

87. Economy politics of climate change: Marxist ecology and *The Flood*¹

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Abstract

According to the presuppositions of Marxist ecology and ecosocialist philosophy, an economic system that is obsessed with productivity and seeks continuous growth, in other words, a system that encourages unlimited growth within the limited ecosystems of planet Earth, will eventually lead to the exhaustion of the resources and dysfunction of the system. Environmental problems such as pollution, global warming, deforestation, endangered animals and depletion of natural resources can be determined to be the direct results of economic activities which should be the main issue of focus. In this regard a Marxist ecocritical reading of *The Flood* finds close links between the traces of climate crisis, such as extreme precipitation, drought or endangered species and the economic, political and military preferences of the City administration, such as imperialist wars, colonial activities and populist behaviours of corrupted politicians. While doing this, the author has obviously benefited from some real-life events to show the impact of environmental problems on society. Therefore, *The Flood* offers its reader examples of modern understanding of industrial capitalism that sees nature as an endless store of raw materials and that still poses a major obstacle to the sustainability of the integrity and well-being of the natural environment. Thanks to its nonconventional ending, the novel also questions the possibility of a change in the fundamental dynamics of capitalism in the case of a major environmental disaster.

Keywords: Marxism, ecocriticism, Maggie Gee, *The Flood*

İklim değişikliğinin ekonomi politiği: Marksist ekoloji ve *The Flood*

Öz

Marksist ekoloji ve ekososyalizm düşüncesi, üretkenliği takıntı haline getiren ve sürekli büyümeyi hedefleyen bir ekonomik sistemin, diğer bir deyişle, dünya gezegeninin sınırlı ekosistemleri içinde sınırsız büyümeyi teşvik eden bir sistemin, en nihayetinde kaynakların tümüyle tükenmesine ve sistemlerin işlevsiz hale gelmesine neden olacağı varsayımından hareket eder. Kirlilik, küresel ısınma, ormansızlaşma, nesli tükenmekte olan hayvanlar ve doğal kaynakların tükenmesi gibi çevre sorunlarının, ekonomik faaliyetlerin üzerinde durulması gereken doğrudan sonuçları olduğu ileri sürülmektedir. Bu bağlamda *The Flood*'ın Marksist eko-eleştirel okuması, aşırı yağışlar, kuraklık ve nesli tükenmekte olan canlı türleri gibi iklim krizine işaret eden belirtiler ile romandaki şehir devleti yönetiminin yürüttüğü emperyalist savaşlar, sömürge faaliyetleri ya da yozlaşmış politikacıların popülist davranışları arasında yakın bir ilişki olduğunu gösterir. Tüm bunları yaparken yazarın, çevre sorunlarının toplum üzerindeki etkisini göstermek için gerçek hayatta yaşanmış kimi olaylarından

¹ This paper is partly taken from my PhD thesis "Representations of nature and environment in post-apocalyptic dystopias: an ecocritical reading of Maggie Gee's *The Flood*, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*" done in 2021 at İstanbul Aydın University under the direction of Asst. Prof. Öz ÖKTEM.

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yararlandığı açıkça görülebilir. Böylece *The Flood*, okuyucusuna, doğayı sonu gelmeyen bir hammadde deposu olarak gören ve doğal çevrenin bütünlüğünün ve refahının sürdürülebilirliğinin önünde büyük bir engel teşkil eden modern endüstriyel kapitalizm anlayışının örneklerini sunmaktadır. Bu roman aynı zamanda, geleneksel olmayan sonu sayesinde, büyük bir çevre felaketi yaşanması durumunda kapitalist sistemin temel dinamiklerinde gerçekleşebilecek bir deęişiklik olasılığını sorgulamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Marksizm; ekoeleřtiri; Maggie Gee; Sel

1. Introduction

Post-apocalyptic novels of the first quarter of the 21st century often involve environmental concerns about the future of the natural world, increased security threats due to terrorism and other unforeseen violence, and the fear of the self-destruction of humanity as a result of advanced technology. In this period, literary fiction shows an approach that handles social issues not only in a cultural and psychological sense, but also in many respects with a perspective that overlaps with the findings of modern science. Recent scientific studies confirm that industrialization and consumption habits in capitalist societies cause permanent damage to the ecosystems of the world. In other words, contrary to popular cultural propaganda, the end of industrial capitalism does not mean the end of the world, but it is slowly destroying the only known planet suitable for human life. In this context, this paper argues that Maggie Gee's *The Flood* which bears the traces of the economic, political and environmental conditions of the period in which it was written, clearly shows the direct relationship between capitalism and environmental problems by revealing the oppressive socio-political situation and the socioeconomic forces at work. For this purpose, the primary focus in this paper is to reveal the misleading paradigm that draws a parallel between the end of the world and the end of the social order in consumption-driven societies by making use of Marxist and socialist criticisms of capitalism. In addition, this paper posits that *The Flood* provides useful tools for raising environmental consciousness by showing the real causes of environmental degradation. It invites us to criticize capitalist exploitation of nature in a number of ways.

