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Social Ecological Perspectives on J.G. Ballard's *The Drought*¹

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Abstract

Research Paper

James Graham Ballard's *The Drought* is the third work in a trilogy of climate fiction novels published in the early 1960s. As the primary examples of climate fiction, *The Drought* stands out in the series as the novel in which the catastrophe is fully caused by human activities. Thus, suitable for ecocritical analysis, this article analyzes *The Drought* from a social ecological perspective in specific. Moreover, social ecology is a philosophy and movement that emerged from environmental activist Murray Bookchin's theories within the second wave of ecocriticism. Thus, this article analyzes Ballard's *The Drought* from a social ecological perspective and reveals the implications that the author foresaw concerning the future of our planet. While criticizing the motives that led to the devastating catastrophe, Bookchin's alternative proposal to prevent a global climate crisis is also mentioned as a possible solution to maintain a harmonious existence with nature. In addition, the article also scrutinizes Bookchin's forerunner Lewis Mumford and one of the most recent scholars, Daniel Stokols' contributions to the theory of social ecology. To that end, it has been concluded that Ballard targets the capitalist world order by exposing the devastating consequences of a climatic cataclysm caused by excessive industrial activities.

Key Words: J.G. Ballard, *The Drought*, Ecocriticism, Social Ecology, Lewis Mumford, Regionalism.

J.G. Ballard'ın *The Drought* Romanında Sosyal Ekolojik Yaklaşımlar

Öz

Araştırma Makalesi

James Graham Ballard'ın *The Drought* adlı romanı, 1960'ların başında yayınlanan ve yazara ait iklim kurgu roman üçlemesinin üçüncü eseridir. İklim kurgunun temel örnekleri arasında gösterilen bu eserler, insan kaynaklı iklim felaketlerini konu edinmektedir. *The Drought* romanı bu serinin içinde felaketi tamamen insan kaynaklı olan eser olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Bu makale, ekoeleştirel analize uygun olan romanı, özelde sosyal ekoloji kuramına göre analiz etmektedir. Sosyal ekoloji ise bir çevre aktivisti olan Murray Bookchin'e ait olup, ekoeleştirelinin ikinci dalgası ile birlikte ortaya çıkmış bir hareket ve felsefedir. Bu kapsamda, makale, Ballard'ın *The Drought* adlı romanını Murray Bookchin'in kuramı olan sosyal ekolojik bakış açısıyla analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Buna ek olarak, yıkıcı felakete yol açan etkenleri eleştirirken, Bookchin'in doğa ile barışçıl bir varoluşu sağlamak ve küresel bir iklim felaketini önlemek amacıyla ortaya koyduğu alternatif önerilerden de bir çözüm yolu olarak bahsedilmektedir. Bununla birlikte makale, Bookchin'e ilham kaynağı olan Lewis Mumford'un ve son dönemde sosyal ekoloji kuramına pek çok yenilik kazandıran Daniel Stokols'un katkılarını da incelemektedir. Bunun sonucunda, Ballard'ın kapitalist dünya düzenini hedef alarak, aşırı boyutlardaki endüstriyel faaliyetlerden kaynaklanan bir iklim felaketinin yıkıcı etkilerini açığa çıkardığı sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: J.G. Ballard, *The Drought*, Ekoeleştiri, Sosyal Ekoloji, Lewis Mumford.

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The Philosophy of Social Ecology

Social ecology is a comprehensive theory and movement which emerged from the second wave of ecocriticism. This theory argues that ecological and social matters are directly connected to one another and thus while analyzing environmental issues, a profound study of social issues is fundamental. The movement originated from the theories of environmental activist Murray Bookchin who asserted that:

The ecological crisis we face today is very much a crisis in the emergence of society out of biology, in the problems (the rise of hierarchy, domination, patriarchy, classes and the state) that unfolded with this development, and in the liberatory pathways that provide an alternative to this warped history. (1995: 120)

As a result, Bookchin defends that the environmental breakdown cannot solely be clarified with the help of positive sciences mainly due to the fact that the motives which have caused this breakdown are largely of social origin. To that end, Bookchin denounces deep ecologists for limiting the scope of the environmental crisis to the area of positive science and biology in particular. The scholar claims that the motives of the ecological breakdown are inescapably nested within the social sphere of our society. The origin of the climate crisis is largely social rather than biological or purely scientific and hence the answers ought to be sought for within that specific social area. The main responsible factors for the climate crisis are the human social constructs such as hierarchy, patriarchy, class segregation and all forms of oppression. Bookchin goes on to point out that:

The way human beings deal with each other as social beings is crucial to addressing the ecological crisis. Unless we clearly recognize this, we will fail to see that the hierarchical mentality and class relationships that so thoroughly permeate society are what has given rise to the very idea of dominating the natural world. [...] Unless we realize that the present market society, structured around the brutally competitive imperative of “grow or die,” is a thoroughly impersonal, self-operating mechanism, we will falsely tend to blame other phenomena for growing environmental dislocations. (2007: 20)

Hence, Bookchin makes a crucial realization of the significance of the impact of human social relationships on the society and on the natural environment where the society is based. He emphasizes that the reason for humanity's hegemony over nature is mainly due to all hierarchical structures that have come to being as a result of human interaction within the society. This, in turn has led to the creation of the free market and its “grow or die” mentality.

