



## Tierratrauma, Anxieties and Mental Health in Literature

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### Research Article

#### Abstract

*Our Earth, earlier a sturdy cradle for humankind, is now undergoing a serious environmental transformation. The wraith of climate instability looms gigantic, throwing a long pall not simply on the corporeal geography but even on our psyche. This analysis focuses on the dynamic toll of ecological ruin by studying the notion of "Tierratrauma" in literary writings. Formulated by psychologists Barbara De Young and Connie Flanagan, Tierratrauma portrays the intricate psychological despair arising from noticing or experiencing ecological collapse. This paper explores how literature is a potent medium to deal with the strains and mental fitness challenges connected with environmental disorders. Conventionally, the ecocritical study has stressed the expression of animals and plants in books and its importance for environmental concerns. While this process remains useful, the idea of Tierratrauma entails a deeper investigation of the cognitive outcomes of ecological failure. Works by eminent scholars like "Living in Denial" by Kari Norgaard and "Psychology and Climate Change" by Susan Clayton and Christie Manning show the method for comprehending the emotional duress of environmental destruction. Writings, with their ability for emotional resonance and empathy, have become a vital space to study these complicated psychological affairs. This article tries to portray the trauma and mental health portrayed in literature.*

**Keywords:** Tierratrauma, Anxiety, Mental Health, Literature, Reflection.

#### Introduction

The inquiry into the Tierratrauma within the realm of literature surpasses temporal boundaries. In Steven Swarbrick's "The Environmental Unconscious Ecological Poetics from Spenser to Milton", the trauma of nature is carefully analyzed. In it, the interaction of the "Redcrosse Knight" with a wooded thing- Fradubio. This encounter is mediated by trauma, "He pluckt a bough; out of whose rifte there came / Smal drops of gory bloud, that trickled down the same". (Faerie Queene). The author uses Patricia Parker's- "dilatatory" essence of romance which wonders whether "Redcrosse Knight will witness his own fate reflected in this bleeding, speaking tree, or whether he will repeat Fradubio's error and wander in the woods of romance without end". In the writings of Shakespeare like "The Tempest" and "King Lear" depict examples of environmental anxiety and their probable effect on functional well-being. In King Lear, the eponymous character says in Act 2, scene 2, "Allow not nature more than nature needs, Man's life is cheap as beast's", in response to his daughters. This shows how base other lifeforms except humans were thought to be in the Elizabethan era. Again, such a sentiment is portrayed in the lines "Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal..." (Act 3, scene 4) shows how Elizabethans differentiated starkly between non-humans and humans. Analysts like Stephen Orgel, have analyzed "King Lear," highlighting the drama's association between the disintegration of social hierarchy and the disorder of the physical world or nature. As the critic argues, the drama's descent into confusion reflects a deep unease about humanity's position in a place ravaged by cyclones and disorder. Again, In "Paradise Lost" by



John Milton, the writer examines the psychological effects of environmental estrangement, as Adam, the first human, and Eve, who came into existence through Adam's ribs, grapple and brood with their eviction from Eden. Ecocritics like Barbara Kalawole, through their works, analyze their displacement as a metaphorical separation of the mortal relationship to nature, emphasizing the emotional load of environmental detachment. In an article by Richard J. Durocher, the writer uses Carolyn Merchant's association with the early 17th-century mining with these lines from *Paradise Lost*- "Ransack'd the center, and with impious hands/ Riff'd the bowels of thir mother earth". This shows how Milton anticipated through his work that humans had always been a source of destruction to nature. As per the Indian literary space, Rabindranath Tagore's poetry, as indicated by intellectuals such as Paula Banerjee, depicts the deep stress of *Tierratrauma*. India's bard's work portrays an endangered human-nature relationship, highlighting the unchanging situation of the climate's emotional impact. Where Tagore's short story- "Balai" portrays a beautiful unity of nature and a boy. His play- "Muktadhara", shows how man conquers nature. According to Tagore, it is man's nature that includes greed, power, and pride, that a man separates themselves from nature. The play shows the building of a dam over a river, which breaks the association between man (farmers or peasants) with nature. Again in "Raktakarabi", the Nobel laureate shows the destruction of nature through the action of mining for gold. In one of his writings "The Relation of the Individual to the Universe", he indicates that "in India", our civilization was birthed in nature, and Indians took a "distinct character" from this source and environment. India was enveloped by "the vast life of nature", the nation was "fed and clothed by her", with having the "closest and most constant intercourse with her varying aspects..." As earlier sages and Indians were in "constant contact with the living growth of nature", their conscience was "free from the desire to extend" their authority by erecting frontier walls around their acquisitions. Their aim was "not to acquire but to realize", to broaden their mind by expanding with and "growing into his surroundings..." he further says on the difference between Indian and Western approaches to nature, "In the west", the general sense is that "nature belongs exclusively to inanimate things" and to animals, and that "there is a sudden unaccountable break where human-nature begins". Tagore says that according to the West, "everything that is low in the scale of beings is merely nature", and the rest that has been authorized of "perfection on it, intellectual or moral, is human-nature..." This shows how Tagore advocated for the harmony between nature and humans. Literary critics like Sudipta Kaviraj indicate that classical works represent a deep-seated concern about the enhancement and modernization of this country and its probable effects on the environment.