The perception that the interrelation of societies and individuals with their environment and nature is influenced by the current social and economic system has a significant number of supporters among environmental movements. From a historical perspective, it can be said that changes in the socioeconomic structure of societies cause these relations to be redefined and restructured. For example, with mechanization in agriculture, which is one of the changes brought about by industrialization, rural populations decreased, cities became crowded, and people gradually began to feel distanced from nature. The new working class (industrial workers), that had been cut off from their roots in adapting to urban life, became modern urban crowds who might ignore the damages of the capitalist understanding of production that sees nature as a warehouse of raw materials for heavy industries. Regarding the environmental indifference of the working class in a capitalist society, Marxist sociologist Michael Löwy has written as follows:

Whether Marxist or not, the traditional labor movement in Europe — unions, social-democratic parties, and Communists — remains profoundly imprinted by productivism and the ideology of “progress.” In some cases, labor even goes so far as to defend nuclear energy or the automobile industry, without asking the necessary questions as to their effects on the global ecology. (2002, p. 127)

According to Löwy both “the market’s profit logic, and the logic of bureaucratic authoritarianism within the late departed ‘actually existing socialism,’ are incompatible with the need to safeguard the natural environment” (2005, p. 18). There is hardly any society in the world that has not fallen into the glamorous traps of the market economy, except for a very few remote and isolated communities that have been able to preserve their traditional lifestyles and integrate with their natural environment without seeing themselves as separate from nature. As the world became increasingly polluted and uninhabitable during the 20th century, “ecological sensitivity has begun to emerge, notably in the trade unions and left parties of the Nordic countries, Spain, and Germany” (p. 17). This is one of the reasons why many socialists oppose the term ecosocialism, stressing that socialism is already an environmentalist, i.e., a green movement.

Modern environmentalism, emerged with the contributions of Marxist and socialist thought and benefits from the knowledge provided by ecology science, but in addition, it does not ignore the usefulness of cultural products, which are known to have a significant effect on social and individual behaviours and attitudes and can thus make a substantial contribution to combating the environmental crisis. This understanding constitutes the core of ecocriticism studies which have become one of the fields of study in Western universities since the 1990s. Practitioners of fields such as cultural studies and literary criticism began reviewing the works of artists who have environmentalist perspectives. Theoretically all kinds of artwork can be subjected to this kind of reading; however, priority is given to the works of artists with an environmental consciousness who are aware of the importance of sustainability and of leaving a healthy planet to future generations.

2. Marxist ecology and *The Flood*

It would not be wrong to say that writers who are conscious about nature and the environment have recently been using environmental themes in their novels more often. In addition to environmental nonfiction and the long-standing nature writing tradition, fiction writers have also included worsening environmental problems in their works. In this way they produce ‘fictional’ stories inspired by the ‘real situation’ of the world and perform an important social mission that nonfiction cannot do. Reading works that have an environmentalist perspective creates an integrative effect that overlaps with the general objectives of the environmental movements. One of the writers who understands that literature has an important function in the process of social change and transformation and who is not insensitive to local and global social, political and economic issues is English novelist Maggie Gee. Gee can be said to be a writer conscious of and critical towards the social and cultural changes caused by the political atmosphere in Britain in the last quarter of the 20th century.

Özyurt Kılıç listed the social problems that the author frequently discusses in her works as follows, “unemployment, global warming, violence, homeless people, militarization, the threat of nuclear war, infertility, childcare, gentrification, cuts in social services, the lowering of standards in publishing and commercialization of culture and current literary ideals” (2014, p. 3), most of which can be seen as current issues both locally and globally. Judging by this list, Gee has an interest in the current problems of her country, but also, considering the globalizing effects of these issues, the planet as a whole. Gee's post 9/11 novel *The Flood*, which confirms Özyurt Kılıç's list, deals with the global climate crisis in a world under threat of terrorism. Besides, it is full of references to current issues in many fields from economy to politics, art to education. Although nearly 20 years have passed since its publication, these issues are still up to date.

The events in *The Flood* take place in a world dominated by the cultural and military hegemony of a superpower called Hesperica which clearly suggests the USA³. This detail in the novel reflects “the widespread fear of Americanisation which had been current in Europe since the mid-nineteenth century⁴.” (Bradshaw, 2005, p. ix). In other words, this allusion can be seen as a manifestation of the fear of becoming a cultural and economic colony of one of its own ex-colonies. The characters live in an unnamed city state which can be seen as an allusion to London. This city is a “part of the satellite lands of the Hesperican empire” (Gee, 2005, p. 54), and both the economic and cultural effects of the imperialist power can therefore be seen in many areas of life. In this city where ‘the dollar’⁵ is used as the official currency, actors, actresses, journalists and writers who have achieved success in their professions continue their careers in Hesperica. Young people cheer themselves up by “singing along with the Hesperican voices that took them over when they sang, and when they bought, and when they ate” (p. 54), which makes it clear that they got their consumption and entertainment habits from Hesperica. The politicians cannot ignore either their president’s or Hesperican outlook on an issue when they make political decisions. This shows that this city state has an imperialist structure and conducts cross-border military activities on the one hand, and on the other that it is also under the hegemony of this larger and stronger country. For example, during a cabinet meeting in which domestic and foreign problems of the city state are discussed, the government’s spokesman asks President Bliss, “What is the thinking in Hesperica?” (p. 38). Bliss’ answer, regarding a decision to go to war against an overseas country, shows that they are politically guided by them; “Mr Bare’s very much onside. We’re thinking May. Provisionally. But if things worsen, we could go in April.” (p. 39). In this statement ‘we’ means Bliss and the president of Hesperica. During the same meeting Bliss decides to turn the crisis – “the restless people around the Towers” – into “a historic opportunity” by launching a new attack against the enemy country that they have already “been bombing for years”, based on a “pragmatic note” by “one of the inner circle” members who declares that “a common enemy will unite us” (p. 38). The declaration of war shows the close relationship between Hesperica and its satellite city, and it can also be interpreted as an example of how politicians avoid their responsibilities by taking advantage of the nationalist sentiments of their peoples, by associating two unrelated events to each other. In one of the later chapters of the novel, Harold, Lottie’s husband, makes a statement confirming this view. He says, “Mr Bliss and Mr Bare make use of the flag of the Hesperican empire” (p. 141).

