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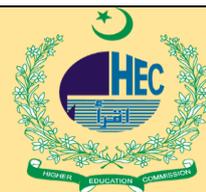
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Reimagining Global Solidarity and Planetary Healing: An Eco-critical Study of Robinson's *The Ministry for the Future*

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Kim Stanley Robinson's speculative fiction entitled as, "The Ministry for the Future" by using the theoretical framework of Eco-cosmopolitanism proposed by Ursula K. Heise. The main concern of this study is to find out the environmental degradation, which becomes a planetary problem, demanding the collective responsibility and international collaboration to ensure sustainable peace and equity. The selected novel is the true depiction of interconnectedness of environmental issues, specifically including the escalating atmospheric temperature, accelerated melting of glaciers, rising sea level, unprecedented heatwaves, diseases, and loss of biodiversity. This research adopts a qualitative thematic analysis as outlined by Clark and Brown. The researcher collected data from the selected novel and review myriads of research article within the domain of ecocriticism in order to find out the gaps. Additionally, this literary production highlights how the literary production like "The Ministry for the Future" can give a lens to predict the climate change in very near future and demands a global ecological citizenship to mitigate the impacts of climate crisis. By using the Eco-cosmopolitanism concepts, the researcher tries to present how environmental crisis is the root cause of other challenges including the violation of human rights, poverty, and injustices. This investigation would be the great contribution in the field of ecocriticism, and proposed mutual strategies to control global issues.

Key words: *Eco-cosmopolitanism, environmental degradation, interconnectedness, Sense of planetary*

Introduction

Climate change has become humanity's foremost challenge in today's rapidly growing, fossil-fuel dependent world, and it destabilizes the delicate imbalance of the global ecosystem. The profit-driven approach of capitalists denied the harsh impact of climate change and prioritized their own interests. Many environmental thinkers have been working in this domain, but it remains a knowledge gap.

Ecocriticism is the combination of two distinct terms, "eco" and "criticism", and it emerged as a significant theoretical framework in response to the outrageous climate occasions. William Rueckert was the first who coined ecocriticism in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" and defined it that "it is the practical implementation of ecological conceptions to the exploration of literary studies" (Rueckert, pp. 107). Cheryll Glotfelty describes it as the study of the complex relationship between literature and environment, while Shikha (2011) explains it as "the study of nature writing". Kim Stanley Robinson, an award-winning

author dedicated his career delves into the complex interconnection between human and their natural surroundings. He is a prolific writer known for his themes of environmental degradation, exploitation, injustices, and proposed possible innovative solution for addressing climate hazards. The selected text is a climate-oriented speculative fiction and it elucidates the impact of climate change, socio-political expropriations, and proposes mitigative and adaptive strategies in response to the rapidly growing environmental crisis through technological intervention and cultural knowledge.

The Ministry for the Future starts with a record-breaking heat wave in Utter Pardaish, India, where millions of people lost their lives because of the extreme temperature. The implications of climate were horrendous at the beginning, where every stratum of a society affected differently due to the unequal distribution of resources. Those who have resources in their hand handle the situation easily, while the lower section of society affected badly. Robinson tries to present the consequences of climate change resulting the careless behavior of anthropogenic activities where the capitalists extract the natural resources without realizing its importance, just prioritizing their own benefits. In this way, the authorities exploit the natural world, creating a huge imbalance among the community and violating individual rights by restricting to access to food and compromising their necessities. The devastating heatwaves later on led to the foundation for the establishment of an international organization, the ministry for the future. The main objective of this institution is to provide a safe and just environment for future generations by combining modern technologies with indigenous knowledge. Eco-cosmopolitanism proposed by Ursula K. Heise in 2008 in her groundbreaking work "Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: An Environmental Imagination of the Global". Heise defines "it is an attempt to envision individuals and groups as part of planetary imagined communities of both human and non-human kinds" (Heise, 2008). Within the framework of Eco-cosmopolitanism, this analysis reveals the interconnectedness nature of ecological hazards and the urgent need to realize global citizenship to protect the earth before it is too late. Eco-cosmopolitanism is a behavioral and structural shift where everything sees through global perspectives by promoting the culture of global interest. Earlier ecocritics see the ecological devastation of their own country negating the reality of its global disposition. Heise cultivates global consciousness that transcends national boundaries and acknowledges the interconnected of the whole universe, so to address the climate crisis, the world needs to make a collaborative effort and inculcate a sense of global ecological citizenship (Heise, 2008, pp. 64).

