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Title

Tracing Corruption, Crime and Violence in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) and its prequel *Above the Ether* (2019)

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Dedications

I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my beloved father, who passed away years ago. I wanted to make him proud with my achievements and I hope I did.

To my beloved mother, great thanks to her because of her enormous sacrifice and unconditional love.

To my brothers, Brahim and Nabil, and to my uncles and aunts for their support and precious assistance.

Lastly, to my friends for their care and inspiring pieces of advice.

“Souhila”

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving parents who raised me, loved me and supported me in my life.

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Last but not least, to all my friends who loved me and respected me

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“Ferial”

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Abstract

*This research investigates corruption, crime and violence in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) and its prequel *Above the Ether* (2019). It studies how man's abuse of nature led to a post-apocalyptic world, which is induced by climate change. Different natural disasters such as storms, earthquakes and floods hit the world. The dissertation discusses corruption, crime and violence in relation to environmental issues. It relies on Claire P. Curtis's *Postapocalyptic Fiction and the Social Contract: "We'll Not Go Home Again"*, Shela Sheikh's concept of violence and Gregers Andersen's *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis: A New Perspective on Life in the Anthropocene*. Barnes's works are chosen for the powerful messages they hide and their impressive impact on the reader's mind. This study aims first to explore the impact of climate change and the post-apocalyptic world on characters. Our investigation of the issue under study has led us to some findings. Both novels show how post-apocalyptic horrible environment cause the absence of the government and the corruption of its leaders and commissioners. We find the total absence of law and police to restrict people. These events push the characters, in both novels, to feel insecure because there is no power to protect them. Consequently, these acts of crime and violence push people to be violent in order to defend themselves. Both novels focus on the use of violence as a self-defence mechanism to survive and the benefit of working as one community to escape the terrifying post-apocalypse.*

Key words: *Corruption, crime, violence, ecocriticism, post-apocalyptic genre.*

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I. Introduction:

This dissertation attempts to examine Eric Barnes's post-apocalyptic novels. It investigates the representation of corruption, crime and violence in Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) and its prequel *Above the Ether* (2019). Our discussion of the novels opens with *Above the Ether* since it is a prequel to the first novel. In fact, several contemporary fictional works represent incidents that cause a post-apocalypse such as bombs, wars or natural disasters. The aftermath is always negative because authors portray the rise of cannibalism, theft, corruption and violence among other topics. Eric Barnes is an American author who describes a post-apocalyptic world which is induced by climate change. He focuses on how it is the main cause of corruption, crime and violence.

The Era of the twentieth century marks the rise of countless historical events that shaped the image of the end of the world such as atomic bombs, weapons of mass destruction and the Two World Wars. These incidents left people despaired about the coming future. They also have an impact on people's thinking about their life and their relationship with nature. Thus, human's destruction of the natural world has a negative impact on it because it engenders climate change. This in turn may threaten human existence through different natural disasters such as temperature rising, earthquakes, tsunamis and floods because they can turn marvellous cities into wastelands. Hence, climate change can bring about the end of the world, mainly apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic worlds.

In Barnes's novels, climate change plays a paramount role in causing post-apocalypse. This generates a plethora of events and a big disorder in the American world. This study explores the collapse and total absence of the American state. It puts emphasis first on the characters' environment which is induced by climate change and the corruption of the government during the aftermath of the apocalypse. Corrupt leaders and policemen do not

work under these circumstances because they are irresponsible. This leads to the loss of security and the upsurge of crime and violence. Therefore, characters, in both novels, turn violent and become criminals. This research also traces how these incidents shape characters' use of violence to impose self-protection. Characters, subsequently, feel obliged to use violence to avoid another violent behaviour and to remain alive. In other words, they resist in order to survive both violence and environmental change.

a) Review of the Literature:

Corruption and violence can be considered as a multifaceted issue by numerous academic scholars. In the past, violence in its most prevalent forms has been viewed as a criminal and social pathology. Through time, there are several American writers who started to tackle corruption, crime and violence in their novels. Many critics have approached Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) and its prequel, *Above the Ether* (2019). However, none of them has tackled corruption, crime and violence. *The City Where We Once Lived* is a dark story of a world destroyed by climate change, industrial carelessness and human anger. This story takes place in an unnamed city which is divided into the North-End and the South- End. It is about urban abandonment, government carelessness and people's choice to remain in their city. In *Climate Change in Popular Culture: A Warming World in the American Imagination*, James Craig Holte analyses climate change in different novels; he focuses on Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived*. He believes that it is a remarkable and special climate change novel since it focuses on one lost man's life. He argues 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 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)

According to Holte, the novel is realistic and prophetic in a sense that it tackles people's reaction and adaptation in a dystopian world. The novel is considered as a picture that delves into the life of ordinary people who have found themselves obliged to face the catastrophic events of the end of the world.

In his review, Michelle Gilbert Doshi sheds light to the negative aspects of the end of the world in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived*. He pinpoints the main themes and ideas of the novel. In this sense, he writes,

The sparse and deserted North End of the city was once an urban, bustling landscape. Budget cuts, extreme weather, and a governmental shift in focus to the South End led to the North End's abandonment. People survive in this area because government-man-dated electricity and water still run. Some people have set up shop on street corners. (Doshi, 2018, p. 45)

The above-mentioned quote indicates that the city has merely collapsed. Doshi portrays the North End's abandonment due to the lack of governmental care. Characters are able to survive because they have electricity and water; this entails that life is hard to bear in the aftermath of the apocalypse.

Eric Barnes's *Above the Ether* is a prequel to *The City Where We Once Lived*, and it is a climate change science fiction. Even though it is fiction, it recounts a shocking story that might be relevant in today's world. It delves into the desolation and destruction of a ravaged earth; it also focuses on people's fear when they face daily destruction. Barnes's unnamed characters do not only entail that they do not have identities in a post-apocalyptic world but also that these events can happen to anyone. There are some cases from a large crowd who are trying to survive even if they are silently suffering from a chaotic atmosphere. In his review, Carl Hays analyses Eric Barnes's *Above the Ether*. He puts emphasis on Barnes's depiction of ordinary people who are struggling in a ravaged earth. In this regard, he claims that this prequel portrays different natural disasters such as earthquake and tsunami, which cause the displacement of people to the North End. Carl Hays explains that

A father and two children flee down a waterlogged highway to escape the tsunami... Barnes' spare and chilling prose flows from one horrific scene to another without, surprisingly, alienating his readers, perhaps because the heart of his narrative ultimately reveals an abiding faith in the power of human compassion. (Hays, 2019, p. 27)

From the previous quote, characters suffer in this changing world. Hays argues that the government is unable to provide any assistance due to the unpredictable weather. The novel follows the stories of characters who suffer from loss, lack of protection, danger, addiction, manipulation, weather change. They also face serious problems in their daily lives. The different characters and their stories converge in the city which is half abandoned.

b) Issues and Working Hypothesis:

From the above review of literature, one scholar has examined *The City Where We Once Lived* while several reviewers have reviewed their contexts and themes. Subsequently, no previous researches in literary academia have contributed a study to discuss corruption, crime and violence in the novels under scrutiny. Despite the fact that there are some studies on corruption, crime and violence in several novels, the previous review of literature shows that no previous research has attempted to examine them in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) and *Above the Ether* (2019). This dissertation, therefore, attempts to probe corruption, crime and violence in Eric Barnes's previously mentioned novels. This research investigates the above-mentioned themes in a post-apocalyptic environment that is induced by climate change.

This study investigates how corruption, crime and violence are depicted in the two post-apocalyptic novels. These novels extensively show corruption, crime and violence in post-apocalyptic American society, particularly in the North End and South End. We find that there are different reasons that may lead to the post-apocalyptic world such as natural disasters and absence of government. Post-apocalyptic fiction draws attention to the feeling

of loss, lack of trust, uncertainty and anxiety about the future. Moreover, the main objective is to focus on the aftermath of climate change in contemporary society. There are a few survivors in both novels that are not sociable, lack interaction with others, because they are afraid of strangers. This means that people face isolation and create their own life away from any human's interaction. These literary works also reveal how strangers can be considered as a source of cannibalism, crime, or violence. In other words, existence is based on a person's ability to adapt to the new chaotic world and to overcome fear and confusion of a post-apocalyptic world.

c) Methodological Outline:

The present research study examines corruption, crime and violence in a post-apocalyptic world in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) and *Above the Ether* (2019). It opens with a General Introduction, Methods and Materials, Discussion and finally the Conclusion. In the Methods, we rely on different theoretical trajectories to explain post-apocalyptic genre, and "social collapse" to put emphasis on corruption, crime and violence in an environment that is induced by climate change. These theorists believe that environmental change is the main cause of human degradation and the use of violence. In the Materials, this study provides Barnes's biography and synopsis of his novels. In the discussion, we examine the main themes in the above-mentioned novels. This section is divided into two chapters. In the first chapter, we will analyse climate change and the corruption of government in the aftermath of the apocalypse. In the second chapter, we shall analyse the results of climate change and corruption of government on people which are crime and violence. We shall discuss the relationship between people and how they are a source of threat to each other. In the conclusion, we will present the conclusions and results drawn from our research study.