This and many other details in the novel can be seen as satirical allusions to the political stance of the British government, which gave full support to the military operations launched by the United States, first in Afghanistan and then in Iraq after the events of 9/11. According to a BBC report published in 2003, the UK is “The most pro-US European nation” and despite all international objections and questionable information about the Iraqi armament program it “is fully committed to military action - if necessary, without a further UN resolution” (BBC News, 2003). Over time, it turned out that this war⁶ lacked any legal basis; weapons of mass destruction have never been found in Iraq and, above all, the relationship between the Iraqi administration at that time and the jihadist terrorist groups has never been proven. Instability in Iraq and its surroundings continued for many years, and new terrorist groups have emerged, which have increased fear and anxiety by causing new problems for the world. Meanwhile several soldiers of allied armies and many more civilians from the ‘target’ countries have lost their lives;

³ This is more than an allusion because it is clearly stated (only once) in the book that Hesperica is the USA. While Davey and his girlfriend Delorice were out together to see an opera, he tells her that, “America is really Hesperica, of course.” And she replies, “That’s obvious” (Gee, 2005, p. 140).

⁴ ‘Fear of Americanisation’ which is one of the concerns voiced by Gee in *The Flood*, has been used as a theme by many British authors in the past. The quote is from David Bradshaw’s introduction to Aldous Huxley’s *The Devils of Loudun*.

⁵ This word occurs eight times in the novel as the official currency of the City.

⁶ Officially it was called the “Second Persian Gulf War” and the “Iraq War”, or more informally, the “Second Gulf War”.

besides this, the living conditions of the millions of traumatized survivors has deteriorated significantly due to destroyed houses, failed infrastructure, economic recessions and disruption to the supply of goods and services. The political actors of that period were subjected to harsh criticism by a certain segment of societies of the invading countries. Similarly, in *The Flood*, the behaviour and decisions of President Bliss, which are ridiculously incompetent, lead the readers to question his reliability.

Another detail from the novel that the author could possibly have taken from real life events is the pigeon (or its equivalent 'dove') problem. For the readers, this detail might serve as the inspiration for a multifaceted discussion about public health, the caring for and feeding of stray animals, and the negative consequences of human-nature interaction; on the other hand, it can also be seen as an allegorical reference that exemplifies the political divisions in the city. In the very first pages of the book, we learn that the city government has taken a series of measures to keep pigeons away from the city centre; "Mr Bliss set hawks to reduce the pigeons, but rebellious old people turned up with sacks of birdseed and pop-corn to woo them back. The arrests were partial and inefficient. The city-dwellers liked their pigeons" (Gee, 2005, p. 8). Based on this event in the novel, it can be observed how the increase in human population and the number and total surface area of human settlements constitutes a serious transformation of wildlife and the environment.

Pigeons/doves are a species that have adapted to be able to live in a wide variety of climates and vegetation. It has been observed that the pigeon population increases uncontrollably thanks to their capacity for adaptation which has both economic and hygienic effects. Pigeons can produce up to 12 kilos of excrement in a year, the ammonia and uric acid in which is proved to cause serious damage to the outer surfaces of historical buildings (Haag-Wackernagel & Geigenfeind, 2008, p. 715). City administrations in various parts of the world have taken serious measures to deal with this problem. One of them is imposing restrictions on selling birdseeds around city squares, and the other is, as exemplified in *The Flood*, the use of birds of prey, especially hawks who are natural enemies of pigeons. For example, in New York City trained hawks had been used to chase off pigeons from urban parks. For the same reason, in London, birdseed sales were banned, and trained hawks were released around Trafalgar Square. Despite all the objections of the environmentalists, London city administration implemented the project of getting rid of pigeons by using birds of prey. There were many reports and comments on this issue in British newspapers at the time, from which it can be learned that the mayor allocated a considerable budget to get rid of the pigeons, which he described as "rats with wings", and was consequently subjected to criticism and accusations of cruelty of animals by his political opponents, various environmental organizations and animal rights advocates (Kelso, 2001 & Barras, 2016). It is clear that Gee refers to these kinds of measures by including the issue about pigeons in the storyline.