Statement of the Problem

The Ministry for the Future by Kim Stanley Robinson is one of the significant contributions in speculative fiction. Within a speculative framework, the selected text addresses the theme of environmental devastation as a grave threat to the world, where international cooperation is one of the most significant steps. Robinson encourages the rights of the whole universe and upcoming generations by presenting the principles of Eco cosmopolitanism. This study explores Eco cosmopolitan values by encouraging the global ecological consciousness and ethical accountability. The aims of the study are to portray how science fiction is significant while addressing global issues, particularly emphasizing the climate crisis.

Significance of the Study

The present study is extremely significant because it addresses the contemporary ecological issues that affect every human and non-human beings, and proposed a possible solution to tackle those challenges by shifting the mindsets of people from limited boundaries to a planetary scale. Moreover, it concentrates the environmental awareness to protect the world, which faces severe environmental deterioration, and it encourages the recognition of human-nature

interconnectedness. This study provides an innovative and systemic approach to control climate change in a possible way.

Research Questions

1. What are the contributions of eco-cosmopolitanism to resolving those issues and restoring hope by changing the worldview?
2. How does place-based environmentalism limit the way to tackle environmental issues, as shown in *The Ministry for the Future*?

Literature Review

Previous Studies on “*The Ministry for the Future*”

Kittelsen critically investigates Robinson’s *The Ministry for the Future*, examining how its narrative approach to solve the impacts of socioeconomic exploitation and environmental collapse that are intertwined with the climate crisis. In his study, he emphasizes the novel’s critique of neoliberal capitalism by reshaping the traditional notion of human agency. For him, neoliberal capitalism is “the main antagonist in the face of the climate crisis” (2023) because it impedes the implementation of successful climate initiatives. Moreover, he investigates the narrative styles of Robinson’s writing in which he skillfully blends the fictional and non-fictional features to encourage the readers to formulate potential solutions for a sustainable future. He also discussed the role of both animate and in-animate powers, summarizing that Robinson’s style of writing effectively addressed climate collapse while questioning the notion of the existing neoliberal order simultaneously (Kittelsen, 2023, pp. 249).

In 2023, Mueller evaluated the form of bureaucrats and collective action. Bureaucrats are decision makers, power holders, and they extract natural resources for their own economic gain by practicing unsustainable methods, neglecting the consequences of their careless attitude. It also shows the deep absurd situation of humanity in relation to ecological devastation, in which there is no planning to establish a “secretary of the future” for the protection of the planet for the next generations. The main objective of Muller is to modify traditional practices of people towards sustainability by proposing the term green capitalism, a novel sustainable way for production by realizing the harsh impact of climate change.

Ali and Rehman carried out research on “*The Ministry for the Future*” from different perspectives including climate crisis, economic injustices, and hope. This study analyzed the differences in economic structure and integration of climate catastrophes, accentuating the modern way to tackle the crisis. By giving the concept of carbon coin and geo-engineering, their research gave a new way to control climate change in real, practical way. Robinson’s work serves as a threat and opportunity simultaneously, criticizing the inadequate role of policy makers, and suggesting new environmental policies according to the need of the time.

Patoine in 2022 analyzed *The Ministry for the Future* under the theoretical concept of Mikhail Bakhtin’s planetary polyphony and realism of climate fiction. The inclusive polyphonic writing style of Robinson gave a new lens to the outlook climate crisis through the involvement of animate and inanimate beings. Polyphonic structure of the study examined the interrelatedness of both the natural world and humanity by realizing an ethical sense of responsibility that creates an ease to combat environmental devastation. This study criticized the limited human ability to view the world by describing the insufficient approach to reducing global issues, including climate change in now a day’s world. The inclusive nature of the study relates with the concept of eco-cosmopolitanism, where the collaborative approach serves as a successful strategy to control climate change. The purpose of reviewing multiple works by different writers was to identify the importance of the selected text from different perspectives and how we can find gaps by revising previous works.

Although the selected novel has been examined from different points of view, in all the above pieces of literary production, there is a notable lack of studies regarding the solution to global warming, specifically under the framework of Ursula K. Heise's theoretical concept of eco-cosmopolitanism. It is not only linked to the interconnectedness of the whole universe, but it also discusses human rights. This research investigates the problems and gives possible solutions for the protection of the environment and individual rights to ensure justice in the world.