II. Methods and Materials

1) Methods:

In order to discuss the themes of corruption, crime and violence in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* and its prequel, *Above the Ether*, we are going to rely on different theoretical trajectories. This dissertation depends on Claire P. Curtis's *Postapocalyptic Fiction and the Social Contract* (2010) to define post-apocalyptic genre and the general atmosphere. It relies on Shela Sheikh's "Concept of Violence", in order to define violence. It also depends on Gregers Andersen's *Climate Change and Cultural Analysis: A New Perspective on Life in the Anthropocene* since it defines the concepts in relation to nature and natural disasters.

a. Post-apocalyptic Genre:

Post-apocalyptic literature is considered a genre of science fiction. Its emergence goes back to the twentieth century and started to spread in the wake of World War I, World War II, and the Cold War. Post-apocalyptic fiction delves into the aftermath of an apocalyptic incident and provides a futuristic vision of the world and human existence. In *Postapocalyptic Fiction and the Social Contract: We'll Not Go Home Again*, Claire P. Curtis writes,

I define postapocalyptic 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. (Curtis, 2010,

p. 16)

This excerpt illustrates that writers use post-apocalyptic genre as a mirror to show characters' lives after an inevitable end. Curtis also points out that these natural disasters may cause an apocalypse such as floods, storms and earthquakes; thereupon, during the post-apocalypse one

may face human extinction or the presence of few human beings. These people struggle to survive in an isolated world where they feel in danger.

A post-apocalyptic novel typically recounts a story of a world in which military and governmental systems have mostly disappeared; there are only few survivors who remain in a society which is devoid of official social control or rule. In this context, Curtis explains that “The apocalyptic end destroys all semblance of organised political life, thus producing the conditions of the state of nature” (Curtis, 2010, p. 18). Violence and devastation of the end of the world produce a natural state where there is no official government. This genre focuses on the absence of any authority due to the destroyed world (Curtis, 2010, p. 10) Therefore; there are no longer hierarchies, laws, or systems that classify people in this world. The absence of a government or authority means that people are freed from all restrictions; hence, they can turn to violence and barbarism (Curtis, 2010, p. 18). They face daily dangers and threats including murder and cannibalism. This means that the main theme that can be found in post-apocalyptic genre is human survival; this is why they defend themselves among the ruined and collapsed society. Characters, here, need to fight to stay alive, even if they have to use violence.

b. Climate Change and Its Consequences

In the twenty-first century, climate change fiction or climate fiction emerged as a new concept in ecocritical theory. In *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, Cheryll Glotfelty argues that ecocriticism is “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty, 1996, p. 4). In other words, it tackles writers’ portrayal of the different connections between people, nature and literature. Theorists indicate the relationship between environmental factors, economic production methods, and cultural

concepts over time (Glotfelty, 1996, p. 20). There are different concepts within ecocriticism such as ecofeminism, climate change and wilderness, which makes it a rich field.

Climate fiction tackles the relationship between humans and environmental crises. In *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis: A New Perspective on Life in the Anthropocene*, Gregers Andersen writes, “climate fiction distinguishes itself from other fictions in which both natural and human-induced climate change have catastrophic consequences” (Andersen, 2020, p. 5). Thus, climate fiction provides a view of the causes of the natural world; it can be either human or natural. However, some of the consequences can be the absence of a government or the rise of crime and violence. In his theoretical framework, Andersen devotes a part to explain the relationship between climate change and violence. He coins a concept called ‘social collapse’ to refer to characters who live in an environment that is induced by climate change. He argues that “according to this imagination form anthropogenic global warming will result in accelerating social disintegration and interhuman violence on a large scale” (Andersen, 2020, p. 11). In other words, environmental change is viewed as the main cause of human degradation and the rise of violence. The absence of the government in this world is also one of its causes since characters are not restricted. This means that the living conditions that surround humans in a post- apocalyptic world have an impact on their acts and behaviours.

Andersen draws attention to a character’s trauma and use of violence. In this context, Andersen states that

The man, who was ‘once good’, is too desperate to think of anyone but himself. Thus when the infected man calls himself a ‘humanist in an inhuman world’, it is a statement no longer in accordance with reality. The infected man was once a humanist, but the inhumane world he exists in has made him inhumane. (Andersen, 2020, p. 38)

This excerpt means that people who have faced and survived natural or man-made catastrophes develop psychological problems. This means that they might suffer from an

emotional breakdown. Thus, traumatic occurrences have a negative impact on people's emotions, social interactions, and behaviours. Many of these impacts are linked to a higher likelihood of violent crime.

Shela Sheikh, in her essay "Violence", believes that the concept of violence is connected to various extremes, particularly ideological, ethical and legal ones. Sheikh argues that violence is very common in real contemporary world; even the media attempt to show it so as to frighten people (Sheikh, 2018, p. 449). Any person's use of physical force or power to harm or threaten another one or a given group is considered as a violent act. Violence can cause damage at different levels, mainly physical. In this context, humans are known to be violent from previous historical incidents. Therefore, Sheikh claims that there is another kind of violence which is bound to environmental issues; nature is an active agent, this is why it promotes people to turn violent once they face any change in climate (Sheikh, 2018, p. 450).

In this respect, Sheikh explains that

environments (including digital ecologies) are registered not only as the fields through which violence is enacted and mediated, but also as the potentially active sensoria or indicators that might bear witness to the (violent) crime – as soon as one learns how to access and read the traces. (Sheikh, 2018, pp. 450-451)

This quote reveals that in a post- human world, the environment is a witness to the crime and violence that characters can do.

From the previous theoretical trajectories, it is obvious that natural disasters can cause the appearance of a post-apocalyptic era. In this post catastrophe, people turn to crime and violence particularly when there is no state or government to rule them. Their core aim is to survive, and they do not care about their socio-cultural principles.

2) Materials

a) Eric Barnes's Biography

Eric Barnes is an American author and publisher who was born on February 28th, 1968. According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, Barnes grew up in Tacoma, Washington; currently, he lives in Memphis. Barnes earned both a BA and an MFA from Connecticut College and Columbia University, respectively. He previously worked as a reporter and editor in Connecticut, New York City, and Kenai, Alaska. He is both a publisher and CEO of The Daily Memphian News, an online news site in Memphis which was opened in September 2018, as well as The West Tennessee News, The Nashville Ledger, The Knoxville Ledger, and The Hamilton County Herald. Additionally, Barnes is the weekly news host for the local public television station WKNO. He has written several novels particularly *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018), *Above the Ether* (2019), *Shimmer* (2009), and *Something Pretty, Something Beautiful* (2013). Moreover, he published a number of short stories such as *All I Can See*, *Friday Afternoon*, *And We Would Drive*, *Captain Marvel*, and *Dreams Where I Can Fly*. In fact, *The City Where We Once Lived* is one of his influential novels because he made a national conversation on climate change due to its various citations. More importantly, his story, *Something Pretty, Something Beautiful* was chosen to be included in the 2011 collection of the best American mystery stories (Wikipedia, 2021).

b) Synopsis of *Above the Ether* (2019)

Since *Above the Ether* is a prequel to Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived*, it is necessary to start with its summary. The events take place in the South End where most people live and where violence firstly appears. The novel delves into the experiences and lives of six different groups of characters. These characters face an inevitable climate change

catastrophe and its impact on their daily lives; hence, they live in a post-apocalyptic period. After a significant earthquake in the Gulf, a father and his young children run from a tsunami. While wildfires steadily approach their home, a mother and her husband punish themselves unrelentingly for losing both of their sons to drug addiction. A clever investor, sitting in the quiet luxury of her office sixty storeys up in the blazing air, evaluates opportunities in the risk to crops, houses, cities, industries, and infrastructure. A doctor and his wife are stranded in an immigrant refugee camp in the southern desert. Moreover, the doctor and his wife show how some parts are run by illegal gangs who are paid to provide safety for people in the core of the rolling pandemics, violence, scavenging, fire, disease and famine increase to cover their everyday life. Additionally, a roadside carnival employs two young guys; one of them is fleeing a violent past, however, he is still a violent guy, and the other is coping with racism in the present. All these characters reach a city that is half-abandoned in order to survive. Additionally, the plot revolves around these characters' anxieties, solitude, financial hardship, and a common trait which is taking advantage of weak and defenceless people. By the end of the novel, a new flood strikes the South End; several people have to move to the North End while others prefer to stay home.

c) Synopsis of *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018)

The City Where We Once Lived is a post-apocalyptic near-future novel that revolves around an unnamed character who is traumatised by his family's death, wife and sons, in a fire incident. He lives in a destroyed and threatening environment due to climate change. Because of his trauma, the narrator flees the South End after the flood that occurs at the end of *Above the Ether* and spends his time documenting the degradation that occurs all around him. The unnamed protagonist lives basically in the North End of an unidentified city, which is abandoned since the majority choose to live in the South End after the flood. Only a few

thousand people are left content to live in peace amidst the disintegrating city, while the scavengers slowly spread chaos in the deserted city by seizing every single thing they find. More significantly, as the incidents develop one learns that there are visitors, both aggressive and desperate, who start to show up in the North End. These visitors are teenagers who do not have anything to do in the South End, this is why they drive to northern places to steal, kill or abuse the citizens of the North End. These teenagers are conscious that things are also falling apart elsewhere and there is no government that can impose laws and restrict violent teenagers. Consequently, both the protagonist and the scavengers agree that they must protect their neighbours from these outsiders and intruders.

III. Results:

In our dissertation, we tried to investigate the representation of Corruption, Crime and Violence in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018), and its prequel *Above the Ether* (2019). The main connection between the two novels is that the events of the second novel, *Above the Ether*, come first because it is a prequel. This is an important subject that raises human consciousness about the dangers of climate change. We relied on the definition of post-apocalyptic genre and climate fiction to analyse the themes of Corruption, Crime and Violence in Eric Barnes's novels. This study demonstrates the lost and distracted generation in the aftermath of the apocalypse. It also reveals the different struggles humans face.