The free market economy's grow or die spirit inhibits a merciless and cruel mentality that imposes two clear options on people: non-stop growth or death. As a

consequence of this harsh imposition, humans engage in a fierce competition with one another. This so-called competitive spirit has normalized aggressive and militant behavior and transformed this into some kind of standard practice. This ferocious mentality has shown to have serious reflections on the natural environment. Human beings have begun pillaging and ruining natural areas to the extent that they could not have imagined. Hence, their ambitions of achieving maximum growth have resulted in nothing else than the maximum destruction of nature. Thus, the destruction of natural areas and the climate crisis are largely due to the grow or die spirit which is a crucial factor of the free market economy.

Social ecology is a theory that advocates complete change in mentality. The founders of this movement proposed their views concerning values as follows:

The cast of mind that today organizes differences among human and other life-forms along hierarchical lines of ‘supremacy’ or ‘inferiority’ will give way to an outlook that deals with diversity in an Ecological manner – that is, according to an ethics of complementarity.” In such an ethics, human beings would complement nonhuman beings with their own capacities to produce a richer, creative, and developmental whole – not as a “dominant” species but as supportive one. (Bookchin, 2007: 21)

This formulation clearly argues that hierarchical structures pose a threat for humanity’s co-existence with nature and all other living beings. Diversity is a notion that needs to be cherished, not oppressed. Humans are simply part of a greater whole that exists out of many species and variants. Humanity’s role in this whole is equally complementary as any other species on earth. In short, a radical change in mentality is imperative for humans to maintain a peaceful co-existence with non-human beings on earth.

Social ecology advocates a spiritual philosophy which has naturalism in its core and which promotes pluralism for all living beings in nature. Hence, all living beings, whether they are human or non-human are ascribed equal value within the ecological system. When compared with one another, the social ecological spirit stands in total opposition with the grow or die spirit imposed by the free market economic system. Thus, in order to achieve an ecologically peaceful mentality, a complete removal of hierarchical structures is obligatory as all forms of hierarchy ultimately lead to oppression.

Murray Bookchin describes hierarchical structures as:

It justifies toil, guilt, and sacrifice by the "inferiors," and pleasure and the indulgent gratification of virtually every caprice by their "superiors." The objective history of the social structure becomes internalized as a subjective history of the psychic structure. [...] We may eliminate social injustice, but we will not achieve social freedom. (1982: 8)

In this statement, Bookchin directly associates hierarchical notions with capitalism and asserts that unless these are eliminated, humans will never reach actual liberty in social and economic terms. Thus, it is the social sphere which acts as the basic determinant of the way humans deal with one another and with nature.

To that end, Bookchin affirms that the origin of all conflicts between humans and those of humans against non-humans are to be found within the social sphere. Thus, all hierarchical constructs are responsible for all suffering, oppression and eventually, ruin. Moreover, the acknowledgement of hierarchy initiates in the individuals' mind and goes on to evolve within the institutional area. As a result, hierarchical constructs are not simply individual but are strongly institutionalized as confirmed by Bookchin:

Unless hierarchy is to be used in cosmic sense, dominance and submission must be viewed as institutionalized relationships, relationships that living beings literally institute or create but which are neither ruthlessly fixed by instinct on the one hand nor idiosyncratic on the other. (1982: 29)

These institutionalized relationships are created artificially mainly according to hierarchical constructs. When analyzing modern institutions, it can be observed that all institutions, whether governmental or private, form their relationships and positions according to hierarchical notions. These notions are completely artificial human constructs that are actually non-existent in nature. Therefore, it can be concluded that all human relationships and their outcomes are determined by an artificial human construct called hierarchy. On the other hand, animals only exhibit hierarchy within behavioral sequences. Thus, hierarchy is a vital determinant that takes its origin from the social sphere and plays a crucial role in shaping the society. As an artificially created notion, hierarchy's strong influence can be traced in all institutions which are constructed and developed in agreement with hierarchical relationships.

No matter how artificial they are, institutions have been seriously internalized by all individuals of the society. Nobody questions them or wonders about their actual origin. On the contrary, hierarchy is the very notion that needs to be questioned mainly due to its devastating effects on human relationships and nature. It needs to be acknowledged that humans have in one way or the other institutionalized all their conflicts that have come to being from hierarchy. From gender struggle, there emerged the institution of patriarchy which led to the systematic oppression of women whereas from economic and class struggle there arose the capitalist world order which was based on the grow or die spirit. The day when humans free themselves from hierarchical institutions will be the day that they will truly be liberated from all conflict and oppression (Bookchin, 2007: 39).

After close observation of the natural environment, social ecologists have diagnosed two different forms of nature which Bookchin formulates as:

Social ecology calls upon us to see that the natural world and the social are interlinked by evolution into one nature that consists of two differentiations: first or biotic nature, and second or social nature. Social nature and biotic nature share an evolutionary potential for greater subjectivity and flexibility. Second nature is the way in which human beings, as flexible, highly intelligent primates, inhabit and alter the natural world. (2007: 29)

To that end, Bookchin argues that social ecologists have determined two specific, distinct domains they label: ‘first and second nature’. First nature encompasses all the features of the biological sphere. All human or non-human beings belong to this sphere. On the other hand, second nature possesses all the qualities of social relationships and whereabouts. First nature shares a mutual, interconnected relationship with second nature.