Theoretical Framework

Eco cosmopolitanism integrates the theoretical framework of ecocriticism, which investigates planetary environmental interconnectedness. Ursula K. Heise proposed the term Eco cosmopolitanism in her groundbreaking book *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: An environmental imagination of the Globe* in 2008. It is the composition of two notions, "eco" and "cosmopolitanism". "Eco" is the condensed form of ecology, which is related to the natural world. As per the definition of Merriam-Webster dictionary, "Cosmopolitanism" is "having wide international sophistication". It sees the individual as a global citizen rather than just confined to limited boundaries. Byberg in 2023 explained that when an individual's perceive themselves as belonging to a wider ecological community that is not confined to specific boundaries that signifies one's movement toward a sense of planetary citizenship.

Eco cosmopolitanism is an investigation that explores how indigenous ecological knowledge lacking to give details aspects of nature, degraded by anthropocentric activities. Heise argues that, we are interconnected in the present-day world. She defined that "Eco cosmopolitanism" is "an attempt to envision individuals and groups as part of planetary "imagined communities" of both human and nonhuman kinds". (Heise, 2008). Additionally, this approach strengthens understanding of the interconnectedness of the whole ecosystems of the world; they coexist as interdependent entities. As a result, Heise determines that the individual responsibility should not be restricted to the specific belongings, but rather have a global duty. Moreover, the theoretical framework covers the environmental consciousness, the human-nature interconnectedness. It also stresses the rights of humanity along with non-human entities. Heise argues about the interrelatedness of the whole universe, "deterritorialization implies that the average daily life, in the context of globality, is shaped by the structures, processes, and products that originate everywhere."

In 2011, Paul G. Harris argues in his study "Reconceptualizing Global Governance", that Eco cosmopolitanism is significant for the formulation of climate policy in which the democratic government should promote inclusivity and justice, in this way inequalities diminish by realizing the nature of interconnectedness of the whole ecosystem. Additionally, he described that the developed nations can contribute with poor and developing countries to control climate change at a greater degree.

This study now aligns the notion of Eco cosmopolitanism with *The Ministry for the Future*, recognizing the Eco cosmopolitan concepts of global citizenship and ecological interrelation between humans and the non-human world.

Research Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative research method of Clark and Braun as proposed in their seminal work "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology" in 2006. The main objective of this methodology is to identify the themes in a systematic and well-structured order. The selected text, *The Ministry for the Future*, is a multidimensional literary production, and the researcher is concentrating on desired themes for further analysis. As Clark and Braun defined thematic approach is a central method in qualitative analysis, and is considered a diversified, complex, and multi-faceted. It is a structured process for recognizing, interpreting, and presenting thematic

patterns within the selected text (Clark and Braun, 2006, pp. 6). The selection of a theme is not followed by any specific standard rule, rather it is solely dependent on the context of the research, and the flexible nature of this method make it easier. "Thematic coding as a process performed within major analytic traditions (such as grounded theory), rather than a specific approach in its own right" (Ryan and Bernard, 4). The six-phase guide to analyze the text in a coherent way, where the first step is to "familiarizing yourself with your data" through frequent interaction. The second one is "generating initial codes", the third step is "searching for themes", the fourth step is "reviewing themes", the fifth step is "defining and naming the themes", and the last step is "producing the report". By following the steps in a logical order, the researcher investigates the focused themes in the selected text (Clark and Braun, 2006, pp. 20-23).

Discussion And Analysis

Depiction of Climate Change and its Interrelatedness

Climate change has become a burning issue in today's modern technological world, and it a dire need for time to understand the intimate bond between humanity and the physical world in order to propose suitable remedies to maintain the sustainability of the whole planet. SDG 13 is about the climate crisis, and the world is actively participating in this debate. Ecological devastation is intertwined with other global economic systems and the global market. *The Ministry for the Future* is a clear depiction of the catastrophic devastation of continuous increase in global temperature result from the neglected behavior of anthropogenic activities. Robinson states, "The sun cracked the eastern horizon. It blazed like an atomic bomb", in which he is trying to explain the intensity of the heat, where human sees the nature as their enemy (Robinson, 2020, pp. 12). It is essential to understand the context through which both the sun and the bomb radiate energy, but for distinct reasons. The energy from the atomic bomb is a human creation and is used for the disastrous and destructive for human beings, nature, while on the other side the sun is a natural element, and it is crucial for the existence of the whole universe. Robinson compares the sun with an atomic bomb to explain the unprecedented increase of global temperature and its detrimental effect on human and animal lives.

