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FRAGILE FAMILY BONDS IN A POST-APOCALYPTIC WORLD: MAGGIE GEE'S *THE ICE PEOPLE*

Kıyamet Sonrası Dünyada Kırılğan Aile Bağları: Maggie Gee'nin *Buz İnsanlar*'ı
Azade GÖKTÜRK*

ABSTRACT

In the world of contemporary literature, post-apocalyptic fiction embodies a thorough investigation of the human spirit confronted with the aftermath of environmental disasters. Such narratives, particularly those that depict a future devastated by climate change, force us to confront the inevitability of ecological crises and the urgent need for answers. *The Ice People* tells the story of a family along with a community called "the ice people" trying to survive in the freezing environment. The novel demonstrates the persistence of the human spirit in the face of climate change in a post-apocalyptic world. The narrator of the novel, Saul, describes his struggles with his son, his relationship with his wife, and his living condition in the post-apocalyptic society. Within this perspective, this article examines the complexities of family interactions in the harsh reality of a post-apocalyptic society, as vividly shown in Maggie Gee's *The Ice People*. Drawing on contemporary Anthropocene studies, this study aims to investigate Gee's *The Ice People* in terms of the specific characteristics that define it as Anthropocene fiction and intends to serve as a critical perspective on human relationships in times of disaster. Furthermore, the article explores how Gee advocates for a more inclusive and equitable approach to environmental justice by illustrating the interrelated themes of environmental degradation, the failure of social and political systems, and the destructive potential of technology. *The Ice People* encourages a reevaluation of human's relationship with the natural world and emphasizes the necessity for a more sustainable co-existence with the nonhuman world.

Keywords: Maggie Gee, *The Ice People*, post-apocalypse, Anthropocene fiction, family dynamics.

ÖZ

Çağdaş edebiyat dünyasında kıyamet sonrası kurgu, çevresel felaketlerin sonuçlarıyla yüzleşen insan ruhunun derinlemesine incelenmesine hizmet etmektedir. Bu tür anlatılar, özellikle de iklim değişikliğinin harap ettiği bir geleceği tasvir edenler, bizi ekolojik krizlerin kaçınılmazlığı ve acil cevap ihtiyacıyla yüzleşmeye zorlamaktadır.

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Buz İnsanlar, dondurucu ortamda hayatta kalmaya çalışan bir ailenin ve “buz insanlar” adlı bir topluluğun hikâyesini anlatmaktadır. Roman, kıyamet sonrası bir dünyada iklim değişikliği karşısında insan ruhunun direncini gözler önüne seriyor. Romanın anlatıcısı Saul, oğluyla olan mücadelesini, karısıyla olan ilişkisini ve içinde yaşadığı kıyamet sonrası toplumu anlatıyor. Bu bağlamda, bu makale Maggie Gee’nin *Buz İnsanlar* romanında canlı bir şekilde gösterildiği gibi, kıyamet sonrası bir toplumun sert gerçekliğinde aile etkileşimlerinin karmaşıklığını incelemektedir. Çağdaş Antroposen teorilerine dayanan bu çalışma, Gee’nin *Buzdan İnsanlar* romanını Antroposen kurgusu yapan belirli özellikleri açısından incelemeyi amaçlamakta ve hem uyarıcı hem de bir dayanıklılık incelemesi olan bir hikâye sunarak, iklim kaynaklı felaketin aydınlatıldığı bir geleceğe eleştirel bir bakış açısı sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, bu makale, çevresel bozulma, toplumsal ve siyasi sistemlerin çöküşü ve teknolojinin yıkıcı potansiyeli gibi birbiriyle ilişkili temaları örneklenirerek, Gee’nin çevresel adalet için daha kapsayıcı ve eşitlikçi bir yaklaşımı nasıl savunduğunu araştırmaktadır. *Buz İnsanlar*, doğal dünya ile ilişkimizi yeniden değerlendirmeyi teşvik ediyor ve insan dışı dünya ile daha sürdürülebilir bir birlikteliğin gerekliliğini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Maggie Gee, *Buz İnsanlar*, kıyamet sonrası, Antroposen kurgu, aile dinamikleri.