As a natural result of a contrast between the change brought about by humans and non-humans, it can easily be concluded that the change brought by humans is immense compared to the change brought by non-humans. While animals and other non-human beings adapt to survive to their natural environment, humans on the other hand dramatically alter the environment according to their own demands and desires (Bookchin, 2007: 30).

Therefore, humanity’s relationship with the natural environment has always been conflicting and problematic throughout human history. Class struggles, civil wars, regional, international wars and all human conflicts have inflicted a profoundly negative impact on humans’ relationship with the natural environment. Murray Bookchin goes on to indicate that:

Social ecology maintains that the future of human life goes hand in hand with the future of the nonhuman world, yet it does not overlook the fact that the harm that hierarchical and class society inflicted on the natural world was more than matched by the harm it inflicted on much of humanity. (2007: 40)

Thereby, it can be maintained that the human and the non-human world are interrelated and thus naturally connected to one another. To this end, it is irrational to distinguish the human world from the non-human world. Conformity between these two spheres is necessary to achieve a harmonious existence on earth. As a matter of fact, it ought to be asserted that humanity’s second nature designs and directly shapes the non-human world. Hence, humanity should take responsibility for their immense impact on the natural environment and the complete non-human world. The disastrous impact which led to the climate crisis is directly caused by hierarchical social relationships. In consequence, affirmative human relationships which stem from a non-hierarchical spirit are prone to establish positive effects on the non-human world while the exact opposite is likely to have a disastrous outcome.

Moreover, social ecologists defend that the modern-day capitalist world order lacks morality in a structural way:

The direction it follows depends not upon ethical prescriptions and personal inclinations but upon objective laws of profit or loss, growth or death, eat or be eaten, and the like. The maxim "Business is business" explicitly tells us that ethical, religious, psychological, and emotional factors have virtually no place in the predatory world of production, profit, and growth. (Bookchin, 2007: 44)

The 'business is business' statement is a catch phrase that deserves close scrutiny. While this phrase appears as a professional motto, it is in reality a simple cover up, an excuse to legitimize and justify all forms of oppression, exploitation and unethical conduct. This motto has been used as a driving force for the grow or die mentality embedded within the capitalist system. Not only is this motto convenient but also provides a necessary means of justification for the immorality behind the deeds that need to be implemented to achieve maximum profit. All in all, the phrase has a great function of overruling all ethical concerns and prioritizing the goal of reaching maximum growth.

The 'grow or die' and 'business is business' phrases are of utmost significance to comprehend the true nature of the capitalist world order. These mentalities not only harvest unstableness but also endorse material voracity by eradicating all ethical values. For this reason, Bookchin points out that:

A society based on the law of "grow or die" as its all-pervasive imperative must of necessity have a devastating impact on first nature. [...] The most serious disruptors of ecological cycles are found in the large industrial centers of the world, which are not only poisoning water and air but producing the greenhouse gases that threaten to melt the ice caps and flood vast areas of the planet. (2007: 44)

Bookchin argues that the word growth possesses a seriously negative connotation in the sense that it actually refers to an endless, ongoing cycle of production and consumption. This Machiavellian mentality puts forward that in order to achieve maximum growth, anything is considered tolerable. On the other hand, this growth has a profoundly catastrophic impact on the natural environment. Void of all ethical values, this gravely harmful spirit has shown itself in many areas of the natural sphere and it is due to this reason that the capitalist world order has become an open threat for nature as:

There are dramatic signs that capitalism is producing external conditions for a crisis an ecological crisis. Capitalism, organized around a "grow-or-die" market system based on rivalry and expansion, must tear down the natural world – turning soil into sand, polluting the atmosphere, changing the entire climatic pattern of the planet, and possibly making the earth unsuitable for

complex forms of life. (Bookchin, 2007: 56)

In short, Bookchin stresses the very fact that the primary responsible for the gradual destruction of the natural environment is none else than capitalism itself. Capitalism is causing immense damage to all types of fauna and flora by authorizing corporate powers to make the final decision over nature. Bookchin concludes by emphasizing that the people ought to regain authority over the environment from the belligerent corporate powers (56).

On the other hand, while Bookchin is commonly regarded as the founder of social ecology, it is widely known that he based his theory on the earlier notions and philosophical studies of Lewis Mumford (Clark, 2000: 5). In addition, “the philosophical basis for Mumford’s social analysis is what he calls an ‘organic’ view of reality, a holistic and developmental approach he explicitly identifies as an ‘ecological’ one” (Mumford, 1970: 386).

As early as the 1960s, Mumford has defended that urbanization causes great damage to natural areas and ultimately to human beings as well. This damage is to be felt in people’s lifestyles and habits. In his acclaimed work, *The Culture of Cities*, Mumford expresses his views:

As the pavement spreads, nature is pushed farther away: the whole routine divorces itself more completely from the soil, from the visible presence of life and growth and decay, birth and death: the slaughterhouse and the cemetery are equally remote, and their processes are equally hidden. (1970: 253)

Mumford simply claims that people who live in urban areas are largely alienated from where they actually belong: nature. Losing the connection with nature has a series of negative effects on human beings such as rising pollution and grave diseases. Mumford also puts forward that the relationship between the urban and rural areas is problematic. The countryside is culturally and economically dominated by the metropolitan cities. The people of the country are shun and looked down on. In short, nature, cultural values and moral concerns are given up for the sake of standard urbanization (Mumford, 1970: 255). In addition, Mumford argues that the era of colonization and exploration brought about vast destruction to the natural environment as the western explorers systematically abused the natural areas of Africa and America (1970: 305).