Our thematic analysis has demonstrated that both novels tackle corruption, crime and violence in a post-apocalyptic American society. The first chapter sheds light on the negative impact of climate change due to the absence of government and the corruption of its leaders and commissioners. These commissioners do not do their job since there are no laws to restrict them and no orders to follow. They also do not fix things in their cities. The second chapter examined the effect of the governmental collapse which is the rise of crime and violence in the abandoned cities. Since the two books are interrelated, it is important to mention that *Above the Ether* consists of the starting point of collapse, crime and violence. Violence grows up within the same community, South End. In *The City Where We Once Lived*, violence cannot be controlled since citizens from the South End abuse those of the North End. For this reason, the protagonist hates them and considers them as a source of threat. In both novels, crime and violence arise as a reaction to some groups who are violent while others want to protect themselves from strangers in a dangerous environment. Some citizens have adapted the same violence to maintain safety. Hence, self-defence and survival are frequent themes. The result of our study reached the fact that both novels deal with

corruption, crime and violence. In climate fiction, people live in a collapsed world; this is why Barnes illustrates American society's use of crime and violence in a post-apocalyptic environment.

IV. Discussion

Chapter One: Climate Change and Corruption in a Post-Apocalyptic World in *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) and its prequel *Above the Ether* (2019):

This chapter examines the impacts of the post-apocalyptic world which are shown on the absence of government and the corruption of commissioners in Eric Barnes's *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) and its prequel, *Above the Ether* (2019). It opens with an analysis of the main causes of the post-apocalypse. In fact, post-apocalyptic fiction is a literary genre that explores people's reaction to a global catastrophe that causes a great number of deaths and human extinction. Climate change can be considered as one of the main causes of the end of the world; it has a negative influence on people's environment and lives. However, the absence of a given state shapes people's lives because there is no law to follow; this pushes the few survivors to live in a barbaric, corrupted and chaotic universe. This shows that climate change creates a monstrous world where everyone chooses to live alone and isolated from other people as a way of survival. Therefore, Eric Barnes's novels portray the aftermath of an apocalyptic incident, particularly climate change.

In *Postapocalyptic Fiction and the Social Contract "We'll Not Go Home Again,"* Claire P. Curtis argues that post-apocalyptic genre has some characteristics: a small group of survivors has to face chaos and must learn to distinguish between friends and enemies so as to overcome undesirable consequences (Curtis, 2010, p. 17). Under these conditions, people think about survival rather than law and order; they do not care about right or wrong. In this context, Curtis argues that "the state of nature is identified by a series of absences: no government, no order, no rules, and the subsequent consequences of that lack of order" (Curtis, 2010, p. 44). This means that people act according to the current state of nature even

if it is chaotic. The absence of governmental authorities causes a high increase of insecurity. Post-apocalyptic fiction focuses on the absence of government; this is why there is no law that can control and restrain human behaviour. Curtis claims that

Modern political philosophers famously constructed the idea of the state of nature in order to highlight that the legitimacy of the state rests on the consent of the governed. The only way to theorize legitimacy was to imagine a time and place where there was no government. (Curtis, 2010, p. 9)

This excerpt shows that as far as the world is destroyed, humans live in a state of nature and do not believe in authority since there is no government to control them. People are free to do whatever they want; hence, they can become corrupt and do not work properly.

a) Above the Ether (2019):

Climate Change Incidents in *Above the Ether*:

Above the Ether is a prequel to *The City Where We Once Lived*. The connection between the two novels is that the events of the second novel take place first. In *Above the Ether*, Barnes depicts life in the South End where the characters live. It is a polyphonic novel that revolves around six characters who are the father, the investor, the stranger, the carousel operator, the doctor and finally the restaurant manager. Every one of these characters lives alone or with a family relative, or a friend in scattered buildings in the South End. Barnes portrays the impact of climate change on the planet and people's relations. Human technology is the main cause of climate change and natural disasters. In this sense, Serpil Oppermann argues, in "Storied Matter" from *Posthuman Glossary*, that "Chemical 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" (Oppermann, 2018, p. 412). In other words, human actions disrupt nature especially with its dangerous industrial components.

Barnes also shows how different sources like chlorine and oil can destroy the purity of water and land surface. He says that

The kid and the epileptic watch a cell tower fall. A smokestack. An oil rig, in the Gulf, they see it slip into the water, steam and smoke and flames erupting, then extinguished. On the television, oil rises to the surface of the waves, the video now showing how it coats beaches and boats and animals. (Barnes, 2019, p. 90)

The quote illustrates that water is full of toxic elements. Oil spreads to water and it creates a mixture of poisons that increase dramatically. Once they reach the surface, they kill everything, mainly animals. Consequently, Barnes refers to the dangers of human actions on the planet and particularly the environment and nature.

Barnes also portrays the impact of an earthquake on people once buildings collapse. In *From Apocalypse to Way of Life: "Environmental Crisis in the American Century,"* Frederick Buell suggests that human actions destroy the ecosystem, since pollution affects both the natural world and human's 'well-being' (Buell, 2003, p. 86). Human actions affect the biodiversity of nature. In this context, Barnes writes, "Cities where, every day, people must cover their faces with masks because of the pollution" (Barnes, 2019, p. 146). This shows that people are responsible for the pollution of the natural world and its impact on their lives. The quote also delves into the degradation of the natural world in the post-apocalypse where nature is a dangerous force that threatens the survivors' life. In fact, natural disasters have a negative impact; they may lead to the post-apocalypse. Storms have almost dried everything and nothing grows there. There is no sign of life since nothing remains as levees and river overflow; therefore, everybody from the South goes to the North End. Characters become refugees as they are forced to leave their homes.

In *Above the Ether*, the plot is unchronological, the events are told through a non-linear pattern. The plot is divided into prologue, chapters, epilogue, polyphony plus subsections. The novel opens with a prologue that describes characters' lives in several

chapters and subsections. It is narrated through the use of the third person to portray the incidents. Barnes writes, “And it’s no longer just water. It’s a force of liquid earth, filled with objects from the ground and from homes and from buildings... pressing down on the earth, eating it alive, finding more water to help it grow stronger every mile” (Barnes, 2019, pp. 6-7). This quote reveals that the city faces a destructive flood owing to the presence of strong water which submerges in the dead land. Water destroys factories, stores and neighbourhoods because it is three to four feet high.

The post-apocalyptic world is harsh and painful for characters because they are homeless and refugees. In this context, Andersen claims that the anthropogenic global warming is harsh for humanity because the new ice age is cold (Andersen, 2020, p. 5). This indicates that the new atmosphere is intolerable due to the weather which is extremely cold, and it is hard for people to bear these hard conditions. Barnes says, “The homeless build shelters to protect themselves from the cold... in the homeless camps. Leaders and followers and people with jobs to keep these communities alive” (Barnes, 2019, p. 24). Thus, people who live in the post-apocalypse have neither homes nor a stable life, but they try to survive and establish shelters to ensure safety and to avoid the cold weather. This proves that these people still have a will to start again and to restore life despite the hard conditions.

In a post-apocalyptic world, disaster can strike at any time. Characters face horrific conditions while they try to escape natural disasters. They try to escape using their vehicles across the roadsides, while others try to turn back. They struggle to survive in a climate change induced environment. Barnes says that

People carry children. People carry old men... one man holds a dog and a cat and some other animal unidentified, and now the man falls, forward, hitting his head as his body slams out of view. People jump from the roofs to the road and some try to run along the otherwise clear, seemingly safe path that the muddy, dead farmland seems to offer. But they stop moving immediately... all of them now only able to sway in

place, swinging their arms, wildly geasping for help as the water from the south finally reaches them. (Barnes, 2019, p. 15)

The above-mentioned quote sheds light on the difficulties that people experience during their journey as natural disasters hit them. The characters are refugees who suffer in their journey as they carry everything with them whether their families, animals or things. There are several people of different ages who leave and search for a better shelter. They want to save their lives. Furthermore, people who live in the abandoned cities have experienced different kinds of natural disasters several times, which are very harsh. Barnes describes the harsh storms that “grow bigger, taller, more severe” (Barnes, 2019, p. 203). It seems that in a post-apocalyptic world, storms are harsh and dangerous, since people are unable to understand the state of the weather. These natural disasters grow rapidly in the wake of climate change. Unfortunately, these people cannot escape this scary environment as long as they do not find a less dangerous and safer place. Otherwise stated, Barnes focuses on the impact of natural disasters on people’s environment.

Corruption and Absence of Government and Law in *Above the Ether*:

In a disastrous situation, the environmental decline is either a direct or indirect result of anthropogenic climate change, in addition to the authoritarian collapse. Climate change has a huge impact not only on the environment and people’s lives but also on the government. In this sense, Curtis states that theorists depict humans without the typical amenities that civil society offers, such as security and law enforcement that permit individuals to pursue their own interests; however, in a post-apocalyptic world, none of these exist because they push mankind to reconsider what is actually required for survival (Curtis, 2010, p. 19). In *Above the Ether*, Barnes portrays how climate change disturbs all symbols of a civilised world, such as law, government and progress. Unfortunately, people have to face the harsh reality of the end of the world. There is no sign of an organised government; but there are some

commissioners who act against people's interests. It appears that the system of life has changed. In this sense, the protagonist writes,

More people working at night in order to sleep during the day. Schools convene at three in the afternoon, sports played only in the late evening of the weekends, under lights paid for entirely by donations from the wealthy. Power is limited. Brownouts are common. (Barnes, 2019, p. 39)

This quote demonstrates that life is inverted; people work at night so they can sleep in the day. Time schools open in afternoons while sports are only available during the weekends. The word 'power' refers to the engines that switch on the lights; it seems that light is very limited in the post-apocalyptic world. This proves that people live in the aftermath of the apocalypse without the presence of a government.