Introduction

Maggie Gee is an English professor and acclaimed author. She was born in 1948 in England. Her novel has been translated into 14 languages and was nominated for two noticeable literary awards: “the Orange Prize and the International Impact Award” (Özyurt Kılıç, 2014: 3). Gee’s literature about nature and environmental apocalypses raises concerns about the collapse of the natural equilibrium of the Earth’s ecosystems, presenting nature as the embodiment of the end of the world (Wheeler, 2013: 66). She has carved out a niche for herself via her examination of anthropocentric themes in novels such as *The Flood* (2005), *The Burning Book* (1983), and most memorably, *The Ice People* (1998). Several post-apocalyptic British novels set in the near or far future of the twenty-first century have been influenced by anthropogenic climate change. *The Ice People* is a climate fiction novel that tells the story of people who encounter ecological disasters as temperatures increase and decrease dramatically, ultimately resulting in “a new ice age” for the Earth (Gee, 1998: 33). The novel focuses on a family, Saul’s family, that experiences the entire process of the collapse of their planet and community. The family dynamics between the characters in the post-apocalyptic world and changing social standards are all clearly underlined in the novel. Maggie Gee explores the tremendous

effects on family interactions in this post-apocalyptic scenario, illustrating how love, loyalty, and the will to endure change human bonds in the face of incredible tragedy. Saul, the narrator, and protagonist, has an unstable marriage with his wife Sarah. Additionally, the fact that his child stays with his mother and the subsequent events provide insight into family dynamics. Gee invites readers to keep a dual focus on Saul's family, first, that of an unpredictable and uncertain environment the family is living in and on the other, that of a typical middle-class family living their daily lives under the similar kind of social stresses as are experienced by many couples. *The Ice People* goes beyond a simple environmental warning it highlights "the life-style and habits of thought leading up to that disaster" (Özyurt Kılıç, 2014: 102). Thus, the novel not only emphasizes how climates are changing but also how people react to these changes in the environment. The story is set in a future world, which Britain is cold and chaotic due to an ice age. Saul, an old man, lives with outlaws named "wild children", who will cast him aside when his usefulness ends (Gee, 2008: 12). Maggie Gee uses the technique of flashbacks and narrates the whole novel in the form of a memoir with her narrator, Saul. The novel starts with Saul's narration of his life story, especially his wife Sarah and his son Luke. Although Saul survives, he is a man who has lost everything: physically he is alive, but mentally he is in the past, not among the wild children; psychological endurance, rather than physical survival, ensures continuity, as humanity can defy the ceaseless passage of time through the deliberate act of recalling and preserving moments (Dillon, 2007: 381).

The Ice People falls into the category of Anthropocene fiction by depicting a drastically altered world where human survival is dictated by environmental shifts rather than political or social structures. The novel moves beyond conventional climate fiction by presenting a reversal of global warming, where extreme cooling reshapes societal hierarchies and migration patterns. The Anthropocene fiction frequently engages with themes of displacement, adaptation, and socio-political instability, all of which are central to *The Ice People*. The novel maintains a balance between personal drama and large-scale environmental transformation by embedding climate catastrophe into the fabric of everyday life. The novel's focus on forced migration and environmental determinism resonates with Trexler's observation that Anthropocene fiction often presents climate change as an inescapable force that reconfigures human existence at both individual and collective levels (Trexler, 2015: 11). However, *The Ice People*

also challenges some of the tropes commonly associated with climate fiction. Trexler argues that many Anthropocene novels, despite their engagement with environmental crises, tend to follow narrative structures that ultimately reaffirm human resilience and adaptability (Trexler, 2015: 18). Gee's novel, in contrast, presents a far more pessimistic vision of survival, where human efforts to escape environmental catastrophe are met with failure. The father-son relationship does not provide a redemptive arc, nor does Saul's migration to Ghana ensure a better future for Luke. This divergence from conventional cli-fi narratives strengthens *The Ice People* as a distinct work within Anthropocene fiction, engaging with but also complicating the themes identified by Trexler and other climate fiction scholars.