As nothing is left to be explored and misused, humanity has come to the end of its quest for abuse. Therefore, Mumford puts forward the notions of regionalism. He positions regionalism against centralization and asserts that “the grasp of the region as a dynamic social reality is a first step toward a constructive policy of planning, housing, and urban renewal” (Mumford, 1970: 305). The scholar argues that different nations have set various examples in terms of regionalist policies.

Regionalism was meant to stress pluralism that rose out of cultural, historical and geographical differences. Mumford affirms the significance of regionalism as follows:

In its recognition of the region as a basic configuration in human life; in its acceptance of natural diversities as well as natural associations and uniformities; in its recognition of the region as a permanent sphere of cultural influences and as a center of economic activities, as well as an implicit geographic fact—here lies the vital common element in the regionalist movement. Regionalism belongs to the future. (1970: 306)

Thus, Lewis Mumford embraces regionalism as a pluralist and enriching value whose practices ought to be spread throughout the world. The philosopher concludes by stating the various characteristics of regionalism by connecting them with specific examples from the United States.

All in all, Lewis Mumford's theories concerning regionalism are closely related to Bookchin's notion of communalism as both scholars welcome and encourage local communities and their pluralistic entities. It is commonly acknowledged that Bookchin was inspired and largely influenced by the earlier theories of Mumford. Bookchin has built his theories on the basis provided by Mumford and thus come up with the term social ecology.

One of the major differences between these two thinkers is that Mumford was a champion of versatility with expertise on various disciplines such as history, philosophy, sociology, technology and spirituality. On the other hand, Bookchin who was seriously influenced by Mumford was mostly seen as an environmental activist with political philosophy in background.

Following Bookchin and Mumford, many scholars and thinkers have contributed to the theory of social ecology. One of the most recent scholars and contributors of social ecology is Daniel Stokols. Together with other social ecologists, Stokols has managed to widen the scope of social ecology which he describes as "the study of communities from interdisciplinary perspectives, reflecting multiple scales and levels of analysis, and more deeply incorporating psychological, cultural, and institutional contexts of human–environment relations than the earlier human ecology research" (Lejano & Stokols, 2013: 2).

Scholars such as Stokols and Lejano have transformed social ecology into an interdisciplinary practice that strives for change within the modern society. Stokols' social ecological framework model and his guidelines for community health promotion have provided an innovative social ecological approach to recent issues of social communities.

I have come to the conviction that all environmentalist and social ecologists' ideas are of great value for our local communities and common folk. I value social ecological innovations especially in the sense that they provide alternatives for the

globalizing world order and function at the advantage of the people rather than multinational, global corporations. The world is globalizing at full speed and citizens are already beginning to feel the changes carried out by globalization. While this issue is debatable, I believe that its negative effects will be acknowledged in the long term. Therefore, social ecology and regionalist policies may provide alternatives to the mandatory trends of globalism imposed on the people.

1. J.G. Ballard's *The Drought*

James Graham Ballard was one of the most influential English authors of the late 20th century. Born in Shanghai, Ballard spent a period of his childhood in a Japanese internment camp during the Japanese invasion of China. This tragic period has had a profound impact on his life and future writing career.

At the beginning of the 1960s, Ballard published the first of his novels which were later entitled a quadrilogy. Published in 1964, *The Drought* is the third novel of his climate fiction that envisions a future society which is ruined by the evils of the capitalist world order. Published right after *The Drowned World*, *The Drought* recounts Ballard's vision of a world running out of water. As the pioneer of climate fiction, J.G. Ballard explored climatic catastrophes through wind (hurricane), water (flood) and scarcity of water (drought).

Dr. Charles Ransom is a scientist who is the protagonist of the novel. Ransom is a disoriented person who struggles to stay alive in the middle of the ongoing chaos. Ransom and his team embark on a journey to survive the harsh conditions of the disaster. The motives that are mentioned which eventually lead to the catastrophe are perfectly compatible for a social-ecological analysis of the novel.

Straight from the very beginning of the novel, the scope of the catastrophe is depicted in detail:

At noon, when Dr. Charles Ransom moored his houseboat in the entrance to the river, he saw Quilter, the idiot-son of the old woman who lived in the ramshackle barge outside the yacht basin, standing on a spur of exposed rock on the opposite bank and smiling at the dead birds floating in the water below his feet. The reflection of his swollen head swam like a deformed nimbus among the limp plumage. The caking mudbank was speckled with pieces of paper and driftwood, and to Ransom the dream faced figure of Quilter resembled a demented faun strewing himself with leaves as he mourned for the lost spirit of the river. (Ballard, 2014: 3)

Ransom is depicted as a lonely man who lives in a houseboat and who has been recently abandoned by his wife. The worsening drought urges people to leave their homes and set off to coastal regions but despite all these, Ransom decides to

stay where he is. As it is the case with Ballard's earlier novels, in his climate fiction series, his depictions of the physical area are not only striking but also quite dramatic and to the point. Ballard highlights the backwards evolution of the natural environment as he deliberately indicates the vast destruction in the fauna and flora by using vivid descriptions of the dying species.