Since the world is divided into two different cities, the North End and the South End, we find a few scattered buildings with a few survivors. Hence, there are only a few commissioners in both cities; many have left because they do not have a sense of responsibility to fix things as long as they think that there is no need to serve those few people and to make an effort in these chaotic cities. We do not have names for commissioners; it might refer to the fact that Barnes wants to show that there are numerous bad leaders who do not care about their citizens. The South End fails because of the commissioners who do not have the intention to solve the problems or provide help. The city is completely lawless as there are no longer the former rules or an executive authority to rule over people in order to punish those who commit a crime or violence. Thus, people can do whatever they want without the feeling of guilt or fear to be sentenced and punished.

Chaos spreads as there is no power to control the situation and provide rules to restrict the citizens in the abandoned city. The stranger's chapter includes, "And as people move away from the failing services and the fires that consume so many homes, the problems just get worse. Fewer people to pay for the many needs that now remain" (Barnes, 2019, p. 39).

This quote shows that people are homeless because of the destruction caused by the catastrophes. Services have failed and nothing remains in the city and citizens cannot pay for their demands and cannot afford money. In other words, they cannot fix everything on their own and need help.

Domination is an essential thing for survival and protection in the collapsed world. The local leaders mainly want to keep their power, and probably to extend it. The characters are unnamed due to their loss of identity in this post-apocalyptic world. In this sense, the investor, an unnamed female character, she represents all other investors who has the same behaviours as her. She is busy in making progress and money. Barnes devotes different chapters to describe her occupation and personality. She is a lonely bisexual character who works as an investor who earns money with all options without taking into consideration the morality of her acts. Barnes writes, "She never thinks about the morality of making money off natural disasters... There's nothing about what she does that is illegal. Her job is to make money. Increase it (Barnes, 2019, p. 59). This quote shows that the investor takes advantage of natural disasters, since she makes profits to increase her money without thinking that it is inappropriate. This commissioner is corrupt, and her only aim is her interests and the interests of her company. Furthermore, citizens struggle to earn money, while commissioners take it over without showing a sense of responsibility. But it appears later that the investor discusses with her analysts about the disasters that hit different parts of the city and all the damages. They also have propositions that are possible. However, it does not seem that there is a will to change the situation. Therefore, things get worse and people lack their rights and can do nothing.

The investor has also gained a billion dollars for the corporation by the Gulf oil spill and her bosses congratulate her once about her investments. Before her investments on natural disasters, she bets on oil spill in the Gulf. Hence, she enjoys her high income even if it is

corrupt. The investor cannot stop what she is doing as there is no law to punish her. The bosses avoid encouraging her because she is a narcissist. One of the analysts tells her, “they are certainly terrible possibilities. But it’s not as if you created these possibilities” (Barnes, 2019, p. 60). She creates possibilities out of natural disasters. She tries to solve some problems, rescue people’s lives and avoid the raise of water by giving orders to repair the broken levees. Yet, inside her, she wants these terrible things to happen. She also wonders why people do not do the same to gain more money. These incidents show to what extent the investor is a corrupt person. She is powerful thanks to her money and nobody can judge or punish her. She likes the bad situation because it gives her a chance to make her money grow faster. This is an illegal act that can be considered as a criminal offense in a normal world; however, here it is not considered as a corrupt act.

Barnes lists different kinds of illegal activities like people’s illegal immigration. This may refer to Mexicans because they are citizens in the South. People who want to escape and get freedom use boats to reach camps in dangerous places. These camps are divided and run by gangs who aim to set rules and control the citizens. In fact, gangs are unnamed to give a specific image of their domination in our chaotic world. Gangs are responsible for the protection of these camps and refugees. They are mentioned in the Doctor’s section because he works for them to seek safety. Barnes portrays the gangs’ job; he writes, “Police demanded larger bribes for even less protection” (Barnes, 2019, p. 100). This shows that citizens live in a city where there is no government, law or security. Police must be a symbol of security; but in a post-apocalyptic world they do not do their job as long as they take bribes for low security. It appears that the gangs take control of these camps and try to protect people from the savageness of the catastrophes.

In a chaotic world, nothing seems right, the only thing that people seek is Safety. People find peace in the presence of these gangs rather than with the corrupt government who do nothing to enhance the situation there. In this context, Barnes writes

The gang's tax rates are quite reasonable, less than what most people paid to the corrupt governments they left behind. Some in the camps consider the gangs to be, at worst, benign. Still others view the gangs as the saviors of all these unwanted refugees. (Barnes, 2019, p. 104)

The previous quote shows that the characters suffer from the carelessness of their government, since they need to pay high taxes for their safety. This pushes them to escape from the South End with the help of the gangs; but they have to pay low taxes to provide them with a sense of security. The gangs save people who really need their services as doctors, but they use girls in other illegal jobs such as human trafficking. Consequently, even though people are aware of the illegal practices, they are obliged to save their lives. In a post-apocalyptic world, there is the absence of governments and the rise of gangs.

Commissioners prove to be corrupt, since they abuse citizens and take decisions on their behalf. Barnes mentions the same story found in *The City Where We Once Lived* of the missing woman and her boy. Commissioners have taken this woman's kid without any right and have obliged them to leave their homes; The woman is unnamed too; It might refer to different abused women in our contemporary world who are unable to get their rights. The woman says, "They wanted us to leave our home" (Barnes, 2019, p. 102). The commissioners also have given her kid to an adoptive parent because they believe that she is not suitable for him. Life in the aftermath of the apocalypse resembles a jungle as long as destruction takes place as the damage continues. Commissioners are incompetent because they do not have any solution or save the main problems of the city before the second hit of natural disasters. This means that they are unfit to be in a higher status or position. Both gangs and commissioners

are unnamed; nobody knows anything about their identity. Their names are not stated because Barnes wants to transmit the idea that they can appear in any time and any country.

Barnes represents the collapse of the North End, as everything has vanished including services and banks. He portrays how an entire family is burnt in a fire and no help has come. He writes, “the flames of a fire ripping through the house’s roof. A father of four hauling bodies on his own out to the curb. Standing there. Neighbors watching. And still no one ever came to help” (Barnes, 2019, p. 136). This proves the carelessness of the corrupt government which is shown in their inability to send fire fighters. Their focus is on making more money and profits out of this complicated situation. Thus, they do not care about people’s lives or doing their duties as they should. Moreover, the abandoned city has vanished, and nothing remains there.

To conclude, *Above the Ether* (2019) can be considered as a post-apocalyptic novel that delves into climate change and its damage. This causes the collapse of the city in the South End and the government. The collapse of the latter has a negative impact on the rise of disorder, lack of security and total absence of law such as the presence of corrupt commissioners, investors and gangs. The absence of law can result in several consequences such as the rise of violence; subsequently, chaos and crimes spread in the abandoned city.

b) The City Where We Once lived (2018):

Climate Change Incidents in *The City Where We Once Lived*:

The City Where We Once Lived describes the effects of climate change in the world and people’s lives. The novel revolves around an unnamed protagonist who tells people’s life stories in a post-apocalyptic environment. From the opening of the novel, it appears that the places are unnamed because there are no countries left in the post-apocalypse. However, their

world is divided into the North End and the South End; people have to live in one of these places. These cities are isolated and neglected by their citizens because they have to choose to remain in such dissolution. After the last environmental disaster in the last chapters of *Above the Ether*, several people have become refugees in the North End. The unnamed protagonist in the novel under scrutiny is a survivor of the post-apocalypse in the South End. In *The City Where We Once Lived*, the plot is non-linear since the events do not follow a chronological order. It has different chapters and subsections in addition to the flow of ideas. The protagonist is anonymous; he is a journalist who narrates the events that happen in the story. He portrays people's dark lives and how they struggle to live in the isolated and empty North End.

In some parts of the novel, the protagonist sheds light on the main causes of climate change which are basically due to human activities. According to Gregers Andersen, Climate fiction focuses on human domination and exploitation of nature; which causes its destruction and changes in the weather (Andersen, 2020, p. 84). The protagonist portrays humans' actions and treatment of the natural world. The protagonist refers to sulphur, chlorine and chemicals that smell for weeks; the gas also comes from factories (Barnes, 2018, p. 61). This leads to the failure of the main corporation that produces engines. Moreover, people are unable to control the waste of industrial products such as mercury.

In the North End, there are several abandoned engine blocks, roads, train connections, and canals that connect this place to the main factory. Before climate change, the North End had many different industrial companies that offered goods; but nowadays they are closed and abandoned. People have also forgotten their source (Barnes, 2018, p. 63). Therefore, humans are behind the creation of these toxic products which affects the environment. In this context, the narrator says

The water is still and in another city it'd be murky with algae and other unidentifiable substances. But not in the North End. Even in their decrepit state, these canals are part of a system that circulates in new water from the bay to the north, 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)

This quote indicates that past human activities can be the main source of post-apocalyptic incidents. Humans are portrayed as a danger to the natural world; they abuse and exploit nature for their own benefits. Water is full of toxic products due to the lack of consciousness about the consequences of chemicals and pollution.

The protagonist focuses on the negative impacts of natural disasters because there are no seasons in this post-apocalyptic world. In this sense, the protagonist writes, “When it rains here, I wonder what could be in those drops. What sort of chemicals are falling all across this city” (Barnes, 2018, p. 72). This demonstrates that human use of chemicals in the industrial zones has a negative impact on the planet. The protagonist believes that rain is full of toxic chemicals due to their strong smell in the North End. This is due to the amounts of toxic materials that emits from factories and rises to the ozone layer and affects it negatively; the result is negative for humanity as well.