In his book, Trexler explores the concept of the Anthropocene, arguing that human actions have so dramatically altered the course of history that a new geological epoch is necessary to reflect this profound shift (Trexler, 2015: 1). Hence, the Anthropocene epoch is defined as the time of concentrated human activity and the catastrophic harm it has inflicted upon the natural world. In this context, Anthropocene fiction narrates "the story of a shattered world where the resulting terrestrial traumas expose the fragility of human existence" (Şencan, 2024: 5). There is no longer any mystery surrounding much of the tragedy and suffering in the Anthropocene, as there is a significant degree of self-imposed vulnerability to what is euphemistically called "natural disasters" (Albrecht, 2017: 296). Gee effectively illustrates the "tension between the existence of devastating global warming and the failed responsibility to act" through Saul's life journey and the various forms of environmental degradation and social collapses throughout her novel (Trexler, 2015: 9). In this sense, *The Ice People* follows Saul, the narrator, from his early years to his older years. Saul's childhood and teenage years illustrate global warming which is a cosmic force affecting the natural and social life of people in the absence of government intervention or safety measures (Düzgün, 2018: 66). He claims that severe temperatures have a huge negative impact on people, that illnesses are on the rise, and that animal populations, apart from cats, are declining. As Saul states: "There were eight billion of us, though numbers were shrinking, but few other animals were left to compete. Insects, bacteria, viruses. And cats, of course. Cats everywhere" (Gee, 2008: 19). The novel highlights worsening environmental catastrophes, beginning with a "shortage of water" and "sea level rise," which signal a world on the brink of collapse (Gee, 2008: 33). This fragile balance is disrupted further by a volcanic eruption in Su-

matra, propelling “thousands of tons of volcanic rock and mud and ash up into the air” (102). Saul realizes humanity’s denial in the face of these crises, stating, “But the world was shortsighted to ignore the eruption as of purely local interest. They soon found they had to be interested, they soon found out they had to be afraid” (102). Following this eruption, the Earth transitions from the dire consequences of global warming to an ice age, a shift that renders the planet “uninhabitable” (Streeby, 2018: 1). Together, these events depict the Anthropocene’s increasing traumas, emphasizing both the urgency of ecological awareness and the devastating consequences of inaction. As society shifts from a very hot to a very cold climate, there are numerous adjustments. As a result, these adjustments threaten family dynamics. Gee provides a detailed account of the difficulties families face in adjusting to this harsh new reality. The protagonists’ psychological condition is similarly severe; they are plagued by the loss of the world they knew and a persistent worry about what lies ahead. The narrator Saul regards how the world he knows has changed as “I have seen the world change utterly, perhaps for ever” (Gee, 2008: 12). The novel provides an engaging examination of the methods families use to not only survive but also find purpose and hope in a future that has been drastically changed.

Drawing on the contemporary Anthropocene studies, this study aims to investigate Gee’s *The Ice People* in terms of the specific characteristics of the novel that make it Anthropocene fiction and intends to serve as a critical perspective on family relationships in times of crisis.

1. Post-Apocalyptic World as the Setting

Gee’s novel is set in a post-apocalyptic world, where civilization has collapsed due to climate-related disasters, leaving behind desolate and inhospitable environments. As Baysal notes “discussing ecological issues and environmentalism have been closely linked with the apocalypse talks” (2022: 32). Apocalypse is derived from a Greek word and means “to uncover” (Pitetti, 2017: 439). When it comes to the literary narration, “apocalyptic narratives predict both the end of the world and the coming of a new age” (Wheeler, 2013: 59). Additionally, apocalyptic narratives depict balancing concepts of the end of the world and the dilemmas of the old and new worlds, on the other hand, post-apocalyptic narratives reject this type of narrative and seek to describe “futures that are different from the present without employing the reductive idea that such futures are separated from the present by an absolute break or unbridgeable rupture” (Pitetti, 2017: 444). It reveals life after the apocalypse, which can also have numerous

alternatives, such as presenting characters to sustain their lives as before or making the life that the context previously had to deteriorate in such a way that characters must establish a new way of existence. Saul witnesses both global warming called Tropical Time and the ice age. He “was born in 2005, in the country on the edge of London, when the Tropical Time was just beginning, what we look back on as the Tropical Time” (Gee, 2008: 15). His childhood and youth unfold within the context of global warming; however, following his marriage and the birth of his child, the familiar world undergoes significant transformation with the onset of a catastrophic ice age. In this regard, the post-apocalyptic setting of the novel serves as a backdrop for all of the changes that the characters and society experience, thus providing a highly significant setting. The narrative begins with a depiction of Britain in the twenty-first century, but later chapters also include Spain, France, and Africa.