## Review of Literature

Maureen O'Connor and Benjamin Gearey's article entitled "Black butter melting and opening underfoot: the 'peat harvest' in Irish literature and culture" deals with the works of Edna O'Brien contrasting with the works of Seamus Heaney. The authors say that even though "Heaney's writing often draws directly on the remarkable preserving and hoarding powers of 'the bog', alongside the act of digging and peat cutting as potent metaphors of creativity and identity, but fails to consider the irony that 'the past' is being erased through the excavation of peat (Everett and Gearey 2019). In contrast, O'Brien's fiction alerts us to the historical damage this kind of appropriative attitude has caused to both humans and nonhumans while championing in its place qualities historically coded as 'feminine': humility, vulnerability, and receptivity." In the article- 'Unreadable Nonhumans, Ambiguity and Alterity in Eric Linklater's Short Fiction' by Karin M. Danielsson, we find the writer discussing the two stories by Eric Linklater, a Welsh poet- "A Sociable Plover" and "The Goose Girl" where the characters interact with the non-human beings and their inability to "read" them. A similar image is compared with Coleridge's



poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, as Morton says about the appearance of Albatross, "a traumatic encounter with the strange stranger, who emerges from, and constitutes the environment". Morton further says, 'Coleridge moves this presence from the background to the frontal foreground. It is the inert density of the albatross, not the fact that it is a cute creature, great or small, which disturbs it. We cannot establish who or what the strange stranger is, or even whether they are a "who" or a "what"'. Through these stories, the author of the article tries to show that humans cannot connect with nature and animals to be on the same level as humans. We can only "read" them with our thoughts and symbolically and fail to comprehend their situations. Therefore, we keep on focusing on clearing out forests and destroying the environment without thinking about other beings that are not as strange as we think them to be.

Tom Idema's article, "When the levees break: global heating, watery rhetoric and complexity in Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl*", depicts how global warming has adverse consequences for both nonhumans and humans. The article also suggests that urgency is lacking in humans and gets only triggered when a natural calamity strikes any nation. Also, here too, the author points out our inability to connect with the "other" beings and the only way both readers and writers use nonhuman beings is through metaphors.

Again, we find a new aspect of dominance over nature in Natasha Bondre's article- "Petromobility and Energy Coloniality in Puerto Rico: Reading Luis Rafael Sánchez's *La Guaracha Del Macho Camacho*", the writer explores how Rafael Sánchez, a Puerto Rican writer, ties together the 'energy coloniality' reality of Puerto Rico, with the isle's steps to evolve into 'Petrotopia', as Stephanie LeMenager puts it, which has been built the buyer practices and fabric of North America (de Onís 2018b; LeMenager 2014, 12). Thus, portraying how humans' dependency on objects not only diminishes our renewable resources but also harms the environment which in turn affects us physically and mentally.

In Suzanne Manizza Roszak's article- 'The Last Time It Snows on Earth': Environmental Violence, Gothic Pregnancy, and Multivalent Loss in Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God*, the writer uses the words of Silvia Martínez-Falquina, an expert in Native American Women's fiction, to show how this novel "'feminist dystopia[n] narrative that is 'aimed at prompting people to actively engage in the fight against climate change and the attack on women's reproductive rights' while paying rigorous attention to the specifically intersectional experiences of 'poor and marginalized women.'" Thus, showing how environmental violence affects humans as much as it affects nature so adversely.

Marco Caracciolo in their article, 'Strange Birds and Uncertain Futures in Anthropocene Fiction' discusses the books- *The Swan Book* by Alexis Wright and *The Strange Bird* by Jeff VanderMeer, and how these two stories tackle the anthropogenic disasters and their outcomes; how they give expression or voice to the imminent tension of human civilization' entanglement with climate and its deterioration.

## **From Dread to Action in Contemporary Words**

Sarojini Naidu, in many of her poems, has condemned the pseudo-modernity and embraced nature as found in these verses- "O come, let us go and play with the spring Like glad-hearted children together". In her poem, "The Snake Charmer", she does not attack a snake but adoringly writes, "Come, then subtle bride of my mellifluous Come thou silver-breasted moonbeam of desire". Also, in "Coromandel Fishers", she shows how humans and the natural are connected and how humans depend on nature. Vandana Shiva, in her works, has portrayed the need to save our environment and how only through a harmonious relationship with nature can humans survive.