Characters live in a scary environment which is hit by natural disasters such as storms and floods. In this sense, Tabjin de Graauw and Elisa Fiore argue that the natural world plays an active role in shaping human activity and interaction (Graauw and Fiore, 2018, p. 185). The protagonist provides a detailed description of his destructed city. He also provides different images of a post-apocalyptic end in the North End. This city is described as a desolate place which lacks green areas. The protagonist says,

I walk along the avenue leading from downtown to the industrial zone wondering what has killed or driven off all animals from the North End. Trees, thirty feet tall and black now, are planted in strict order along the avenues and main boulevards. The trunks are smooth, almost slick, as if they've been varnished and preserved. (Barnes, 2018, p. 40)

This excerpt shows that there are no living beings in the North End because climate change causes animal extinction and absence of plants. Hence, it is represented as a wasteland where nothing grows or blooms and everything falls apart. Everything has vanished; consequently, people try to cope with this new environment and find new tools that help them continue their life. They have to bear it and fight in order to change this atrocious reality.

Climate change, in post-apocalyptic fiction, shapes the monstrous world that the characters have to face; subsequently, they want to survive natural disasters. In this sense, Frederick Buell argues that climate change has an influence on human wellbeing, and the tightening of restrictions on future human action (Buell, 2003, p. 70). According to the protagonist, the weather is incomprehensible because people have to face the threatening challenges of recent natural disasters. To illustrate, he states that

Storms come like hurricanes, but they are shorter, more sudden, lasting only half an hour or less, with wind blowing rain sideways so hard that the drops hurt your face, and thunder bursts come frantically, and bright lightning strikes so close you can smell the ozone burn of the explosion. (Barnes, 2018, p. 67)

From the above quote, huge natural disasters such as tornadoes, storms, sudden rain, thunder and strikes hit the North End. These disasters generate a sense of fear in the characters. The protagonist delves into the relationship between characters and natural disasters which is a complex one. They try to survive because they cannot bear this environment and they want to feel secure. However, they need to adapt to the new lifestyle which is very hard and tiring in order to stay alive. Whatever they face, they need to persist and fight the anger of nature.

The world in the aftermath of the apocalypse is nothing but doom and gloom, with not even a spark of light. In *From Apocalypse to Way of Life: "Environmental Crisis in the American Century,"* Frederick Buell explains that past human destruction of the natural world has an impact on them; this means that human exploitation and abuse of nature shape the

present atmosphere and environmental crises (Buell, 2003, pp. 66-67). The protagonist describes the state of the natural world, he writes,

The damage from the storm is immense. Buildings cut in half. Tall smokestacks knocked to the ground. A massive knife, more than one it seems, cut through this place, opening fissures through the densely gray and abandoned landscape. Dark brick walls are turned bright red where sections cracked and fell into large piles. Wooden walls knocked down to reveal brightly blue containers. (Barnes, 2018, p. 87)

From the above quote, there are different natural disasters such as storms and tornadoes which hit the city. Therefore, people live in a post-apocalyptic world with fear; they have to accept their reality and to face a bad atmosphere which is filled with struggles and mazes. Furthermore, the protagonist befriends a gardener who tries to plant different trees and flowers in the North End so as to save the environment. This gardener says, “the weather has changed dramatically. That is killing the planet life too” (Barnes, 2018, p. 147). This quote reveals that climate change causes serious damage, since it affects the ecosystem and people’s lives.

Corruption and the Absence of Government and Law in *The City*

Where We Once Lived:

Climate change does not only have an effect on characters’ lives but also on governments. It has an impact on law, order, and government; characters live in a world where all forms of security are absent. In *Crime and the Imaginary of Disaster: “Post-Apocalyptic Fictions and the Crisis of Social Order”* Majid Yar argues that in post-apocalyptic fiction, the long-discussed "crisis of law and order" theory is taken to its logical conclusion (Yar, 2015, p. 24). When law and order collapse under the weight of a catastrophic event such as a zombie apocalypse, nuclear war, eco-systemic collapse, or economic collapse, evil is allowed to run rampant and the weak and defenceless are left without protection (Yar, 2015, p. 24). Through this context, in *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018), Barnes

addresses how the environmental destruction leads to the issue of disorder and the absence of law in a post-apocalyptic world. He also highlights the disintegration of legal institutions; hence, he illustrates the impact of the absence of government in the characters' lives. Moreover, there is no apparent government in the city; however, the few commissioners left are barely doing their work and sometimes they have meetings in the North End. The protagonist says that

The city government was disbanded, the area unincorporated nearly ten years ago. But we still fall in a country. The commission has so far been unable to let go of their responsibility for the North End, although they've tried so many times... Nothing that they talk about is ever acted on. (Barnes, 2018, p. 20)

The quote shows that the narrator describes an unnamed country where commissioners do not do their duties as they are supposed to, they have weekly and monthly meetings but there are no actions. Subsequently, the state of isolation and the absence of authority make the North End deserted and no longer ruled by anyone. The narrator does not name the country because he wants to show how leaders in different countries do not work during natural disasters. Even in previously developed countries, leaders do not want to work. The North End may refer to either USA or European countries.

Hence, this absence of rules and laws that restrict people leads to the increase of corruption among the group of commissioners who do not do their work in a serious way. Curtis argues that there is no working government, no functioning economy, and no functioning military, which could be described as in full un-nature (2010, p. 23). In the novel, the commissioners have lost identity, race and ethnicity. They are unnamed because they represent all the commissioners of our contemporary world who neglect all their responsibilities in the North End, since they refuse to improve the situation. They also do not care about this place and its citizens. The protagonist says, "Ultimately, the repairs were part of what drove the last of the city's leaders to encourage even faster growth in the South End

over any commitment to the north” (Barnes, 2018, p. 35). Simply put, the commissioners are irresponsible; they are not committed, and their carelessness leads to the collapse of the North End. They also want to let people to become refugees in the South End. In addition to this, these commissioners do not repair the levees that can destroy the North End. They are careless commissioners because they do not want to find any solution. The absence of repairs in the city causes a ruin and threatens people’s lives. Significantly, the government is corrupt since it does not care if these people die. They do not help people to rebuild the city. However, they want to get rid of them. The citizens of the North End are inactive even though they do not have the basic rights. They have lost hope since their previous discussion with this commission. In this context, Curtis argues that the political authority only exists because people actively have chosen to band together, renounce some of their inalienable rights resulting from existing in a completely anarchic society and establish a new type of institution known as government (2010, p. 10). In the novel, the commissioners find themselves free to do whatever they want. According to the protagonist, the city was once characterised by brick houses, corner shops, and baseball games; currently, its apartments are huge but faceless. The commissioners demolish the grand mansions to make way for windowless duplexes. They made decisions that resulted in a steady departure of citizens. However, the majority of the government members live in the South End, and no one has acknowledged or documented their mistreatment and incompetence (Barnes, 2018, p. 125).

The corrupt commissioners do not seem to have a will to make any change in the city. The sixth chapter opens with a meeting between the commissioners and citizens. The commissioners talk about fixing and destroying things while the citizens are silent; they listen to the officials as they want them to move from words to actions. But their suggestions shock the audience. One of the commissioners argues that “Why don’t we shut down the places where these people still live?... Cut the power and water, as we did in the bad neighbourhoods

in the South End?.. Now let's do it here" (Barnes, 2018, p. 127). By doing this, they try to force people to become refugees. This implies that the failure of the commissioners means the corruption of the government in a post-apocalyptic world.

To conclude, we tried to shed light on climate change and its impacts on the world, since it causes a post-apocalyptic world. This chapter examined climate change and corruption in Eric Barnes's *Above the Ether* and *The City Where We Once Lived*, and how it affects the characters' lives. The government is unable to handle the situation since there are no countries, governments, and police. The world is divided into the North End and South End. Therefore, there is no law to restrict people's behaviour. The unnamed commissioners are corrupt, and they only care about their interests. More importantly, they do not do their job; nonetheless, they care about closing cities, threatening citizens and not repairing anything. In *Above the Ether*, the majority of people live in the South End; whereas, a few of them choose to live in the North End. Besides the corrupt government, there are gangs who rule the abandoned city; they take control of citizens, since there are no laws to follow. This unbearable situation obliges people to either escape or live as a community to survive. For these reasons, most people have travelled to the North by the end of the novel. In *The City Where We Once Lived*, the unnamed narrator portrays people's harsh life in the isolated and empty North End. The horrible climate change led to the appearance of many issues and to the world's destruction after the failure of the government and commissioners.

Chapter Two: Crime and Violence in *The City Where We Once Lived*

(2018) and its prequel *Above the Ether* (2019):

Due to the rise of climate change, the familiar coordinates of social, cultural, political, economic and moral organisations vanish and are replaced by crime and violence. Besides, the partial or total absence of the government pushes some or all characters to be violent because there is no law to restrict them. Others may use violence as a defence mechanism to survive. In this context, Andersen claims that climate change can cause “social disintegration and interhuman violence on a very large scale” (Andersen, 2020, p. 11). Violence can be considered as a villain act which is against both social behaviours and law. This chapter investigates the representation of crime and violence in Eric Barnes’s *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) and its prequel, *Above the Ether* (2019).

Some American post-apocalyptic novels represent people’s crime and violence. In fact, natural disasters bring about social collapse which in turn leads to the rise of violence (Andersen, 2020, p. 33). Subsequently, characters’ behaviour changes and deteriorates due to the rise of barbarity and cannibalism. In this context, Andersen argues, “Good and evil are here relegated to their respective socio-anthropological poles in the form of a few sympathetic survivors and the horde of cannibals wanting to devour them” (Andersen, 2020, p. 30). This quote illustrates that survivors may face criminals, violent people and cannibals. Consequently, these environmental incidents of the apocalypse affect characters since they become criminals and violent.