The Ice People acts as an alarming story about the potential threats that both global warming and an ice age could bring. In the novel, global warming catalyzes the catastrophic events that lead to the post-apocalyptic world depicted in the narrative. Saul narrates the consequences of global warming. Water scarcity is a constant struggle: “On the one hand there was never enough water, and watering your garden from the tap was a crime” (Gee, 2008: 15). Paradoxically, sea levels rise, threatening the very land: “On the other hand, sea levels were rising, and the white cliffs of Dover had to be shored up after part of them toppled into the sea” (15). Moreover, “People from even hotter countries were always trying to get into Britain” (16). Aside from all of these adverse consequences of global warming, society also changes. Social order, political structures, and societal norms all change or collapse radically. Humans are unable to form a strong unit and support one another in surviving natural disasters. In the end, humans are destined to dwell on the ruins of their former accomplishments. Furthermore, global warming causes a refugee catastrophe between Europe and northern Africa in the novel (Trexler, 2015: 124). The refugee crisis splits society into “Insiders” (native people) and “Outsiders” (immigrants) (Gee, 2008: 59). Saul describes the structure of British society as a pyramid: “the Speakers perched precariously on top, then the relatively successful people, ... Underneath them were the Outsiders and Wanderers, a great stirring, floating base of people with nothing” (Gee, 2008: 98). On the other hand, decreasing fertility rates demonstrate that climate change has devastating effects on people’s public and private lives. In the private

sphere, individuals become unhealthy and are not capable of having a baby in a normal way, leading couples to resort to technological methods. Reproductive science clinics make it possible for couples to reproduce and Saul and Sarah are blessed with a son. Saul mentions how this type of clinics take “our bodies completely, our private parts, ourselves, our money” (35). Men and women start leading separate lives as women tend to be more sensitive towards nature, while men tend to lead a life intertwined with technology. For instance, Saul finds relief in his involvement with technological advancements as a nanotechnologist and his wife Sarah wants to live in the country to find tranquillity in nature. However, high technological advancements harm nature to the utmost level, so nature is not in the same form as it once was. This conflict causes Saul and Sarah’s separation, leading them to move into completely different societies composed solely of their own genders.

Having grown up in a hot climate, Saul one day discovers something odd about the results that he encounters. Tech fixes intended to reduce the amount of ice that melts due to global warming deliver different results. “They seem to show the ice is getting thicker” instead of melting (Gee, 2008: 22). Saul disregards this, claiming that there is an error in the results. Hence, he never does anything, and his private life follows a similar pattern to humanity’s general lack of activity in *The Ice People* (Strizova, 2016: 49). Contrary to what Saul believes, there has been a change in the climate following the volcano explosion in Sumatra. “There was no spring at all that year in Britain. The temperatures dropped, then dropped again, and the constant grey light was a weight upon the spirit, dull grey light, and sharp grey cold” (Gee, 2008: 102). Moreover, the incredible coldness of the weather causes a big migration. People migrate “from north to south, from the poles to the equator” (102) As the television reports on this massive migration to African nations, Saul hears the term ice people which is the title of the novel:

the ‘ice people’. ‘We cannot take in all these ice people ...’ ‘The ice people are coming here in ever greater numbers ...’ a growing concern that we shall be swamped ...’ ‘Thousands, maybe millions of ice people ...’ *Ice people, ice people* ... So now Europeans were ice people – perhaps we had always been ice people (Gee, 2008: 103).

This is precisely the novel's post-apocalyptic setting. A world where segregation persists on practically all fronts, including gender; where politics, violence, and turmoil are on the rise; and where immigration and the racism it breeds are all on the rise.