Global warming is one of the prominent outcomes of climate change, and it creates a chain of other challenges, including poverty, diseases, famine, water scarcity, and loss of biodiversity, droughts, and many global issues. "The heat was beyond what the human body can stand. Hyperthermia that is just a word. The reality is different. You can't breathe" (Robinson, 2020, pp. 72). These lines show the grave implications of global warming, and it becomes difficult for human beings to even breathe due to extreme temperatures. Water resources are shrinking rapidly, access to clean water is challenging, and fertile lands are turning into barren lands.

Mary Murphy, the central character of *The Ministry for the Future*, is an embodiment of an Eco cosmopolitan ethos. She incorporates diverse global challenges, including environmental policy, emotional resilience, economic systems, and biological diversity, into a unified ethical framework. She utilizes collaboration, affective understanding, and cultural remembrance as agents of change. One should envision new ways, realizing the interconnected of all species on earth and the interrelatedness of climate change. She encourages the development of an ecological awareness and moral discernment to take care of all life everywhere. She redefines the notion of community-level adverse effects in a global sense: describing Eco cosmopolitan worldview can make the local and place-based damage a collective renewal.

Both Robinson and Heise agreed upon the systematic interdependence of humanity and the natural world where the local damage of humans and nature can be detrimental to the whole universe without making any difference. As the line "And all over the world people pointed out that the ozone layer would be hurt, which would be bad for everyone" (Robinson, 2022, pp. 37).

If there is any imbalance in the ecosystem, then it may not be a problem of any single nation or a community, rather it would be hazardous for the whole planet. It depicts the interdependence of all life on earth through which collective thinking approach can sustain global protection as Heise (2008) describes in Eco cosmopolitanism.

Injustices and Climate Policy

Robinson explores the themes of injustices and lack of governance across the globe, through which a large number of resources of the world go into the hands of authoritative and powerful people. Heise is suggesting in her notion of Eco cosmopolitanism formulating a just and fair government system where climate change can be controlled in an inclusive and fair way. These lines are a clear depiction of injustices in a society where “The three richest people in the world possess more financial assets than all the people in the forty-eight poorest countries added together” (Robinson, 2020, pp. 82). It shows the distinct differences between the classes, where the upper hands are full of resources by expropriating the rights of the neglected and marginalized one. It is the ultimate result of the failure of the global governance system. Both Heise and Robinson presenting the lacks in global policies and demand novel, just, and ecocentric policies by stressing international collaboration to address these injustices in society.

Environmental injustices are seen in the selected text where the natural disasters disproportionately influence the marginalized and poor groups of society. As Heise (2008) explains in Eco cosmopolitanism, about the environmental injustices where the southern are considered as poor, ignored, and subjugated. Black color is often the representation of the lower section of a society because of its long history of racism. The casualties of the catastrophic heatwaves are the poor people who live in the southern part, while the north is free from any disaster and is the habitat of rich people. Due to this reason northern, remain unable to understand the urgency of the time to tackle climate emergencies. “It was the South where it had happened. It was mostly poor people, in particular poor people of color” (Robinson, 2020, pp. 336). The class distinction and injustices are prominent in the selected text due to the inadequate formulation of climate policies, because the authorities are only focusing on the well-being of the bourgeoisie class, depriving the basic rights of the common people by ignoring their necessities. This shows the deep inequalities in a community where the poor are more exposed to any natural calamities, due to poor facilitation to overcome the challenges.

The selected text highlights the value of Eco cosmopolitan justice, accentuating ethical responsibility that transcends local and anthropocentric boundaries. It depicts a moral outlook shaped by human empathy and global solidarity, where decision-making not only shaped by economic or political gain but by a collective moral obligation to protect all forms of life on the earth. This framework relates with Heise’s concept of “imagined communities” which urges people to think of themselves as part of a planetary citizen. The line “giving the world back to the animals” expressed deep commitment to environmental justice, a conception of justice that acknowledges the intimate worth of nonhuman beings and calls for the revival of natural balance and harmony between humanity and the natural world. By advancing this perspective, Robinson calls for a reimagining of equity as a comprehensive planetary ethic based on global interconnectedness, mutual care, and moral consciousness (Robinson, 2020, pp. 17-18).