In a post- apocalyptic environment, humans compete to survive owing to the annihilation of official forms of power and rules. Natural disasters change human nature as they use violence whenever they face a threat (Curtis, 2010, p. 47). People live in a state of fear due to the rise of violence. In this regard, Curtis explains that characters live in a state of

dread and horror in a post-apocalyptic world because they can face death that may be caused either by nature or humans (Curtis, 2010, p. 45). More significantly, Curtis explains that “without rules, violence is inevitable and only a political authority, created and chosen by people, can provide security” (Curtis, 2010, p. 44). Simply put, in a post-apocalyptic environment, a few people may generate officialdom to limit barbarity; this can work only when people respect rules.

a) *Above the Ether* (2019):

Figures of Crime and Violence in *Above the Ether*:

Eric Barnes’s *Above the Ether* displays characters’ obstacles and terror in a post-apocalyptic world. They struggle with the same issues of lawlessness, crime, disorder, risk and terror in the aftermath of the end of the world. Therefore, the whole atmosphere embodied the inability to control human behaviours and restrain violent, rapacious appetites and humans’ morality. Characters also struggle with different forms of physical violence in a newly established society. This novel depicts the figures of crime and violence through characters’ everyday life that is shaped by environmental factors.

In the South End, characters are aware of the desperate circumstances that surround them; however, they try to find meaning in their dark world. They recast themselves to fit in their risky environment where there are no values and morals. In this regard, the unnamed father says that “no one has much ability to help anyone but themselves” (Barnes, 2019, p. 45). This illustrates that everyone thinks of his own survival; consequently, they become violent and forget humanity. In this dangerous world, survivors do not help others and have an animalistic instinct to attack others. The unnamed father lost his identity which represents the role of any father to save his children and does not care about others.

Many survivors do not have a shelter to protect themselves neither from cold weather nor crime and violence. Barnes mirrors how many homeless teenagers suffer from a mental illness owing to their experience in a post-apocalyptic world. Since teenagers do not find safety and are uneducated, they become homeless and lost. As a result, they are unnamed like all the other characters. They have lost identity. Barnes writes that “The Homeless teenagers sleep along Third Avenue, exactly one block from the nicest parts of downtown. Their bodies, lying asleep next to each other, inadvertently form an unofficial border that neither they nor the police cross” (Barnes, 2019, p. 22). This illustrates the harsh living conditions in the city since these teenagers live with no refuge and find themselves exposed to violence and drugs. In this sense, Barnes states that “Many of the kids shoot heroin; others smoke pot.” (Barnes, 2019, p. 22). It is obvious that these kids become violent and commit crimes easily due to homelessness and the consumption of drugs that cause the loss of self-control.

Moreover, the issue of drug consumption is an outcome of a post-apocalyptic world, since those kids have no parents or a government to protect them. The mother is an unnamed character who gives a close image of the hardships of any mother who has to adapt with the new environment, especially if she has children. She has two unnamed drug-addict teenagers, this is why she believes that something went awry with her oldest son. The latter shows signs of rage and growing contempt, until it almost descended into violence. He becomes angry at others and at himself and he suddenly had a constant temper. Therefore, the oldest kid cannot cope with the new environment; he becomes depressed; hence, he turns to violence and crime. He is an example among many; he holds a story of thousands like him that is why he is unnamed. According to the mother, the kid becomes violent and then he becomes a drug addict to escape his frightening reality.

People do not distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. In this sense, Curtis argues that: “a space without the controlling power of government and rules to reveal

human beings as they really are. With humans thus revealed each then outlines how and why humans such as these would come together” (Curtis, 2010, p. 117). Therefore, people become violent; this can be shown through the relationship between the mother, who is described as a stranger, and both her kids who turn to crime and violence. Barnes says,

Her son’s anger wasn’t enough. Drinking, speeding, fighting with strangers and students at school. None of it was enough. And so he turned to stronger drugs. They’re everywhere, she learned. He bought them at the grocery store. At a dance. In the classroom. (Barnes, 2019, p. 37)

This illustrates that these illegal activities are found everywhere. The spread of criminality makes it difficult for these teenagers to avoid this barbarity and drugs; they are victims of a lawless city and a scary environment. They find themselves in need to hide their fear and weaknesses by drugs and violence. Besides, the mother says, “The therapists tell her it’s as if he had a hole so deep and painful. A hole he couldn’t possibly bear or live with or control. And soth anger, with alcohol...” (Barnes, 2019, p. 37). Her kid tries to fill his feeling of emptiness in his life and mind through the exploration of new activities to escape from his horrific reality and his dark life. Since there are no medical institutions that help drug addicts and mentally depressed people in the post-apocalypse, it makes the mother feel helpless.

The absence of the government gives rise to violence because citizens are not afraid of punishment. In this regard, Curtis argues that “Without established laws and a system for the enforcement of those laws, humans have the right to do whatever they need to do to survive” (Curtis, 2010, p. 51). In the novel, Barnes portrays the steady increase of violence as long as people fight each other due to the presence of gangs. In fact, regular criminals are allowed to roam in the city unobserved and undaunted as a result of the police’s desperate efforts and the absence of the commissioner to destroy the drug trade. Thus, violence is increasingly widespread in the south; in this vein, Barnes states that “The violence was no longer confined to the people working in the drug trade and to those trying desperately to fight it. It had

become, instead, a commonplace infection throughout the entire country”.(Barnes, 2019, p. 132). This shows the rise of barbarism and violence since nothing can stop gangs, barbarity, crime or violence.

The carousel operator is one of the main characters in the novel to whom Barnes devotes some chapters. He is identified by his job. The carousel operator befriends an epileptic who is unnamed to reflect other people who have the same situation. The carousel operator and epileptic are best friends because they live with each other; however, their names are not mentioned. This may entail that they have lost their identities in the post-apocalyptic world and do not have any documents that prove their real names. One can know these two characters through different attributes, one by his job while his friend by his illness. It is worth noting that these identifications are general because any carousel operator can befriend a person with disability.

In the novel, the carousel operator cannot avoid places where there is no violent conflicts and instability. This embodies that environmental crisis defines the carousel operator’s attitudes. According to Andersen, in a climate change environment, interhuman trust does not exist (Andersen, 2020, p. 28). The carousel operator grew up in a hemisphere full of violence; therefore, he becomes violent. In this sense, he says “I was a bad person there” (Barnes, 2019, p. 87). Even though he has left his friends and his old city, he has tried to remain calm, but violence still permeates him. In fact, a man abuses his friend as he tells him “Is he your fucking boyfriend?” (Barnes, 2019, p. 91). This triggers him to react badly. He becomes violent in a restaurant and fights and breaks a man’s arm due to the bad manners of this man. Barnes describes the fight

The kid hits him again in the throat. There’s something about this. How he hits him in the throat. The epileptic considers this. In the seconds that substitute for normal moments or minutes. This kid he barely knows embodies in a violence he didn’t recognize. (Barnes, 2019, p. 94)

This quote demonstrates the carousel operator's horrifying violence because of the environment he is raised in. As he is unable to let his friend be abused by foreigners, he uses violence to defend his epileptic friend. Barnes further portrays the reason that pushes people to be violent. The carousel operator and the epileptic are used to violence and violent scenes; hence, they are not shocked as long as they are aware that fights are the only means to defend one's rights.

Violence is frequently presented as a reality that characters must accept; when the heroes respond forcefully to violence, it is a source of relief rather than amusement (Curtis, 2010, p. 158). The epileptic, the carousel operator's friend, admits that "All of us can be killed. You know that, right? We can be killed. And we can kill others" (Barnes, 2019, p. 146). From this quote one can understand that violence is unavoidable, everyone can fall victim to violence. This brings about the survival of the fittest in a post-apocalyptic world because the person who is in a state of strength can use force to stay alive. Consequently, there is no place for the weak. The epileptic is an unnamed character because he was bullied, and he reflects who people suffer with this illness.

In the doctor's chapter, Barnes portrays another image of terror. He provides the example of a doctor and his wife who live in a post-apocalyptic world. Like the previous characters, the doctor and his wife are unnamed to reveal that anyone can fall victim to crime and violence. The doctor does not have a specific name since the reader does not find any throughout the novel. This may show that he is deprived of his name in the post-apocalyptic world. It may also reflect that he lost his documents that prove his identity and his wife's identity. By focusing on an unnamed doctor's life, Barnes demonstrates that even an educated person can face different struggles in this demonic world. It is not only his life that is in danger but also that of his wife.

The unnamed couple live in a lawless camp, but they are safe because of the gang that runs the camp. This camp needs him as a doctor; subsequently, it provides him with protection as long as he follows their instructions and diagnoses and treats their girls. Doctors are needed by both normal people and gangs because medicine is still an important skill in our contemporary world. Barnes claims that “the authorities here, they welcome anyone who relieves them of a service they are required to supply” (Barnes, 2019, p. 98). Although the doctor and his wife are aware of the dangers of the camp they live in, they are obliged to seek shelter and escape violence. Moreover, most people seek refuge in camps even though there are illegal activities such as crime, violence, drugs and human trafficking. Barnes adds “Drug violence. All of it. Violence institutionalized. Violence” (Barnes, 2019, p. 100). Due to the rise of violence, people have to pay the gangs to live in safe camps even though these gangs do illegal things and exploit people.

