, people experience physical injuries and emotional trauma. Due to the failure of the government, the North End citizens try to help each other. In this sense, he writes, “We knew the fire department was nearly absent. Knew the ambulances no longer had means to respond” (Barnes, 2018, p.167). The protagonist represents chaos and inequality that shows total anarchy in the North End. Besides, there are no hospitals in the North End. Furthermore, the unnamed protagonist has also shown the absence of government in providing proper governance and law enforcement because of the lack of police presence. This results in a lack of public safety and an increase in the crime rate. The best example is when violent kids from the South End threaten citizens of the North. These citizens usually feel unsafe and unsupported because of the failure of the government to protect citizens.

Citizens face recurrent storms that break the remaining buildings, cars, levees, canals, and trees. Nothing can stand this destructive storm. Many people have lost their homes, are

injured and their cars are broken. More importantly, humans have built levees to prevent water from overflowing and inundating the surrounding areas; however, if storms hit with severe rainfall, they cause total destruction because of flooding. For instance, when North End citizens face a drastic storm, commissioners can neither help nor repair the city; their aim is to push citizens to quit and ran away from the city. In this sense, he writes, “I have a feeling of heat on my neck. I say, may be another levee broke in the storm. It’s a minute, and I say one that’s maybe now releasing water into the highway” (Barnes, 2018, p.219). Simply put, the protagonist portrays a powerful storm that comes along with rushing water and breaks levees; therefore, people are endangered. Weather change can have serious devastating results on citizens in the North End.

Because of these different natural disasters, both cities are destroyed. Hundreds and thousands of people from the South End are injured and are still waiting inside their cars for assistance. Unfortunately, water still rises and people are facing danger. Therefore, citizens of the North End decide to help people because they welcome the injured people. From this incident, the unnamed protagonist exhibits the effects of worsening climate conditions on mass migration. In this vein, Trexler states, “Ecocriticism evolved primarily to address local and easily identifiable outrages and injustices” (Trexler, 2015, p.08). In the same vein, he states, “Anthropocene is a truly global event ever as its effects local climates and ecosystems and in different ways” (Trexler, 2015, P.04). Simply put, global warming causes to the displacement of people. In the novel, citizens escape because they are unable to find help due to the absence of a state and government. Therefore, once they escape, we can consider them refugees. This marks the rise of refugees in the novel because thousands of people escape from the South End. The protagonist and other citizens put several ladders to climb high buildings. This indicates that

ladders are useful tools to reach high buildings. Hence, they provide an efficient way to assist these displaced people to remain in a safe area.

Displacement because of natural disasters is one of the main attributes of climate change. Citizens can become victims once they do not find protection. In this context, Lester R. Brown explains,

One of the defining characteristics of our time is the swelling of flow of environmental refugees: people displaced by rising seas, more-destructive storms, expanding deserts, water shortages, and the dangerously high levels of toxic pollutants in the local environment. (Lester, 2011, p.72-73)

‘Environmental refugees’ is a word coined by Brown to refer to displaced people. In the novel, the protagonist calls them ‘refugees’. These people, who have escaped from the South End to the North and climbed high buildings, are considered ‘refugees’. In this context, he writes, “expect these aren’t soldiers or invaders. They are just survivors, and when they finally reach the overpass, grasping at the guardrail as they reach the top, it’s clear these are not just survivors they are refugees”(Barnes, 2018, p.223). These refugees are often referred to as survivors because they have endured and overcame challenging circumstances where they had to flee their homes due to weather change. Their resilience and ability to overcome these obstacles make them survivors of climate change. By portraying them, Barnes describes the impact of climate change and its danger on citizens.