As mentioned above, the pigeon-hawk interaction transferred from real life situations can also be read as an allegorical reference to the political divisions in the City. Doves, or interchangeably in this context, pigeons and hawks are metaphorical concepts used in political discourse to characterize pro-war and anti-war attitudes. The use of 'hawk' to characterise warlike politicians dates back to the 19th century, when it was used to describe the American congressmen who advocated war against Great Britain (Hatzenbuehler, 1976, pp. 1-3). On the contrary, dove analogy is made for those who support a democratic solution, i.e., those who want to avoid war. Hawks are wild birds of prey, so they are associated with war and violence, while 'doves' have long been a symbol of peace and love. On some special occasions such as public ceremonies, weddings and funerals white doves are released. Hawk or 'hawkish' are, on the other hand, used to connote aggression in everyday language. Therefore, the disagreement between the elders concerning the use of hawks against pigeons can also be seen as a

reference to the pro-war policies of both the fictional and real politicians; Tony Blair, who was the head of the British Government at the time⁷, gave full support to the president of the US, George W. Bush, just as President Bliss supports Mr. Bare, President of Hesperica in *The Flood*.

Gee has benefited from some real-life events to show the impact of environmental problems on society. Besides, when describing climatic conditions of the City state, she gives the words she chooses pragmatic significance which informs us about different aspects of social, political and cultural contexts of the novel. For example, when talking about Lottie, in order to emphasize her beauty and wealth Gee wrote, “blonde and voluptuous, rain-drenched with diamonds” (Gee, 2005, p. 139). We learn that Lottie, a middle-aged woman who is the heir to a great fortune, is not shy to display her wealth. The figure of speech in “water-drenched with diamonds” does not seem to be a random analogy; it would be more meaningful when we consider several issues from the novel in a holistic way: the source of the diamonds, more precisely the source of the Segalls’ wealth, the shortage of clean water that can be caused by the polluted floodwaters, and in cruel contrast the shortage of water caused by scarcity of rains in Loya which is at war with the city state in the book.

The first fact here about Lottie that we should keep in mind is that her “wealth had come from fur” (p. 52). The financing for Lottie’s comfortable and luxurious lifestyle, and the self-confidence that comes with it, comes from the fur trade, an emblematic capitalist interpretation of the availability of nature for exploitation: “her father having made millions in the trade long before people disapproved of it.” (p. 52). In ancient times, when the world population was low and wildlife areas were relatively large, hunting fur animals for various human needs probably did not exert any pressure on the balance of nature. This, however, ended in the post-industrial era. The number of endangered animals has exceeded normal limits due to destruction of the natural environment – in other words a deterioration of the balance of nature – due to accumulated pollution (air, soil and water), overfishing/hunting and, perhaps most importantly, the narrowing of the natural habitats of wild animals as a result of human population growth. The healthy existence of living things depends on the harmonious relationship between the natural environment and other living species. Factors that disrupt this – fur hunting is obviously one of them – weaken the ecosystem and jeopardize the existence of the organisms within it. Thanks to the studies of ecologists that clarify this issue with reliable scientific data and the untiring efforts of environmental activists, fur hunting has been limited by strict rules and fur production has declined in most parts of the world. In fact, although it is ‘disapproved of’ today – as it is in the novel, the fur trade was an important step in the development of capitalism in Western countries. For example, the Hudson’s Bay Company, the first and largest company to pursue fur trade in North America (founded in London in 1670), is also among the oldest trading companies in world history (Ray, 2009). Since fur was not obtained from ‘farms’ as it is today, establishing colonies was one of the first phases of the fur trade. The Company controlled a significant part of the continent (larger than the total area of many countries) and served as a role model for colonial activities. Huge profits obtained in North America inspired the expansion of European colonialism and led to the circulation of new trade goods and a significant increase in trade volumes. As can be seen, ‘fur trade’ has a more significant meaning when it is ascribed to Lottie’s wealth, not only due to the destruction it causes to the natural environment, but

⁷ Tony Blair was both the PM of the UK and the leader of the Labour Party which is known for social democratic and socialist views. Consequently, his public support decreased considerably due to the support he gave to American President George W Bush regarding the Iraq war. This is similar to the support for Bliss who was severely criticised after the City Gala (they launch the air strike on Loya that night).

also because of its contribution to the spread of capitalism globally; the primary source of inequalities and exploitation in history.