The post-apocalyptic world is full of wrong doings since people are not afraid to break rules that are supposed to restrict them. In this regard, Curtis claims that “People obey rules because they fear punishment” (Curtis, 2010, p. 59). In other words, people need the governmental order to restrict them and to provide punishment for those who threaten the security of the state. Since the government is corrupt, people are free. In the novel, teenage girls head north to escape the scary atmosphere. Barnes claims that “The doctor sometimes feels he is only prepping these girls to be more efficiently abused. To assure the survival of these high-priced investments as they head north for a life of rape and torture” (Barnes, 2019, p. 105). This quote shows that girls are diagnosed by the doctor to ensure their good health, but they are prepared to get raped and tortured without mercy. As a result, these illegal and criminal acts spread around the abandoned city, since everyone is free to do what he wants. More than that, girls are abused badly in this camp, as long as they are just a commodity to satisfy men and no one can help them. This shows that people are afraid of gang’s orders;

hence, they are dominated and exploited. If somebody rebels, he will be killed immediately as there are no police to rescue them.

Grief is the main cause of all illnesses in the camps; the doctor's wife cannot handle this situation anymore. She is already traumatised by her past and was forced to live in the street when her father died. More significantly, gangs' female relatives are usually overthrown, raped, tortured, and ultimately killed whenever they are caught. It is a matter of fact that the huge violence and torture are normal things in post-apocalyptic world, since there are no policemen to stop that. In fact, the drug lords and gangs are the only authorities that exist. The doctor states that

Some in the camps consider the gangs to be, at worst, benign. Still others view the gangs as the saviors of all these unwanted refugees. The doctor might think so too. Were it not for the women they keep in the very busy brothels. And the drugs and guns they transport across the border through the tunnels and the young girls they traffic north. (Barnes, 2019, pp. 104-5)

The above quote provides different points of views about how people consider the gangs. There are people who find themselves safe because they find them as saviours. Unfortunately, others are abused and fall victims to the gangs' violence without any hope to be rescued by the government. This reveals that the absence of a state brings about illegal gangs, drugs, violence and human trafficking.

As the events develop, the gangs kill anyone who tries to do an illegal activity through the tunnels. There are three kids who used to work with these gangs, in drugs and weapons; once they are caught, one of them is shot by a gun. He has got no chance to live; as a consequence, the doctor diagnoses a medicine to let him die peacefully. The boys are nameless characters since Barnes does not mention any names; these boys are known by their gender. Instead of the person's name, Barnes focuses on how these boys are affected by a drastically different world due to their new relationship. It is worth nothing that Barnes

pinpoints to the fact violence defies gender since he portrays both boys and girls, and both men and women. Hence, this novel shows how anyone can face a situation as the unnamed characters that are described in the novel. Additionally, the gangs have several girls used to be sold to northern places, while others are used as prostitutes. Moreover, other women are raped. According to Barnes, “One rape is too many. One murder is too many. One assault, one robbery, one car theft is too many. Yet one will happen. In the next minute. One just happened. A few moments ago.” (Barnes, 2019, p. 123). The quote also puts emphasis on rape, theft and murder as recurrent things in the camps. Therefore, the different incidents mentioned above show that violence is dominant in the camps and people have to face it. It appears that crime and violence are present everywhere in people’s lives.

The investor is a female character, who is associated with violence. She is the best example of corrupted commissioners in a post-apocalyptic world. She makes her money through bets on natural disasters instead of helping those who are harmed by the catastrophic incidents. She does not consider her activities as illegal, but as a good thing that she mastered. Barnes depicts her as “she bets on oil. She bets on natural gas. She bets against a basket of new heart drugs” (Barnes, 2019, p. 25). There is no law to stop her or punish her because she has money and power. From the quote, it appears that she bets on drugs, which is illegal and can be regarded as a criminal act. However, there is no government that can punish a commissioner who pushes people to use drugs in a post-apocalyptic environment.

However, Barnes devotes some chapters to an unnamed character who is the restaurant manager. In the novel, we see that the restaurant manager is the only character who is not involved in any violent acts, but he encounters violent scenes in his restaurant. He is away from problems and drugs but involved in an illegal business. He owns five stores in the city, and his cousin is his partner. They make money illegally; the restaurant manager says that “we make money illegally, the CEO tells his cousin. What we sell will eventually break. We

know this. That's illegal" (Barnes, 2019, p. 110). Illegal money is a criminal offence in a normal state; however, in a post-apocalyptic world it is normal. In addition, people who work with him have a criminal past; but he does not care because they do not behave badly. This highlights the presence of corruption and crime in the characters' lives. The restaurant manager's cousin argues that "We're not alone in doing this, his cousin says. People, everywhere, do this all the time" (Barnes, 2019, p. 114). It seems that people perceive violence as a normal thing. Everyone seeks money because there is no government to restrict them.

Barnes describes further incidents of violence to dramatize human barbarity in a post-apocalyptic world. The restaurant manager is an eyewitness to abuse; the kid is beaten to death. One can notice that the kid is unnamed to uncover that any kid can fall victim to physical abuse. Barnes says, "When he was a child, the restaurant manager had a neighbour, another child, maybe six or seven years old. He liked or torture cats. Stray cats, his own cats. He'd tie things to their tails. Shoot at them with his pellet gun" (Barnes, 2019, p. 161). This quote demonstrates the frightening violence that one cannot imagine, since both elderly people and young people are violent. Even children have guns and can torture others. Subsequently, a bad environment influences all categories of people who suffer due to the absence of law and government in a post-apocalyptic world.

b) The City Where We Once Lived (2018):

Figures of Crime and Violence in *The City Where We Once Lived*:

The unnamed protagonist describes the state of the abandoned city and houses as long as there are no police or government. Some citizens are obliged to move and become refugees while others prefer to remain. The protagonist portrays his own city because he is a journalist;

hence, he roams the city so as to portray its abandoned parts. One day, he stops in front of a hospital which is no longer exploited. He writes

The hospital was looted heavily when it was closed, addicts and criminals and kids of all ages searching every crevice of every room for any sort of drugs. But I don't enter, don't go looking at the scene of chaos and destruction. I trust what I've been told. (Barnes, 2018, p. 50)

The above quote states that in a post-apocalyptic world, different people seek trouble. There are both criminals and drug addicts who remain in abandoned buildings. The protagonist avoids any confrontation with them because they are dangerous people who can spread havoc. Therefore, the world has changed into a state of no safety.

The protagonist refers to commissioners' viciousness since they want to turn off the lights. They do not help people who live in the North End; however, they destroy what has been left in the collapsed city. People are frightened as they hear the sounds of collapse in the city. In this context, the protagonist claims that

If they turned the power off, it would change our lives completely. Turning our narrow, spare existence into something more difficult and barren. The power gives us the lights. It keeps the water pumping. It keeps the streets from falling into utter darkness, a darkness that might be lost to crime and fear and violence. Because we wonder if it is the power that keeps this place from turning bad. Are there people living here who, without light and heat and water, might finally go insane? (Barnes, 2018, pp. 70-71)

The quote expresses that the lights are very important to the citizens of the abandoned city as long as the electricity keeps everything on. They know that darkness will make the situation worse and it provokes the rise of fear. The protagonist wonders if it is truly the power that stands between them and violence owing to the presence of violent people in the city. Hence, if it turns off, people will respond violently against the irresponsible acts of the commissioners because it affects their safety.

Some people become refugees in the North End in order to escape abuse and look for safety. The protagonist meets a missing woman that escapes the South End to find a shelter in the North End. However, she does not tell her story. The only thing she says is that she wants safety. The only place where people meet in the abandoned city is at funerals. One day, the protagonist finds a corpse of an unknown man; he gives the corpse to the church to have a proper burial. He writes, “Nomadic or warlike or cannibals or saints, they stand together to witness the funeral rites” (Barnes, 2018, p. 59). Here, he refers to cannibalism in the novel even though he does not provide a detailed description. This entails that cannibals exist in a post-apocalyptic world and they live among other people. This also uncovers that characters live in a dangerous world where cannibals eat other people’s flesh. More importantly, the missing woman pretends that she does not know the dead man as she does not trust others.

The woman recounts her story to the protagonist when she trusts him. In this regard, Andersen explains that in a climate change induced environment, people become violent toward each other and struggle for survival (Andersen, 2020, p. 20). In the novel, the commissioners in the South End have ordered to turn off the light in order to force people to leave their homes or declare them unfit in their society. Once she decided to remain, governmental authorities have taken her child to an adoptive parent who abused him. She says, “The abuse started within days. Abuse of every kind... What happened to that man, it was entirely deserved... That man deserved to die” (Barnes, 2018, pp. 102-3). This quote illustrates that commissioners take decisions without taking into consideration citizens’ opinions and benefits but they think about their own; these commissioners are also against people and want them to become separated and lost. This has led the woman to commit murder to protect her child; she is aware that violence is the only means to bring back her child. Consequently, the woman act is a defence mechanism to defend her rights.

In a post-apocalyptic world, teenagers and kids are not a symbol of purity and kindness; instead, they are dangerous and scary. The protagonist confronts a group of violent kids who want to take his camera; hence, he decides to light a fire to attract their attention. His idea proves to be a good one since the kids have forgotten his presence. Furthermore, he breaks their car and puts fire to it; he says that “I’m standing next to their car. I take the screwdriver and break the valves on both front tires, the air now escaping with a high and steady hiss. Through the open window on the passenger side, I pour the last of the gasoline on the seat and light it” (Barnes, 2018, p. 110). He also admits that he used to be ‘scared’ but he is no longer the same person. This shows that he is not a violent person; but he is aware that defence mechanism is the only way to impose safety once there is no government, law or police. He uses the same violence against these kids to ensure security. As a result, facing violence with violence is a means of survival in the novel.