The dead birds in the water, the extremely polluted mudbank and the resemblance of Quilter to a mythological figure are all instances of foreshadowing concerning the grave scale of the upcoming environmental catastrophe. Ballard's statement "mourning for the lost spirit of the river" (2014: 3) is an intentional use of personification the author utilizes to draw attention to the dying state of natural areas. Ballard implies that all the elements of the natural environment, including rivers, lakes, seas and all others are living beings which are no different than humans. Just like humans, the elements of the natural environment possess souls but nevertheless with the coming of the drought their soul is now lost and doomed. Ballard's vivid depictions of the extermination of nature continues in the next pages:

On the last morning he woke to find the houseboat beached at the end of a small cove. The slopes of mud, covered with the bodies of dead birds and fish, stretched above him like the shores of a dream. [...] In the previous three months the river had dropped some twenty feet, shrinking to less than a quarter of its original volume. As it sank it seemed to pull everything toward it. The two banks were now opposing cliffs, topped by the inverted tents suspended from the chimneys of many of the riverside houses. Originally designed as raintraps--though no rain had ever fallen into them--the canvas envelopes had been transformed into a line of aerial garbage scoops, the bowls of dust and leaves raised like offerings to the sun. (2014: 4-6-7)

Thus, Ballard begins the novel by stating the dramatic changes that have taken place in the natural environment to stress the very degree that humans have altered the earth. Rivers and lakes have dried out to such an extent that they no longer resemble what they used to be. As the narrator describes them, they have begun to look like a "dust bowl" (2014: 33) and like a garbage dumping area. Ballard directly emphasizes the impact of the climate crisis on the animals. The lack of water has resulted in the extermination of all species living in and around this area. These non-human species have become the first victims of a crisis directly caused and aggravated by humans. This imagery created in the early pages of the novel is an indirect foreshadowing of the dark fate that awaits humanity.

A new world without water has several significances in *The Drought*. Water can be considered as a symbol of birth as it is associated with the womb as a life giver (Firsching, 1985: 302). From a social ecological perspective, the extermination of water can be interpreted as the eradication of the natural order by the human-caused capitalist system. As water slowly disappears, characters'

memories of the past also begin to fade away (Firsching, 1985: 304). Ballard indicates the closure of a collective rebirth but puts forward the beginning of a new world order, with little water and lots of sand. In this new world with little water, the ones who get hold of the water also have authority over the world and other valuable assets (Firsching, 1985: 304). In an interview given by J.G. Ballard, the author states that:

In *The Drought* I deal with the future, taking sand as the central image. [...] In my novel *The Drought*, I see the future as a world dominated by sand. It is the end of the planet, and the few people who survive on the planet are governed by perfectly abstract relations, through an entire geometry of space-time, of emotion and action. It is a completely abstract world, as abstract as the most abstract of painters or sculptors one can imagine. (Sellars & O'Hara, 2012: 12)

Thus, the author exposes that *The Drought* represents his vision of a dark future. As a matter of fact, the author's third climate fiction novel is a Ballardian interpretation of humanity's catastrophic future. It is worth noting that J.G. Ballard was one of the first intellectuals to have predicted the climate crisis and global warming during the 1960s as he is commonly regarded as the founding author of climate fiction. How Ballard was able to predict the climate crisis lies not only in his visionary abilities but also in his depressing personal profile. As a child, Ballard spent a notable time in an internment camp which had seriously negative effects on his psyche. This traumatic experience has led him to write works of dystopian grandeur. Jim Clarke notes that Ballard's works are directly related to his childhood experiences:

While Ballard's texts cannot comment on the politics of anthropogenic climate change in the manner that later cli-fi could, they are not without extensive political subtexts. Ballard, who grew up in the colonial-era Shanghai depicted in *Empire of the Sun*, transplanted the annual floodplains of his childhood China to a postdiluvian London in *The Drowned World*. (Clarke, 2013: 13)

It is thus not very surprising to comprehend how the author came to be such a masterly skilled writer of dystopian fiction.

The actual focal point Ballard mentions in the beginning of *The Drought* concerns the causes of such a global disaster. What caused a catastrophe of such global scale? Ballard attempts to clarify a rational explanation for the cause of this worldwide drought. This is also the very reason why *The Drought* is different than its predecessors, *The Drowned World* and *The Wind from Nowhere*. The causes of the climatic disasters in these earlier novels are intentionally left open by Ballard, whereas in *The Drought*, it can be inferred that the cause of the catastrophe is anthropogenic. However, while Ballard does not openly state it, he prefers to imply

it through several strong references which clearly indicate that the catastrophe is a result of human industrial activity on earth. Thus, human relationships and excessive industrial activities are responsible for the downfall of earth's natural balance. Ballard conveys this vital message to the readers at the beginning of the novel:

Covering the offshore waters of the world's oceans, to a distance of about a thousand miles from the coast, was a thin but resilient mono-molecular film formed from a complex of saturated long-chain polymers, generated within the sea from the vast quantities of industrial wastes discharged into the ocean basins during the previous fifty years. This tough, oxygen-permeable membrane lay on the air-water interface and prevented almost all evaporation of surface water into the air space above. Although the structure of these polymers was quickly identified, no means was found of removing them. (Ballard: 2014: 36)