Another point that draws attention in the “rain-drenched with diamonds” analogy is the use of diamonds, being the symbolic of Lottie’s wealth, which have been associated with beauty and wealth throughout history. Diamonds are probably one of the best-known materials that would assure that being “rain-drenched” would never be a problem. Although, for instance, water is a crucial substance for human life, storing water is a costly and difficult task, so there is not much profit in having more of it than is needed because it would then have significantly less value. In economics, it is explained by the marginal utility theory; according to which, in simple terms, as the amount consumed of a commodity increases, the benefit taken from each unit of that commodity decreases. In this case, although its use value is high, having extra ‘water’ would not be so desirable. In contrast, the exchange values of precious metals and stones which have a low use value, such as diamonds, are extremely high. That is, under normal conditions they are more valuable than the substances abundant in nature, such as water. Scottish economist and philosopher Adam Smith, who is regarded as the father of the classical economic school, explained this connection in his famous book as ‘the paradox of value’ or ‘the diamond-water paradox’. According to Smith (1976),

The things which have the greatest value in use have frequently little or no value in exchange; and, on the contrary, those which have the greatest value in exchange have frequently little or no value in use. Nothing is more useful than water: but it will purchase scarce anything; scarce anything can be had in exchange for it. A diamond, on the contrary, has scarce any value in use; but a very great quantity of other goods may frequently be had in exchange for it. (pp. 44-5).

What actually creates this paradox of value is the scarcity of the commodity in question, rather than its use value. A common example used to explain this is that of a rich merchant lost in the Arabian Desert. For a person under such circumstances, the price of water would be excessive, such that he would exchange all the diamonds he has for a drink of water. Considering the city state in the novel is inspired by the author's homeland, a clear relationship can be established between Lottie’s being “rain-drenched with diamonds”, whose source of wealth is the exploitation of nature, and England, one of the countries mainly responsible for global environmental destruction since the onset of the Industrial Revolution, being literally “rain-drenched”. The diamonds, which can be purchased at the expense of destroying nature (the fur trade), and the country (England), which is flooded by the extreme rainfalls caused by the climate change resulting from that destruction, perfectly complement each other.

All Lottie’s possessions, her “five floors (some rarely used) house” full of expensive paintings and other “*objets d’art*” (Gee, 2005, p. 95), her diamonds and other items of symbolic meaning that individualise her and her family and differentiate them from other people, could not save the Seagall family from a fatal end. A society is a community consisting of individuals; therefore, the general characteristics of a society would be the average of the total characteristics of each individual. However, it is a sociological fact that the common values of a society are effective in the formation of individual characteristics. In this context, the argument that the attitudes and behaviours of the Seagall family are the product of the social structure blended with a production-consumption understanding of industrial capitalism as well as their individual characteristics would not be wrong. At the end of the novel, the helicopter they boarded to escape from the city crashed to the ground due to overloading and all its passengers die. They allowed “five other people” to board with them “who paid so much they could not be left behind, but the helicopter is overloaded” (p. 312). Here we can see another aspect of being “rain-drenched with diamonds”. All valuable stones and other items with a high exchange value and low use value are actually

meaningful (and valuable) in a system that is completely artificial and not directly related to basic human needs. On the eve of the apocalypse all symbolic values become meaningless and a life and death struggle begins. However, at this very moment the corruption of human values caused by the economic structure based on private property can be clearly seen; in such an atmosphere we see how the greedy pursuit of material wealth alienates people from their own material conditions. Many rich people who have access to helicopters prefer to take their valuables with them instead of saving a few more lives:

They are fleeing, fleeing; they are falling over; they are dragging trunks and boxes of paper; they are telephoning taxis, airports, heliports, rushing the banks, rifling their storerooms. The rich are trying to leave the city. The rich believe they can always leave, that money will always get them away; but most of the phones aren't answering, most of the taxis have already gone, and the helicopters hang there, sky-born, swinging dark bellies over the city, droning, droning, deafening.

Frightening the people who do not leave. The poor believe they can never leave. There is no escape; life simply happens, the wheels roll forward, crushing them or sparing them. The helicopters hang there above them.

The rich have choices. What will they save? Jewellery, art, their Slim Jim Shoos, those silvery slender kid-glove stilettos that will surely dance to dry land again, the gliding wheels of their Rollon watches, their Verso shirts, their Parade purses. (pp. 303-4)

It is understood that nature is not an endless store of raw materials; facilitating human life is not a unique function of nature, potentially it is not a function of nature at all. Nature has its own laws (natural laws), and whatever must happen happens according to those laws. The apocalyptic event in *The Flood* demonstrates that natural laws invalidate the basic principles of the capitalist system. It seems that Lottie and her family were not satisfied with the number of their possessions. Instead of displaying the rational behaviour of the merchant in the Arabian Dessert who exchanged his diamonds for some drinking water, the Seagall family waste the opportunity to escape from the city for a little extra money. Their choice cannot be explained simply by their being 'greedy'; they were merely fulfilling the requirements of the system that created them. The behaviour of the Seagall family alludes to the situation of the upper classes in general. They are in the pursuit of constant economic growth, but not for the purposes of reducing poverty or improving the quality of life for all. As the living conditions in the world continually deteriorate due to environmental degradation, those who have the most responsibility, in other words, the segment of society who consume the most and therefore pollute the most, turn a blind eye to the facts before their eyes in order to continue increasing their wealth.