One day the protagonist attends one of the meetings organised by the commissioners. After the meeting, he goes out with a female commissioner. They confront dangerous teenagers; accordingly, they have to hide. Moreover, the protagonist goes out with the female commissioner but some kids follow them in their car; they escape to avoid the barbarity of those teenagers and they have to counterattack to protect themselves. The protagonist breaks the driver's side and back windows and the teenagers scream at him. He writes, “The kids are screaming at me, screaming, “Stop,” but I am on the passenger side, swinging at another window, breaking it in an explosion of tiny shards of glass” (Barnes, 2018, p. 138). As a result, he has to defend himself through the use of violence; his reaction is a defence mechanism. He goes against human nature to impose safety in his environment. The novel, therefore, shows the negative impact of the absence of government and police.

In the novel, the kids come to the North End to look for troubles. A man is chased by violent teens when he goes out from church, people are robbed and another person has broken

his arm. Furthermore, there are others who are beaten. The protagonist writes, “All of it seems to be a kind of aimless, menacing joke, bored kids from the South End increasingly making a game of roaming through the north” (Barnes, 2018, p. 149). In this quote, the protagonist uses some words such as “aimless” kids, “menacing joke” and “bored kids” to suggest that these kids do not take things seriously and look for troubles without putting limits to their acts as if they are playing a game. Hence, they are lost teenagers who are not guided by parents, institutions and law.

Nevertheless, the protagonist feels obliged to react; he suggests that closing the neighbourhood is the best solution to avoid violence. But in the following pages, it seems that the protagonist hits the kids due to their recurrent crime and violence in the North End which is presented by their brutality and criminality; they are always ready to cause harm at any time. Therefore, when another group attacks, the protagonist turns violent. Actually, both the gardener and commissioner decide to help the protagonist in beating the kids. The protagonist knows that violence is not innate but it must be used. In this sense, the protagonist says, “We are not 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). This demonstrates that violence is not innate but acquired to defend oneself in a post-apocalyptic environment. People wish to overcome all these struggles; all they want is their lives back and recover the way things have been. He claims that

I hit the kid with the side of my fist, swinging down like I hold a hammer, hitting him in the eye, hitting him as hard as I think I can.

“Aimless,” I say. “Lost.”

He’s writhing on the ground, holding his hands across his very bloody face, screaming into his palm.

I stand up and kick him in the side, very hard, the point of my shoe driving into the soft part under his ribs. (Barnes, 2018, p. 152)

The above excerpt demonstrates that the protagonist's defence mechanism is violence which manifests his capacities of violence to impose order. He does not have another option or solution mainly when the government is absent.

The citizens of the North End are calm people who are bound to this place. They are also afraid of strangers because they are seen as a source of danger. In this regard, the protagonist wonders, "And where does this new violence come from? How is it that a gardener and a minister find such violence necessary? What makes us respond to these outsiders in such a terrible, dangerous way?.." (Barnes, 2018, p. 172). This quote shows that people are violent for the sake of safety and it has to do with their identity and their belonging. They were born in the North End and do not want to be displaced. Next, once the citizens of the North have held a meeting to discuss the situation, they have agreed to build an overpass to avoid outsiders which is suggested by the gardener. The protagonist shows that they live as a community as long as they are concerned about their future. The gardener plays an important role in his community as long as he wants to find a solution. He says

I think what we know... is that to do this, to do it right, you have to understand your capacity for violence... You have to be willing to stand on that overpass and talk to the driver of every car that wants to enter the North End. You have to be willing to tell some people that they cannot pass... And that means you have to be willing to enforce what you have said. (Barnes, 2018, p. 177)

This quote illustrates that the gardener can think properly in a post-apocalyptic world. He appeals to people to live like a community with an awareness of the importance of using violence to get rid of the outsiders. Therefore, he suggests that they need volunteers to close the overpass to stop kids who look for trouble.

People are aware of the danger and threat of violence in the North End this is why they want to control it. The protagonist claims, "The kids are sarcastic, belligerent, sometimes threatening" (Barnes, 2018, p.180). The huge danger pushes the citizens to build a gate to avoid violent foreigners from the south who still look for trouble. Even though the

commissioners promise to arrest them by bringing police, citizens of the North End do not open the overpass order, safety and security measures. Even if citizens have built an overpass and closed the gates, kids come to the North End to abuse people. Ten guys come to the North with their weapons to attack; they have no mercy as they beat people. The protagonist states that

The men in masks do their work in the deafening silence created by the traffic... Soon they are burning everything they see. We watch them, the minister and me and the two scavengers all standing above the five wounded people on the ground... Their anger and violence, it clearly spawns in them a kind of joy. (Barnes, 2018, p. 212)

From the above quote, one can notice that different gangs in the South End are full of rage, hate and violence. The minister and the protagonist do not have a solution to this violence because many people have been hurt, beaten and injured; this shows that there is no safety anymore. In a post-apocalyptic world, gangs have no mercy for other characters; therefore, citizens of the North End are unsafe and afraid.

However, people become violent when a destructive storm hits in both the North End and South End. Due to this climate change, both cities are destroyed and look like waste lands. Darkness covers the city when the electricity has stopped; it seems that both nature and people turn violent. In addition, people fight when they fall in danger; this is why they fight to climb the ladders. This causes massive violence and the death of many people. The protagonist says, “Within an hour of the storm moving out of the South End, looting began, bands of kids and adults attacking shopping centers, restaurants,... Looters were killed. Police were shot. Even a commissioner was beaten to death” (Barnes, 2018, pp. 236-7). A post-apocalyptic world is full of natural disasters which cause immense damage in the South End since many people have died. Simply put, climate change transforms people into violent and angry ones; their conflict brings about a lack of safety. This means that the South End is falling apart because of the rise of violence.

To conclude, this chapter has investigated crime and violence in Barnes's *Above the Ether* and *The City Where We Once Lived*. Environmental change and the absence of government cause the rise of crime and violence in a post-apocalyptic world where characters struggle to survive. *Above the Ether* depicts life in the South End through the lens of different characters. Several people have become homeless and can become victims of violence. The chapter has investigated the presence of several violent people, criminals and gangs. Moreover, in *The City Where We Once Lived*, Barnes shows the progress of crime and violence since there are different incidents of crime and violence in the North End because of the foreigners who come from the South End. Teenagers steal, abuse and discriminate against people in the South End. Therefore, the protagonist becomes violent towards these foreigners to ensure safety in a post-apocalyptic world

V. General Conclusion:

This dissertation has explored corruption, crime and violence in Eric Barnes' *The City Where We Once Lived* (2018) and its prequel *Above the Ether* (2019). The research study has investigated the impact of climate change on the planet and people who are obliged to face inevitable climatic catastrophes. It has featured the image of a chaotic hemisphere where characters struggle to survive due to the horrible climate change, which promotes the characters' mysteries and harsh circumstances in a post-apocalyptic world.

The first chapter, "Post-apocalypse and Corruption in *The City Where We Once Lived* and *Above the Ether*", has stated that humans' exploitation of nature causes climate change. It has also examined the negative impacts of natural disasters that hit the world. In both novels, the world is divided into the North End and the South End, which are isolated with few distant buildings and survivors. Climate change has brought about the post-apocalyptic world which in turn has an impact on characters' lives because of the absence of governmental authorities. There are no countries, states, governments and official authorities. This affects the state of law owing to the absence of order and rule. Furthermore, governmental leaders and commissioners are corrupt; they do not do their jobs and duties correctly.

In both novels, commissioners do not fix things or search for solutions. In *Above the Ether*, the governmental authorities are corrupt, they only look after their interests and forget that they have duties and issues that must be settled. The events develop in *The City Where We Once Lived*; the same commissioners do not work in the North End even though they have already experienced the loss of the South End. In the North End, people are lost due to irresponsible commissioners who do not respect their role. Subsequently, people find themselves in a position where they should face massive natural disasters such as floods,

earthquakes and storms which lead them to lose their stability and peace of mind. They also lead to a turn to crime and violence.

The second chapter, “Crime and Violence in Eric Barnes’s *The City Where We Once Lived* and *Above the Ether*”, investigates the impact of the absence of government and the corruption of commissioners in a post-apocalyptic world. This chapter shows that these incidents have caused the rise of crime and violence due to the changes in people’s comportment. Thus, people become either criminals or violent whenever they feel unsafe or encounter obstacles. In addition, the corrupt commissioners want to destroy what is left from the ashes of the aftermath. Collapse causes the rise of barbarity because commissioners are irresponsible. In both novels, some people are silent to avoid trouble and protect their families.

From the analysis of *Above the Ether*, one can notice that there exist different scenes of both crime and violence. People who live in the South End face different forms of abuse, crime and violence. Since no power provides restriction and punishment, people are free and nothing can make them afraid. In the novel, some characters turn violent as a result of what the world has come to while others are obliged to use violence to respond against this brutality. In *The City Where We Once Lived*, crime and violence are progressively increasing in the North End since the South End is already destroyed. People live in unsafe zone; therefore, they are obliged to become refugees and look for better places to rescue themselves and their families. The terrible circumstances of the post-apocalypse changes human personality and push them to be violent. These teenagers and kids are outsiders who come to cause trouble and threaten the citizens of the North End. These kids think that nothing can stop them since the government is absent. The chapter has concluded that the citizens use violence as a defence mechanism.

Finally, Barnes emphasises the consequences of climate change on both the environment and governments. He portrays the impact of a post-apocalyptic world on humans' minds, showing them becoming criminals and violent. He also highlights the importance of taking care of the natural atmosphere to survive. He draws through his writings the misery that people face and how it seems to live after the end of the world. Moreover, these novels raise the readers' awareness about environmental exploitation and abuse. Further research can be done on eco-criticism.

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