Amitav Ghosh is a postcolonial ecocritic and in his work "The Imam and the Indian",



discusses environmental collapse as a condition of silencing, mirroring the failure of representatives for the marginalized residents and the natural surroundings. In Ghosh's "The Hungry Tide," he demonstrates the psychological consequence of climate instability on coastal residents. Ghosh's characters wrestle with their feelings of uncertainty, loss, and displacement, as they encounter the increasing sea levels. These lines, "We are not separate from nature; we are a part of it. Our fates are intertwined, for we are all connected through the tides and seasons of life" advocate the need to connect with nature and not just use and ruin it.

Chitra Sankaran in "Women, Subalterns, and Ecologies in South and Southeast Asian Women's Fiction" captivatingly covers a powerful field of socio-cultural links between nature and humans. Many areas of the book portray the disparate and unlike paths in which environmental ruin and its outcomes impact marginalized residents. Similarly, the novel "The Overstory" by Richard Powers probes into the mental consequences of environmental collapse on people with varying associations with nature. Patricia Hampl discusses in her study of this novel that the story makes readers feel the heaviness of our ecological vices on our souls.

In a study of Matthias Stephan and Sune Borkfelt's, "Interrogating Boundaries of the Nonhuman Literature, Climate Change, and Environmental Crises", the writer suggests that the book portrays the effects of ecological crises on beings other than humans. This book has a chapter on "The Overstory" by Owen Harry. Here they use Powers' words through the voice of the story's protagonist to depict a link between nonhumans and humans, "trees want something from us, just as we've always wanted things from them. This isn't mystical. The 'environment' is alive a fluid, changing web of purposeful lives dependent on each other". The novel implies that to stem further ecological collapse, humans must try to be more open-minded to the natural, agentic world. Limited, individualist notions of selfhood block this receptivity, and we see all of the primary characters in the story transform to evolve into more observant of the world which is essentially not human.

### **Desolate Sights: An Appeal to Action**

The dystopian pieces of the eminent writer- Margaret Atwood, like "The Year of the Flood" and "Oryx and Crake" present a stark depiction of a climate-wrecked future. Analysts like Atwood herself, in her essays such as "Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth," stress how these writings act as an awareness about the likely outcomes of idleness on environmental problems. By displaying the anxieties linked with a severely varied environment, her work acts as an invitation to action, encouraging readers to face the hurdles of climate instability. Lauren Berlant asserts that dystopian writings such as Atwood's can act as a potent means for developing a tomorrow where nature and humans can harmoniously and sustainably coexist. Further enhancing the global mosaic of Tierratrauma, through an article by Yvonne Reddick - "Seamus Heaney's Ecopoetry and Environmental Causes: From Conservation to Climate Change", where the writer offers us a glimpse of Heaney's ecological awareness which started from his boyhood days spent in a rural setting and was reflected in his poems. He protested against the menacing of the wetlands and boglands close to Lough Neagh in Northern Ireland. The researcher says, "Research at the National Library of Ireland's major Heaney archive reveals valuable information about Heaney's use of poems to raise funds for conservation, and shows the development of ecological ideas in his poems at draft level." Heaney altered the title of the poem to 'A Pollution,' from 'As We Roved Out' modifying the idea of his poem, which tries to make his readers aware of the upcoming environmental issues. His lines portray the great ecological concerns of recent times-

**What can fend us now  
Can soothe the hurt eye**



Of the sun,  
Unpoison great lakes,  
Turn back  
The rat on the road. (Heaney)

Hence, Literature fosters compassion for nature and prompts critical thinking on the results of environmental ruination, literary pieces can motivate us to become engaged parties in forming a better hereafter for our world. such a future might include:

**Environmental righteousness:** The works that accentuate the unequal allocation of loads of ecological destruction can inspire effort toward building a more fit and sustainable tomorrow for all. Books are a powerful means for strengthening the spokespeople of marginalized residents who are frequently disproportionately impacted by environmental matters.

**A change in morals:** Literature can inquire into anthropocentrism, the idea that we are the vital and most significant species on Earth. Studying the linking of all sentinal things, literary pieces can promote a more integral sense of our position within the physical world.

**Revisualizing our connection with nature:** The writings can make us push beyond a morally utilitarian idea of nature while reconnecting with its inherent value. By promoting a feeling of amazement and gratitude for our natural world, erudite narratives can uplift a more compliant and sustainable connection with the surroundings.

**Sustainable approaches:** Literary creations can showcase models of sustainable habitation and positive ecological activity. This can boost readers to embrace more sustainable procedures in their lives while advocating for systemic differences that promote ecological well-being.

## Conclusion

The investigation of Tierratrauma in literature acts not solely as a review of our existing environmental concerns but furthermore as a likely abundance of expectancy and action. With empathy, pressing critical contemplation, and showcasing opportunities for positive transformation, literature can be indispensable in playing a crucial role in developing a hereafter nature and humans can flourish together.

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