Nature is a common property and its resources belong to everybody and every society, to those living today and those who will live in the future. The following quotation from American economist Henry George exemplifies this: "The equal right of all to the use of land is as clear as the equal right to breathe the air—it is a right proclaimed by the fact of existence. For we cannot suppose that some have a right to be in this world, and others no right" (2006, p. 186). It is self-evident that this theoretical and optimistic perspective does not conform to today's neoliberal economic policies. There is an inconsistency between those who are guided by the laws of nature and the individuals guided by an unnatural understanding of capital accumulation. There are no borders in nature; as British naturalist Gerald Durrell (1986) once said "There is no first world and third world. There is only one world, for all of us to live and delight in." (p. iii). The borders created between countries are human-made and these have no relevance especially when it comes to natural and climatic events.

Due to the disastrous rains in *The Flood*, clean and dirty water sources have been mixed and the amount of clean water can therefore be expected to decrease. Although there are a few details about the pollution and the pandemic disease that is called "flood sickness" caused by the withdrawal of flood waters, there

is no information that this city state has clean water shortage in general. On the other hand, there are many examples of how the marginal utility of water decreases as the amount of it increases. When the marginal utility of water reaches the zero level, which is what happens in *The Flood*, and the total utility then reaches its maximum. At this point, according to this theory, when one more unit of water is consumed, the marginal utility will decrease to negative, that means it will no longer be beneficial; water thus turns out to be a harmful substance. Difficulties in the daily activities of the inhabitants of the City can be considered as examples of this phenomenon. In conversation between Viola and Delorice, the one who is more directly informed about the realities of everyday life (Viola) says:

‘It’s been horrible here,’ she told her sister. ‘We couldn’t get milk, or papers, or nothing. We, you know, bartered, some days, for food. That wasn’t in the papers, was it? The government did fuck all for us. And then they’re surprised when there’s a little bit of trouble. It’s like, “Violent Riots”, and “Towers Mob Rule”. In any case, let’s hope it’s over. I’d started to think it would rain for ever’ (Gee, 2005, p. 170).

From this, it is understood that there are difficulties in accessing some basic products, yet not clean water. However, it is obvious that the cause of such a supply problem is due to excessive water. Another example that could be seen as a result of the negative marginal utility of water arises when Mohammed and Rhuksana are eating take-away Chinese food:

There was a pause while they ate their Chinese Chicken, listening to the whisper of the rain on the window. Lots of the takeaway menu had been crossed out; ‘suppry plobrems’, the man explained. No sweetcorn, no Chinese Leaves, no carrots; everything came with water chestnuts. Mohammed wondered if the chicken was fresh. (p. 132).

While people of the City “had been oppressed, by the rains, by the shortages” (p. 149), in Loya, which is under military attack by imperialist states, the same economic theory is manifested in a different way:

[Rhuksana Habib] was thinking about her sister-in-law, her husband Mohammed’s beloved Jamila, whose city Mr Bliss was attacking. Last week her water had been cut off. It was back on now, but her tree had suffered, which Jamila usually watered every day, the desert rose that grew in her courtyard: the first pink flowers had fallen off, leaving it ‘grey as an elephant’. ‘I hope it’s alive,’ she had written. ‘If only we could have some of your rain.’ (pp. 114-5).

Mohammed’s home country Loya is associated with fundamentalist terror groups and their terrorist acts; at the same time, it struggles with poverty, imperialist attacks and drought. It is undoubtedly a very different place to the Western state hit by the floods. Nevertheless, when ecologists study the issues of climate change and global warming caused by environmental degradation, they look at Earth itself, that is, nature itself, not the political views of those living on a piece of land. The boundaries separating people from each other do not exist in nature. “Although it is well accepted that Earth consists of many different ecosystems, human societies much less readily recognize that Earth itself is an ecosystem, dependent on interacting species and consisting of finite resources.” (Vignieri & Fahrenkamp-Uppenbrink, 2017, p. 259) Therefore it is difficult to ignore that the environmental problems in both countries are in mutual interaction. Excessive consumption of resources by one half of the world will inevitably lead to the deprivation of the other half. The history of industrialization and colonialism already proves this. Thanks to colonial policies most of the world’s limited resources are used for the welfare of Western societies. Nevertheless, although the destruction of nature is approaching an irreversible level, very few people demonstrate a will to give up the opportunities they have. In other words, referring to Adam Smith’s story about the rich merchant, it is seen that the people of the City have no intention of sharing their diamonds, nor exchange them for the wellbeing of nature or society. In this regard this paper’s ecocritical reading from a Marxist perspective finds close links between

Lottie's being "rain-drenched with diamonds" and Jamila's being shot in the street looking for bread; between the excessive rains, floods and supply problems in the city state and the water scarcity and war in Loya. This relationship, which increases the marginal utility of essential needs for human life in one part of the world and decreases it to zero on the other, also reduces the value of human life into an equation that can be measured in precious stones.

"Environmental problems require analysis in cultural as well as scientific terms, because they are the outcome of an interaction between ecological knowledge of nature and its cultural inflection" (Garrard, 2004, p. 14). As a consequence, ecocriticism emerged as a multidisciplinary approach that makes use of both social and natural sciences, especially ecology, while examining cultural products. In *The Flood* global warming manifests itself with major floods, and so far, the discussions in this paper have been dealt with the relationship between climate change and the capitalist/imperialist exploitation by using concepts of economics, history and political science. However, it is also possible to approach the same subject using a different branch of science.