Thereby, the author openly attributes the cause of the disaster to the several forms of industrial pollutants that have been dumped into the water in the last fifty years. Ballard specifically utilizes the statement 'industrial waste' to ascribe direct responsibility to the industrial world order which has performed immorally for such a long period that the vast pollution in the oceans has in turn caused a chain reaction which eventually lead to a worldwide shortage of water. The anthropogenic causes which give rise to the disaster are further described in the upcoming pages:

The mechanism of formation of these polymers remained obscure, but millions of tons of highly reactive industrial wastes--unwanted petroleum fractions, contaminated catalysts and solvents--were still being vented into the sea, where they mingled with the wastes of atomic power stations and sewage schemes. Out of this brew the sea had constructed a skin no thicker than a few atoms, but sufficiently strong to devastate the lands it once irrigated. (Ballard: 2014: 37)

Set in an undefined, distant future, *The Drought* presents a vision of a society where capitalist production has reached its peak and can no longer be kept under control. These industrial wastes are in no condition of disposal and therefore must blend in with nature. This blending in with nature causes irreversible disruption in nature's balance and creates a chain reaction that ultimately leads to catastrophe. The author's choice of words such as "millions of tons of industrial waste, petroleum, reactive, polymers" (2014: 37) are not random, but carefully selected words that serve vital implications. As a consequence, Ballard reveals that the source of the apocalypse is human industrial activity and *The Drought* therefore clearly differentiates from its forerunners.

Ballard's previous climate fiction novels, *The Wind from Nowhere* and *The Drowned World* both contain climatic disasters whose causes are rather unknown. This is mainly due to the fact that Ballard was more interested in the process and

result of the catastrophe rather than the motives that caused them. Therefore in his earlier novels, the cataclysms happen all of a sudden, lacking any type of satisfactory explanation. Thus, Ballard writes as if these catastrophes are events that happen to humans rather than being caused by them (Clarke, 2013: 10). In his very first novel, *The Wind from Nowhere*, Ballard writes the following:

Recently our monitors have detected unusually high levels of cosmic radiation. All electro-magnetic wave forms have mass – perhaps a vast tangential stream of cosmic radiation exploded from the sun during the solar eclipse a month ago, struck the earth on one exposed hemisphere, and its gravitational drag might have set in motion the huge cyclone revolving round the earth's axis at this moment. (Ballard, 1962: 48)

It is worth noting that in these lines, the explanation conveyed for the killer winds is uncertain and lacks any factual justification. Ballard's specific use of words like 'perhaps' and 'might have' point out to the unknown cause of the hurricane and to the author's particular distrust for science and scientists. While it is not very common for a science-fiction writer to distrust scientists, Ballard seemed to be obsessed with this as he expressed it in many of his works either directly or in an indirect manner. In this work, scientists can only make guesses rather than create solutions. As a result, the vagueness concerning what caused the disaster in *The Wind from Nowhere* is thus replaced with a clear indication in *The Drought*.

2. The Anthropogenic Cataclysm

It can be put forward that 'the grow or die' mentality which has been discussed by Murray Bookchin is manifested in the subtext of *The Drought*. Ballard gives readers a glimpse of the distant future by exposing the advanced stages of industrial production and capitalist world order. These post-stages of capitalism have been reached through an ignorant and excessive pollution of the natural environment which in its turn caused irreversible damage, ultimately leading to a global, climatic catastrophe. The chain of events that have led to the disaster is meticulously described in the novel.

Millions of tons of industrial wastes have been dumped into the oceans, which combined with toxic, nuclear waste became ultra-dangerous and poisonous substances. Consequently, these highly toxic wastes have blocked water's evaporation cycle, causing a worldwide scarcity of water and massive fires all over the world.

Thus, the starting, focal point of the catastrophe in *The Drought* is human-caused pollution. Ballard implies that in the distant future, the advanced stages of capitalism will make it impossible to revert the effects of environmental damage which will lead to cataclysm of global scale. Ballard's portrayal of apocalyptic disaster is entirely due to human activity. The grow or die mentality promotes

maximum production, which is destined to consume and harm all that is left and can be consumed, including the environment.

From a social ecological point of view, the catastrophic results of the drought are not only observable in the natural environment, but also in the characters' relationships with one another. The state of nature is in complete consistency with the state of human beings. Just as nature is experiencing a massive transformation, humans are also going through a troubled phase of disorientation. Dr. Charles Ransom is an anthropologist who lives in a houseboat on a river that is drying up. This drying up of the river symbolizes the disappearing of psychological sanity as:

The house reflected this domestic and personal vacuum. The neutral furniture and decorations were as anonymous and free of associations as those of a motel - indeed, Ransom realized, they had been unconsciously selected for just this reason. In a sense the house was a perfect model of a spatio-temporal vacuum, inserted into the continuum of his life by the private alternate universe in the houseboat on the river. Walking about the house he felt more like a forgotten visitor than its owner, a shadowy and ever more evasive double of himself. (Ballard, 2014: 33)

The drying up of the river acts as a foreshadowing for the greater calamity that is awaiting humanity. Moreover, it also symbolizes the gradual death of nature and the beginning of a new world order. With the drying up of the river, essential parts of land lose their connection with and become disconnected from one another. This also leaves its inhabitants disconnected from the land and from one another.