2. Family Dynamics: The Volatile Relationship between Saul and Sarah

To assess Gee's approach to family relationships within the post-apocalyptic scenario, it is necessary to initially evaluate Saul's relationship with Sarah. After moving in together, the couple begins to feel the effects of global warming on their relationship. Saul is insistent on having a kid and describes their dreams as "Our private mantra was 'the ends of the earth'. We imagined raising a family by the sea, with forests, fields, clean bright water. The children were running, shouting, towards us" (Gee, 2008: 25). However, raising a child is not realistic in "a box of a room" in the sweltering heat. The government decides to put an end to construction, ostensibly to protect the last remaining "green spaces", which drives up real estate costs, so they are unable to rent a larger home (Gee, 2008: 24). This is the first stage where their relationship begins to crumble. At this point, Gee highlights the major impact that global warming is having on the environment as well as how it affects people personally and, consequently, on interpersonal and familial ties. Furthermore, while living as though they are married, Saul and Sarah do not tie the knot since Saul states that marriage is not seen favourably in their society, particularly in the context of global warming and the segregation of the sexes. "Marrying was rare in the Tropical Time (though it came back later, with the Troubles and the Ice.) In the twenties and thirties, only god lovers got married, plus a few old slows afraid of the future" (Gee, 2008: 33). Despite the positive beginning to their relationship, this circumstance demonstrates how environmental and social occurrences touch them.

When Sarah accepts that they should have a baby, Saul and Sarah are unable to have a child despite their best efforts and end up in a high-tech reproductive science clinic. Reproductive science clinics make it possible for couples to reproduce and Saul and Sarah are blessed with a son. Saul mentions how these types of clinics take "our bodies completely, our private parts, ourselves, our money" (Gee, 2008: 35). Luke, their boy, is born, and his girl twin passes away. This is a result of a problem at the reproductive clinic. Although the post-apocalyptic world they live in has advanced technology, there are also side effects of interfering with the flow of a natural event such as reproduction, which emphasizes another anthropogenic

feature of the novel. After her loss, Sarah suffers a psychiatric breakdown and gets therapy. This is the point at which their relationship breaks down a second time. Sarah starts having extramarital affairs with her therapist. After the argument, Sarah leaves the house to live among ladies like the rest of the population. She vindicates herself against Saul and pushes him back saying “I don’t belong to you. I’m not your wife. I don’t have to. As a matter of fact, I think we’d get on better if one of us moved out. I’ll keep Luke, of course” (Gee, 2008: 41).

Despite their marriage, Saul and Sarah are unable to establish a strong family unit, emphasizing the increasing neglect and strain in their relationship as portrayed in the novel. Sarah keeps her promise to marry Saul because of Luke, but they fail to create a cohesive family. Saul laments that their marriage utterly destroys their relationship and that neither Luke’s birth nor their union brings about any meaningful changes: “And so we got married; a kind of divorce” (Gee, 2008: 41). Their bond grows increasingly tense as Sarah begins devoting more time to her work. Consequently, Luke is neglected and does not grow up in a supportive family environment. Saul becomes upset when he discovers one day that Luke is wearing his friend Polly’s dress. He confronts Sarah, asking how she could allow such a thing to happen, but she remains indifferent: “She was annoyed. ‘You’re not going to tell me that worries you?’” (Gee, 2008: 49). This exchange reveals the growing distance between Saul and Sarah. Her dismissive attitude reflects their lack of communication as parents.

The novel focuses on the destructive impacts of technological advancement. There is a new technological advancement called Dove in the novel. Doves are self-reproducing robots that replace babies in an age of fewer births (Trexler, 2015: 32). They “could dust, wash floors, recycle rubbish ...” (Gee, 2008: 58). Saul names the robot dove Dora. In Sarah’s absence, Saul starts to regard Dora as his wife and family. He asks himself; “Did I see her as menopast, like Sarah?” (91). When Sarah catches Saul and Dora in bed, the chains shatter. Sarah leaves at that moment, never returns, and begins to live entirely under the shield of Wicca World a “women-only community” (Watkins, 2020: 134). Because Sarah never approves of this Dove, she does not consider it reliable to be “artificial, not natural,” and refuses to treat it as a human being (Gee, 2008: 64). The different routes that Saul and Sarah take as they get more and more absorbed in their own goals represent the alienation and division that people of different identities go through in the post-apocalyptic society that Gee describes in the