Thermodynamics is a branch of physics that focuses on heat, work, and energy relations. According to the Zeroth Law of thermodynamics 'thermal equilibrium between systems is a transitive relation' and this transition must continue until a balance is reached between the systems. That is, the warmer object continues to give heat to the cooler one until equilibrium is reached. There is no need for complex experiments and complicated formulas for a scientific explanation of global warming; for a basic awareness on the issue this simple law of physics seems sufficient. Thus, although it is considered as a closed system like all planets, there is constant heat transfer to the Earth from the sun. This process continues with the Earth transferring cumulative heat to space. However, carbon emissions accumulated in the Earth's atmosphere limit this heat transfer; the carbon-containing materials consumed to generate energy prevent the natural cooling mechanism of the planet to a certain extent. Especially with the increasing fossil fuel consumption after the Industrial Revolution, this excess of carbon gas has been increasingly warming the planet. Research has found that with the increase in average temperature values, permanent changes are observed in the climate. Excessive rainfall in Britain or elsewhere and droughts in other parts of the world can be seen as a result. Based on this explanation, a direct connection can be established between the situation in Loya (droughts and poverty) and the Western city state (heavy rainfalls and better financial opportunities). There are also visible links between the war launched against Loya and the immigration issues, rising xenophobia and terrorist threats in *The Flood*. However, studies on climate, national security and immigration have produced data on how droughts, whatever the reason for their occurrence increase the probability of conflict.

In addition to the debilitating effects of industrial agriculture policies, drought disasters due to climate change have become a serious issue on a global scale. Studies show that even if global warming increases within the limits proposed by intergovernmental agreements to mitigate it, droughts will continue to cause significant damage until the end of the 21st century. This means that even, in the near future droughts would also be seen in regions currently not regarded as water poor, for example certain parts of Europe, at problematic levels (Spinoni et al., 2018, pp. 1722-23). Studies conducted in drought-prone regions around the world show that it not only affects agricultural production and quality of life, but that there is a significant relationship between climate change and poverty, between poverty and migration, and between security threats caused by migration and conflicts at both national and international levels.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the security threats and conflict risks caused by the climate crisis, especially droughts. For example, in *Climate Wars* (2010), Dyer predicts that frequent natural

disasters, rise in sea levels and increasing droughts will put the whole world into a rapidly spreading destabilization process, including not only third world countries but also developed Western countries. Starting from a basic reality, such as whether rich or poor every human being has a need to feed and drink water, considering the scarcity of resources and the rapidly increasing world population, the climate crisis can put the world on a path of no return. Dyer (2010) argues that, “The first and most important impact of climate change on human civilization will be an acute and permanent of food supply. Eating regularly is a non-negotiable activity and countries that cannot feed their people are unlikely to be reasonable about it.” (p. 8). Energy security expert Jon Powers also draws a dark picture regarding the same issue: “In the security world, decisions are made by a careful evaluation of risk. And climate change is the mother of all risks”. Powers also states that climate change is a “threat multiplier” for national security and emphasizes the importance of “clean energy innovation” (Powers, 2015). Marc Levy, Deputy Director of the Center for the International Earth Science Information Network at Columbia University, shares Dyer and Powers’ relatively pessimistic outlook. Levy, the leading author of the human security chapter in the report prepared by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, argues that the future projections about global warming should go beyond the social science perspective: possible military consequences should also be taken into account. In his presentation titled, “Welcome to the Pressure Cooker: How Climate Change is making our World More Violent and Less Secure” (2015) Levy included graphs, news and media images that establish causal relationship between the increase in average temperature values and the rise in violent events in various parts of the world. The threats of immigration, poverty, drought and terrorism (both real and as a government manipulation) in *The Flood* can be explained by the arguments Levy has put forward. According to him, “Climate stress is causing people to move involuntarily and that’s creating problems”. Therefore, he concludes, climate and conflict are “undeniably linked” and “at least we can say societies that are suffering from violent conflict are more vulnerable to climate change” (Levy, 2015).

Creating a direct relationship between climate change and conflicts poses an important risk; since we cannot stop global warming, it would come to mean that conflicts and wars are inevitable. However, there are also experts like Buhaug (2016) who believe that the impact of climate change on conflict risk would be “indirect and conditional” (p. 334). In an article on the same relationship, Buhaug (2016) evaluates the “recent progress in scientific research on climate and conflict” (p. 331), argues that, “Climate change won’t cause armed conflict... But impacts of climate change might.” (p. 333). Buhaug argues that conflicts and violence are dependent on multiple factors and that showing these issues directly related to climatic conditions would be a deterministic attitude that would cause other issues to be ignored. He explains this idea with the following example:

the conflict potential of drought depends on local land use (e.g. agricultural production, residential area, undeveloped rugged terrain), the affected population’s vulnerability and coping capacity (e.g. access to ground water and irrigation systems, market forces, alternate modes of livelihood) and, of course, the response by the state (relief aid, subsidies, price control, etc.) (pp. 333-4).