The dramatic transformation in nature causes humans to become seriously isolated. Humans thereby lose their connection with the nature. The drying up of the river symbolizes the disappearance of Ransom's identity and memories. Ballard openly indicates the state of human life before and after the drought (Jerončić & Willems, 2018: 8). Before the disaster life was joyful and peaceful but Ballard's vision of the aftermath of the apocalypse is one of sorrow, isolation, disconnection and loss of memory.

At the end of *The Drought*, the characters set off on a journey in search of the most valuable commodity and source of survival on earth: water. Tracing water becomes the one and only target of every human left alive in the middle of this barren, forsaken world. Ballard grants his readers a glimpse of the post-apocalyptic stage of the post-capitalist society. The post-capitalist order has damaged the natural areas to such a degree that it has left nature with an unrepairable destruction of which humans are the primary responsible. The grow or die mentality has consumed all of the natural resources and the tendency for infinite development and renovation has led to the inevitable fall of earth's natural harmony.

Murray Bookchin accounts the free market economy as the foremost responsible for the climate crisis and directly expresses that despite all its flexibility

and capability of renewal, within the system and boundaries of capitalism, there is simply no remedy and recovery for the natural environment. Hence, the free market economy is designated to ruin earth's natural areas. About this notion, Bookchin comments that:

At a time when a blind social mechanism – the market – is turning soil into sand, covering fertile land with concrete, poisoning air and water, and producing sweeping climatic and atmospheric changes, we cannot ignore the impact that an aggressive hierarchical and exploitative class society has on the natural world. We must face the fact that economic growth, gender oppressions, and ethnic domination – not to speak of corporate, state, and bureaucratic incursions on human wellbeing – are much more capable of shaping the future of the natural world than are privatistic forms of spiritual self-redemption. (2007: 22)

Thus, it can be concluded that humans' social relationships and the instruments that were born from those have extremely negative and harmful effects on the first nature. These effects ought not to be neglected and need to be taken seriously by the political authorities.

3. Alternatives & an Ethical Foundation

While Bookchin identifies the cause of the climate crisis, he not only criticizes the current capitalist system but also proposes a solution for it. Instead of the free market economy, the foundation of 'moral economy' is suggested which:

implies the emergence of "a productive community" to replace the amoral "mere marketplace," that currently prevails. Such an analysis assumes that if the prevailing system of economic exploitation and the dominant economic culture based on it are to be eliminated, a sphere must be created in which people find new forms of exchange to replace the capitalist market, and this sphere must be capable of continued growth. (Clark, 2000: 20)

To that end, Bookchin and social ecologists suggest a rational and viable alternative to that which they have identified as the fundamental cause of the climate crisis. This alternative replaces the very cancer of the grow or die spirit which is the lack of moral decency. This new alternative not only restores morality but also promotes the equal involvement of individuals to the labor force. While maintaining productivity, it also sustains morality and thereby constructs an ethic means of production which is in complete harmony with the natural environment and all its constituents.

As a matter of fact, Murray Bookchin strives to establish his own unique type of ethics which serves as a solid foundation for his ecological philosophy. The role of ethics is not to be underestimated as:

For Bookchin, ethics serves as a normative guide to what can and should exist given humanity's developing potentialities for freedom, self-consciousness and cooperation. [...] This entails an "ethics of complementarity" that seeks to harmonize natural and social evolution and to endow human beings with responsibility for the integrity of natural processes. (Best, 1998: 336)

Thus, according to Bookchin, ethics is the backbone of his philosophy which seeks to constitute a peaceful co-existence of humans within the natural environment. It is thereby imperative that an ecological philosophy adheres to ethical principles.

Ballard's *The Drought* is directly concerned with social ecology as the author exposes his vision of the aftermath of the capitalist world order. In the novel, there are many conflicts and struggles between the characters. One of these is between Ransom and Lomax, the latter being a stereotypical capitalist. These conflicts reveal themselves in several areas including ethnic, gender and class struggles. Towards the end of the novel, all of these conflicts are eliminated by natural selection and leave place to the one and only vital struggle: struggle for water. Along with the global drought, water has become a luxurious commodity which is at the same time necessary for human survival. To obtain water has become the only priority, the characters care about in the end of the novel. Ballard thereby indicates the fragile nature of human beings and the possible results of what might happen when resources actually die out.

In brief, it needs to be affirmed that capitalism and the free market economy are the sole belligerents of the natural environment and that this system stems from social hierarchical constructs. Thus, in order to maintain peace and harmony with nature, humans ought to eradicate all types of social hierarchies (Eiglad, 2016: 88). Only then can a new chapter of human civilization begin to exist. As a philosophy, social ecology is free from all anthropocentric limitations which:

"radicalizes" nature, or more precisely, our understanding of natural phenomena, by questioning the prevailing marketplace image of nature from an ecological standpoint: nature as a constellation of communities that are neither "blind" nor "mute," "cruel" nor "competitive," "stingy" nor "necessitarian" but, freed of all anthropocentric moral trappings, a participatory realm of interactive life-forms whose most outstanding attributes are fecundity, creativity, and directiveness, marked by complementarity that renders the natural world the grounding for an ethics of freedom rather than domination. (Rudy, 1998: 61)

All in all, social ecology urges us to save the environment from all anthropocentric restraints mainly because natural areas and non-human living beings cannot become subjected to the mercy of humans. Therefore, a new, non-anthropocentric order must be set in motion to embrace and ensure a peaceful co-

existence of humans with their natural environment and other living beings.