Heise (2008) investigates that Eco cosmopolitanism provisions empathy towards all life on the earth and a lasting commitment to ecological responsibility. The character, Mary, acts across local boundaries through her leadership role to give voice to the upcoming generations, the neglected communities, and even nonhuman species. Through her collaborative initiatives, she unites experts from different fields, including climate science, economics, law, and ethics, promoting a comprehensive planetary approach to climate governance. Such a type of

leadership embodies a progressive framework of global citizenship that emphasizes inclusive participation, adaptability, and ethical accountability.

Inadequate policy formulation is a crucial indicator of climate calamities due to the earlier placed-based ecological policies fails to control the global climate crisis. Heise (2008) suggests that the Western eco-policies are ineffective and focus on their own place, neglecting the interrelatedness of the species, and demands to formulate new, just, inclusive, and adequate policies to address the climate crisis at a global level. By acknowledging the challenges of all the people, we can make a just and fair society, disregarding the geographical or religious differences.

Human Rights and Ecological Citizenship

A human being is considered a global citizen, a universal right given to every individual. Being part of the global community, all human should have the same interests to safeguard the Earth from devastating anthropogenic intervention and to promote justice. As climate change is a global challenge, human recognition is not restricted to any specific geography, but rather takes our own part to mitigate these natural disasters by adopting a routine of responsible citizens. To enjoy the basic needs of life, including food, shelter, clothes, access to education, and freedom of speech, is considered a divine human right. Heise's conception of ecological citizenship and protection of human rights is apparent in the selected text, where the writer gives certain rights to every individual as planetary citizens. By recognizing individuals as part of the global community, one can revive hope in times of crisis. In a way, human rights can be protected by dividing equal responsibilities among all nations. By ratifying the Paris Agreement and promoting global cooperation, one can acknowledge as oneself an ecological citizen and share a common belief to foster justice for both humans and nature.

Environmental catastrophes can be solved by promoting a culture of responsibility, where everyone holds moral awareness as a planetary citizen. The Earth is not just a belonging of a single nation or a community: rather it is open to all individuals, strengthening the notion of collective stewardship. "Of the world as a common, one ecosphere, one planet, a living thing they were all part of" (Robinson, 2020, pp. 476). Robinson strives to explain the oneness of the whole universe and human are not detached from nature, and therefore, Heise's framework advances global interconnectedness, moral accountability, safeguarding human rights, and recognizing the globe as a whole. Both Heise and Robinson stressed the protection of human rights by treating everyone equally. "Let us agree we are equally, and gives important and so everyone has to on time, to respect each other" (Robinson, 2020, pp. 514). In the context of climate change, equality, justice, mutual collaboration, and striving for shared beliefs are the significant features to protect the rights of both the Earth and humans, disregarding any distinction.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the analysis of the selected themes of *The Ministry for the Future* by Kim Stanley Robinson gives the opportunity to interpret climate change as a global crisis, and how it can be solved by adopting an Eco cosmopolitan worldview, as Heise described in her framework of Eco cosmopolitanism. Climate change is not only a problem of a single nation, but it is a shared problem, and it demands collective collaboration to mitigate the impacts of those calamities on humans and nature. This study is restricted to analyzing the themes of interconnectedness of climate calamities, exploring the ineffective formulation of climate policies, and safeguarding human rights as a planetary citizen. Robinson's speculative fiction is a true depiction of the impacts of the climate crisis and proposes possible remedies to tackle those challenges by adopting a responsible daily living. Furthermore, both Heise and Robinson gave voice to the non-

human entities to see them deeply. Keeping the research questions and objectives in focus, the researcher addresses the inquiry by integrating references from the selected theory and the text, and it would be a greater contribution in literary production.

This study opens up a door for future researchers to examine it from the perspective of ecofeminism, in which the central character, Mary Murphy, is an agent of change in a male-dominated and conservative society, where the contribution of females is disregarded and they cannot count their outcomes. The scope of knowledge continues to expand by analyzing it from a Marxist approach, in which the capitalist expropriates the natural resources without concentrating on the well-being of the Earth, and the large gap between the classes in a society. Character analysis of the novel is still unexplored, where the physical and mental transformation of a character is a significant gap for future researchers. The above recommendations facilitate the intellectual to explore the novel from different paradigms to gain an in-depth knowledge.

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