In case of chaos, people help refugees to save their lives; to illustrate, they help them climb high buildings. The protagonist argues, “The scavengers and others from the North End must help from the ladders, talking to them about where to put their hands on the guardrail, where to step, holding the refugees by the hand” (Barnes, 2018, p. 223). After being alienated from each other for a long period, the citizens of the North End try to be humanitarian in a sense that they help others in time of crisis. Therefore, more people come throughout the days. More

importantly, refugees are given both shelter and food on the rooftops. The protagonist claims, “A kitchen of sorts is set up under a tent. People make soup and they make coffee and at first they serve this just to the refugees who’ve made it out of the highway” (Barnes, 2018, p. 224). Put differently, refugees are provided not only shelter but also food. They afford them with different needs such as water, food, and blankets. The last chapters of the novel unveil that people become helpful to others in hard times to overcome the power of nature.

Barnes provides different images of people from both cities. The citizens of the South End can feel either gratitude or fear. The protagonist writes,

Some refugees hug the people who’ve helped them, weeping, arms wrapped tight around tall and weathered person from the North End. Other refugees only nod. Still others turn quickly and run away, fearing what might happen even as they are saved by people from a place that they’ve long ago learned to fear. (Barnes, 2018, 223)

From the above excerpt, there are two kinds of refugees. On the one hand, some of them are grateful because they are saved; they express their gratitude, appreciation, and connection. On the other hand, others are still afraid because they alienate themselves and do not know their human nature. Barnes portrays refugees’ trauma and shock because of what they saw, lived and experienced.

Refugees are also portrayed as victims because it is difficult to reach the rooftops. The protagonist argues, “the scavengers, not far from the highway, have built a kind of cage, a steel basket they’ve welded together in street using the pipes and gear in the back of their trucks and now that cage drops down from a winch and boom they’ve set up” (Barnes, 2018, p. 224). Due to the absence of the government, scavengers play a significant role in saving other people’s lives. They have created a steel basket to help refugees. Hence, due to the lack of technology, scavengers rely on different methods to provide shelter for these refugees. Furthermore, they have built a kitchen and provided refugees with necessary things. Additionally, they try to

survive in the post apocalyptic world by creating some means of transportation; they want to create some solutions. More significantly, Barnes describes people's feelings once they become refugees as they are desperate. This means that each refugee's experience is unique. Besides, Barnes writes, "Living on the edge of a madness or chaos" (Barnes, 2018, P.225). Once people realize that they are displaced and homeless, they feel lost and emotionally abused. Barnes focuses on people's despair and hopelessness to show refugees' feelings and fear.

Barnes describes more refugees who come from other places to save their lives and survive. The protagonist writes, "There are people from other places who climb up those ladders. People not from the South End. Some get to the top and look North, with fear similar to what they'd felt on the highway. That's the North End, right?" (Barnes, 2018, p.230). In other words, several people are victims of climate change. The protagonist provides an example of people from different places who take refuge in a safe place, the North End. These refugees prefer the North End because it seems safe. As a result, people in a post apocalyptic world want to survive and look for safety. Furthermore, they believe that the whole world is unsafe except the North End. They also want to feel home, free and protected even though they are displaced. Consequently, climate change has a negative impact on people's life. The protagonist describes even animals as refugees since they are roaming around automobiles and humans (Barnes, 2018, p.225). Some of the animals, there are chickens, pigs and cows. As a result, not only humans cross the highway to enter the North End but also other species that are looking for safety and peace.

One day, refugees experience a frightening scene when rungs of ladders break. Fortunately, scavengers save them. In this context, he writes, "The rungs of ladders break and the people on them scream and the people above the break manage to get to the top and the ones below, saved by the safety lines strung along the full length of the ladders, they are forced to

return to the bottom” (Barnes, 2018, p.225). Therefore, the protagonist portrays the hardships that refugees face while escaping to a new place. These refugees struggle while climbing the ladders, but they are saved. This entails that lucky people survive and reach the surface. Besides, refugees can quarrel in the ladders. The protagonist adds, “A fight breaks out at the base of a ladder. There is screaming there, and pushing” (Barnes, 2018, p.228). These fights occur because refugees feel unsafe and want to reach the rooftops to survive. The absence of the government during climate change results in the rise of chaos and disorder.