novel. While Saul spends most of his time at the Gay Scientists Club and with Dora, the robot he purchased to help him gets out of loneliness, Sarah grows increasingly focused on her work and Wicca World. Noting that Sarah and Saul break ways and go to the Wicca World and the Gay Scientists Club also illustrates how people of diverse ethnic and gender identities are isolated amid all these catastrophes. This broken relationship with Sarah is also seen at the end of the novel when he thinks about the loss of his son. He feels that Sarah will not understand his desire to mend his relationship with his son. “She didn’t understand that I wanted to free him from all the debris of the ice people. And now I had failed, she would never know” (182). Consequently, Sarah and Saul are fully aware of everything when they finally meet at the end of the novel. Their world is icy, just like their relationship, and now the society they live in has deviated from the ideal government and society profile. As a result, they will not be able to paint the picture of a happy family with their children playing and running towards them on the warm and flowery day they imagined.

3. Luke and Saul’s Frail Father-Son Connection

In the second half of the novel, Gee depicts Saul’s effort to reach Ghana with his son, Luke, before the impending border closure. The closure aims to prevent the influx of refugees fleeing the ice-bound regions of Europe. The apocalyptic world depicted in *The Ice People* is one in which society’s formerly recognizable features have undergone a catastrophic transformation. In addition to physical stamina, survival in this barren environment requires ingenuity and flexibility in the face of perpetual threat because in the ice age, “Now people die at forty or fifty, if they survive the cold that long” (Gee, 2008: 53). In *The Ice People*, the importance of the father-son relationship in the apocalyptic fiction genre is discussed ironically. The narrator of the novel, Saul, learns at the beginning of the novel that his father is half-black and becomes frustrated over it. He identifies being black even half-black as a “horrible thing” (16). Ironically, Saul’s intense racism at the start of the novel vanishes when his son’s life is at risk and his conditions abruptly shift. “He perceives his racial heritage as an inheritance that he can pass on to Luke to save him from the Ice Age by qualifying him for immigration into Ghana” (Watkins, 2020: 136).

Luke is the first and only child of Sarah and Saul. His birth coincides with the end of global warming and the beginning of the ice age, and Sarah and Saul even imagine their child playing in the snow and experiencing winter. “The ice is thickening. Our little boy might even see snow” (Gee,

2008: 30). However, the climate turns into an entire winter, or more accurately ice age begins rather than progressing through a typical winter and summer. After an argument between Sarah and Saul, Luke stays with his mother for the most part, but at some point, he is completely under the care of his mother and the Wicca World. This keeps him from developing a strong relationship with Saul, and because of his women-only community, Luke even struggles with gender confusion. Saul's ongoing efforts to protect his son from the mistakes of his own past and his strained relationship with Sarah emphasize the challenges he faces in forming a strong connection with Luke in the novel; in fact, he spends the entire novel trying to prevent it as he says; "I think I had a tendency to tell him too much. I wanted to save him from my mistakes – I wanted to save him from *any* mistakes" (173). But even if it goes unnoticed, Luke is affected by Saul's conflicted relationship with Sarah, which is the reason why Saul fails to make a strong connection with his son. For instance, house cleaning grows more and more of a point of dispute between Saul and Sarah as time goes on and their relationship weakens. In an argument about cleaning between Sarah and Saul, Luke even expresses his desire to kill himself "You always row about cleaning [...]'That's why I don't want to be alive anymore" (57). Although it appears to be an easy disagreement at first, Luke reveals his nervousness. He is stuck in a terrifying post-apocalyptic world and torn between his parents. When Sarah takes Luke to live in the Wicca World, Saul and Sarah's quarrel with Luke gets worse. Saul rebels "don't go back there, please. I want Luke to live with men and women. I want him to know who his father is. How is he going to grow up into a man if he doesn't see what men are like?" (63). Saul's request highlights the importance of the father-son relationship in shaping Luke's understanding of masculinity. He desires a balanced upbringing for Luke where he is exposed to both genders, which would not be possible in a female-only community such as Wicca World. Saul believes that for Luke to develop as a well-rounded man, he needs to know his father and observe male behaviour. Saul fears that without this exposure, Luke's growth into manhood will be stunted.