Overall Conclusion

In conclusion, Ballard's *The Drought* reflects intriguing perspectives of social ecological analysis. As the author explores the outcome of capitalist societies, he proposes that the societies governed by the free market economy are destined to cause a global, climatic catastrophe which eventually will cause the downfall of humanity and the environment. Ballard managed to foresee the aftermath of capitalist society and wrote his first works of fiction as a premonition for future generations.

The ending of *The Drought*, as it is the case with its forerunners, is quite gloomy and equivocal. Dr. Charles Ransom and his team experience a quest that leads them from one place to another which basically lacks meaning and eventually demonstrates the insignificance of the novel's plot. Characters go through certain conflicts with one another and these conflicts have no essential result for the novel's storyline. At the last page of *The Drought*, Ballard has a surprise for his readers.

Ballard makes his finale by stating that:

To his surprise he noticed that he no longer cast any shadow onto the sand, as if he had at last completed his journey across the margins of the inner landscape he had carried in his mind for so many years. As the light failed, the air grew darker. The dust was dull and opaque, the crystals in its surface dead and clouded. An immense pall of darkness lay over the dunes, as if the whole of the exterior world were losing its existence. It was some time later that he failed to notice it had started to rain. (2014: 232-233)

To the surprise of many readers, it begins to rain at the end of *The Drought*. As unexpected as it may be, this rain is symbolic but also ambiguous. It seems that rain has begun in an unexplained, miraculous way. However, instead of bringing joy and prosperity, Ransom is unable to perceive and acknowledge the fact that it is actually raining. The character's psychologically isolated condition prevents him from perceiving rain as he is lost in a mental state of oblivion.

In social ecological terms, the recurrence of rain symbolizes the recovery of nature as nature is restoring herself after a massive disruption of its balance. After centuries of human domination, nature is once again regaining control over the earth. Nevertheless, due to his mental state of disorientation and oblivion, Ransom is unable to perceive the water (Firsching, 1985: 304).

I strongly believe that the emergence of rain possesses a symbolic significance in terms of the sub-text of *The Drought*. With the reappearance of the rain, Ballard not only aims to surprise his readers at the end of the novel but also attempts to convey a message to the public. Earth and nature have a regenerative

power that enables the environment to heal and recover. However, this potential is much lower and weaker on human beings. While earth recovers through the regeneration of rain, Ransom is not able to recover so quickly as he simply does not perceive rain (Firsching, 1985: 304). Ballard exposes the effects of mental regression on human beings and favors nature over humans. Therefore, it can be asserted that the anthropocentric view present at the beginning of the novel is transformed into an ecocentric one at the end of the work. Nature has prevailed over humans as Ballard mocks humanity through the character of Ransom.

All in all, this marks the beginning of a new world order. An order where nature is trying to restore herself from the scars of the previously human-dominated and ruined society which eventually led to an unseen global catastrophe. Nonetheless, the new world order, as Ballard puts it, is a combination of question marks and ambitions of building a better future for upcoming generations (Firsching, 1985: 305). It is obvious that *The Drought* has no happy ending, but rather an ending that raises more and more questions and drives humans towards an unknown, bleak future. It needs to be emphasized that the author does not present any type of solution or alternative to the global climatic catastrophe. As most authors of dystopian/post-apocalyptic fiction, Ballard simply portrays the apocalypse and the destructive results of it on humans and the natural environment.

Humans have slowly transformed earth into an uninhabitable sphere during the anthropocene age. To that end, humans have been so caught up by unethical mentalities that they have been carried away by human constructs like the accumulation of endless wealth. It is the result of such constructs which Ballard explores in *The Drought*.

Ballard's messages ought to be interpreted as warnings for our age. Humanity has come to the end of the road concerning the climate crisis. In order to fight and stop climate change, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997 and put in effect in 2005. Despite controversies, Canada withdrew from the protocol and the US. has still not ratified it. After Kyoto, the Paris Agreement was signed in 2016 by 195 nations. The agreement proposed common enforcement of strict regulations among member nations. In spite of all effort, the US. has announced its withdrawal by November, 2020. Though climatic awareness has risen thanks to the efforts of environmental activists such as Greta Thunberg, citizens of industrialized nations must organize and push their authorities to abide by the Paris Agreement and to enforce environment-friendly policies.

As Ballard's third novel of climate fiction, *The Drought* recounts an intriguing account of the outcomes of capitalist societies. From a social ecological point of view, it can be concluded that 'the grow or die' mentality which is the result of human social hierarchies is destined to cause turmoil and disaster for planet earth. It is therefore imperative that this spirit must be replaced with an alternative mentality which tolerates the preservation of natural areas and the

peaceful coexistence of humans with all non-human beings. To that end, as proposed by Mumford and Bookchin, communalist and regionalist policies may serve a liberating function for natural areas and for human beings.

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