The unnamed protagonist refers to harsh circumstances where refugees fight amongst themselves, shout and shove each other; unfortunately, this drives scavengers and people of the city to behave brutally and aggressively. In this sense, he puts down, “He falls. She kicks him in the head. She turns to the other man who’d been pushing forward. She hits him in the face. Hard. One punch. He falls too and she kicks him in the head also” (Barnes, 2018, p.228). This explains that people of the North hate every kind of violence because it is based on physical force or aggression. As a result, when they see people doing it, they feel compelled to respond with violence as well to seek justice and punishment.

To conclude, Eric Barnes’s *The City Where We Once Lived* investigates the mass migration of people because of climate change. This chapter deals with refugees experiences in a post apocalyptic world. They struggle with harsh realities because their aim is to survive; they face displacement to the North End. The chapter also demonstrates the connection between the characters once the North End citizens decide to help the refugees because the government is absent. They help the refugees to climb the buildings and provide them with both food and safety.

V. General Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation examined ecocriticism in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018). To study the complex connections between humans and their environment, this research is partitioned into three chapters; it relied on several theorists and their concepts. It relied on Cheryll Glotfelty, Stephan R. Kellert and Ladelle McWorther's definition of ecocriticism. It also focused on Adam Trexler's *Anthropocene Fiction: The novel in a Time of Climate Change* (2015), Gregers Andersen *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis: A New Perspective on Life in Anthropocene* (2020), and Antonia Menhert's *Climate Change Fictions: Representation of Global Warming in American Literature* (2016). Through characters and protagonist's lives, it has demonstrated the negative effect of human abuse and exploitation of natural world.

The first chapter, it explored the abuse and despoliation of nature through the unnamed protagonist's narration. In *The City Where We Once Lived*, the unnamed protagonist witnesses the consequences of the debasement of the natural world. Barnes portrays characters use of pollutants to harm the environment, focusing on massive chemicals, petroleum plants, smokestacks, pipes, storage pools and different substances. This dissertation has also examined the disappearance of greenery, trees, plants, grass, shrubs, flowers and the loss of life. It has presented different storms, tornadoes, floods and rain that people have to face and their impacts on society, politics and economy. Through Barnes's narrative we noticed climate change as a central theme. The story explored the consequences of rising sea levels, extreme weather events and the overall impact of changing climate on the city. The characters have to navigate and cope with these challenges which shape their lives and the overall dynamic of the community to adapt and survive.

The second chapter delved into the theme of revenge of nature. This chapter discussed the impact of human abuse and exploitation of the natural world that led nature to avenge itself through natural disasters. These contributed to the alienation of society, rise of violence and more displacement of people. Through Barnes's narrative society is portrayed as fragmented and disconnected. Characters are forced to confront the consequences of their actions and adapt to a world that has drastically changed. Some characters become more resilient and resourceful, while others may be consumed by fear or desperation. Therefore, Eric Barnes succeeded in representing nature in *The City Where We Once Lived* as an active and powerful entity that restrict people's ideas that nature is passive and inferior.

The third chapter presented the theme of refugees in the context of a post apocalyptic city. This chapter thoroughly explored the displacement of people. Barnes depicted citizens' challenges and experiences while being displaced. They are forced to leave their homes because they were affected and unable to endure the strength of natural disasters. Through Barnes's portrayal of refugees in *The City Where We Once Lived*, we observe the deep impact of climate change and natural disasters on the protagonist's and characters lives because they struggle with different obstacles to cope and deal with a post apocalyptic world.

These chapters provide an image about the impact of exploitation and abuse of nature. Barnes's work serves as a powerful reminder of ethical responsibilities humans hold towards their environment in order to protect and preserve nature. *The City Where We Once Lived* can be approached from other perspectives. It explores parent-child relationship, post-traumatic stress disorder and psychological alienation.

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