In a post-apocalyptic scenario, Saul's choice to remove his son from his mother and from London is illustrated in Gee's novel as a result of his desire to mend broken family bonds and shield his boy from potential dangers. He thinks about his family relations with his own father and realizes that his family has connections with Africa. "Then the realisation pierced me, *he could be*. He had Ghanaian blood, his great grandfather's blood. He

was part Ghanaian, for all his blonde curls. He had a right to be there, in the sunlight” (104). In this regard, in a post-apocalyptic world, Saul’s decision to take his son in reflects his drive to reunite fractured family ties and protect him from perceived threats. He thinks it is “safety for Luke, where the ice would not come” (165). Saul’s realization of his son’s Ghanaian heritage emphasizes the importance of cultural identity amid societal collapse. However, he is still unable to be as close to his son as he would like. He accepts that he fails; “I know our family wasn’t perfect” (173). Luke is annoyed by his father’s love for Dora and he describes his feelings as “I don’t just have to say what you want me to. I’m not Dora. I’m not a robot” (169). Even after spending several days with his father, Luke remains unchanged. He does not want to travel to Ghana and leaves his father. After spending so much time searching for Luke, Saul discovers that “he didn’t want me to find him” (182). Saul’s journey in *The Ice People* reveals the fragility of identity and belonging at the time of environmental collapse. As he loses both his son and wife, his desperate attempt to reconstruct a future in Ghana collapses under the weight of his own contradictions. His fixation on Luke’s racial heritage as a means of survival reflects the anxiety within climate fiction. As Maczynska argues, *The Ice People* falls into a pattern common to climate fiction, where “ecocatastrophe scenarios are susceptible to backward-looking apprehensions about the breakdown of modern ‘civilization’ and an ensuing descent into a state of ‘savagery’” (Maczynska, 2023: 164). Saul’s ultimate fate, isolated, powerless, and rejected, mirrors this thematic preoccupation with civilization’s supposed decline, reinforcing the novel’s ambivalence toward the Anthropocene’s social and racial implications. In doing so, *The Ice People* exemplifies the tensions within cli-fi, where imaginative engagements with climate change often remain entangled in historically conditioned anxieties rather than presenting alternative, transformative futures.

Conclusion

The Ice People is a moving examination of relationships and family dynamics against the harsh backdrop of a post-apocalyptic society. It is witnessed the disintegration of interpersonal relationships amid the chaos of environmental disaster and societal collapse through the eyes of the narrator, Saul. *The Ice People* depicts a post-apocalyptic world heavily damaged by social disintegration and environmental deterioration, making it a prime example of Anthropocene fiction. The plot of the novel explores how scientific developments and global warming are the results of human activity,

and how these factors can eventually cause catastrophic occurrences like the outbreak of an ice age. The setting itself provides a striking background that highlights the sharp contrast between the world before the apocalypse and the harsh realities that the characters must deal with afterward. The novel also examines issues that are crucial to the Anthropocene debate, such as environmental injustice, social division, and the vulnerability of family bonds in the face of environmental change. *The Ice People* is a provocative commentary on humanity's relationship with the environment and the effects of our activities on society and the globe through its examination of these themes. "That there is a balance of nature is one of the most deep-seated assumptions about the natural world..." (Kricher, 2009: 1). Based on this, the novel demonstrates how societal interactions, relationships between individuals, and even family and personal interactions are all impacted by the natural world's equilibrium. Saul and Sarah's relationship is an aspect of the larger social changes brought forth by climatic change and the impending ice age. Their path from happy beginnings to broken relationships is a reflection of how social standards are breaking down and how division and discrimination are starting to appear in their world. Their eventual separation is brought about by the strain resulting from societal upheaval, technological breakthroughs, and environmental concerns, emphasizing the fragility of human bonds in the face of hardship. Gee notes that political, economic, and environmental events have an impact on society as a whole and that people cannot be superior to one another based solely on their gender, race, or class. Similarly, Saul's bond with his son Luke illustrates the challenges of cultural identification and parenthood in a world that is changing quickly. Luke's upbringing is characterized by discord and detachment, despite Saul's best efforts to protect and mentor his kid; this is representative of the difficulties families confront in an uncertain future.

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