Buhaug emphasizes the multidimensionality of environmental problems and points out that their impact can be relieved by state aid. Societies have ways to cope with the effects of global warming before conflicts and violence occur. However, we need to see that most of these methods are related to the preferred economic structure. Buhaug’s example becomes clearer when evaluated in comparison with the capitalist/imperialist government in *The Flood*. It seems that the political and economic choices of the city state tend to promote the continuation of the war rather than ending the economic inequalities on its own territory, especially regarding the flood damage that have hit the city’s infrastructure and affected mostly the poor. In order to gain public support for the war, President Bliss and his cabinet try

to manipulate public opinion by leaking fake news that the flood damage was due to sabotage by Muslim foreigners.

On the radio now, a government spokesman was saying the worst of the floods was over. A full inquiry had been launched into apparent failures of emergency planning, with particular reference to the 'alleged' lack of pumps and boats around the Towers in the east. The government was 'unable to substantiate' rumours that sabotage had been involved. 'Links to a foreign power' should be 'treated with caution'. (The government habitually denied its own rumours, so the item must be a government leak. The 'foreign power' would obviously be the one they were at war with.) But 'the rioters' voices would be fully heard'; the government was meeting their leaders today. 'Full and constructive' discussions were expected. (Gee, 2005, pp. 148-9)

While the government blames "foreign powers" instead of fixing the damaged infrastructure, crime rates, along with acts of violence, is increasing noticeably. For example, Mohammed's suicide bombing plan, the violence inflicted on Kilda by Father Bruno and his cult, Dirk's breaking into homes, and property damage and acts vandalism by Lola and her friend Grace indicate the stress society is loaded with by the effects of the floods. However, instead of solving social and economic problems and reducing the negative effects of climate change, the government tries to distract attention with media manipulations. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that the government is completely unsuccessful in the business of media manipulation; except for a tiny segment of the society no one cares about the war or poses a serious opposition.

While environmental degradation and climate change make human lives increasingly difficult, the state still uses its resources for uncertain wars. Additionally, public resources are not shared fairly among all segments of the population. In such an environment, the rise of various opposition movements from the society seems reasonable. However, the experiences of the modern environmental movement over the last fifty years have shown that no significant gains can be made from disorganised or individual responses; it seems unlikely that positive progress can be made in combating environmental problems without organized action, public participation and political support. In addition to this, as can be seen from the examples given above, the protest methods chosen by Lola and Dirk cannot possibly solve any of these problems; on the contrary, such actions lead to new and more complicated problems in society; there is an increase in crimes such as violence, theft and vandalism. These are also examples of the security risks created by the environmental problems discussed above.

It seems possible to associate the failure of protesters with the widespread insensitivity in society, especially the middle class who have the ability and resources to make a difference. Thanks to its economic superiority, which is mostly based on colonial activities and heavy industries, Britain, and other industrialised Western countries, is able to offer comfortable and safe living conditions to the working classes and the other social classes in general. Although the poor experience some difficulties due to deteriorating environmental conditions, it can be said that the citizens of the City in *The Flood* have better conditions than much of the rest of the world. This is probably why protests and demonstrations have limited participation and efficacy. In *The Flood*, the citizens of the City do not care about the precautions that should be taken while the weather is fine; even a cheap fireworks show during the Gala, is enough to distract the public and draw their attention in a different direction. The servitude of the majority for the comfort of a few is one of the natural consequences of capitalism. The relative advantages of the ordinary people in Western countries such as employment security, Mediterranean vacations and comfortable retirement make them close their eyes to economic inequalities and in many ways to the deterioration of nature.

3. Conclusion

The major scene in Maggie Gee's *The Flood* features an environmental apocalypse that both reflects the global fear posed by the post 9/11 agenda and certain issues frequently articulated by the Western world such as racism, class conflict and fear of a global environmental catastrophe. Gee provides a physical and social panorama of a colonialist state (an unnamed city state) where continuous rains both complicate the daily activities of its people and make economic injustices more visible. A wealthy and privileged minority suffer less thanks to the location of their residential areas, but the poor have to live in the flooded lower part of the city, mostly in isolation. In the meantime, the city state is at war with a distant Muslim country, echoing the West's interventions in Iraqi and Afghani territories. In *The Flood* Gee questions the possibility of a change in the fundamental dynamics of capitalism in the case of a major environmental disaster. The existence of people who are striving to protect their assets, even in the last moments of their lives, quite clearly shows that the capitalist social structure does not create a favourable environment for both humans and nature. In this city where the strong crush the weak, the segment of society which has the capacity to make a difference, who are able to solve many of the problems, remains blind and deaf to them. The voices of those who clamour against the social, economic and environmental exploitation are ignored, if not forcibly silenced and punished. The brief 'After' chapter located at the very end of the novel depicts a world in which the conditions of the different strata of society are equalized. However, in contrast to classical post-apocalyptic narratives, this chapter represents a world after the apocalyptic event portrayed as having an ideal, paradise-like social structure in which social and environmental problems no longer exist, meaning that there is no capitalist exploitation and destruction of nature.

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