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**Exploring Ecofeminist Issues in Maggie Gee's *The Ice People***

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## Dedication

To the symphony of words that orchestrates the world of literature, I dedicate my first step, with overwhelmed heart, filled with deep gratitude to the best parents a daughter could ask for. To my dear father, **Abdelkader**, and my beloved mother, **Olia**, who always have my back. It is thanks to your boundless love and support that I fearlessly chase my dreams, free from worry or hesitation.

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To my partner in this thesis, my dear friend, **Ahlem Neili**, who always stands by my side.

Look who I am. I am the dreamer. I will make it happen cause I believe it.

**Imene**

## Dedication

This humble work is proudly dedicated to my beloved Mother, **Saïda**, for the great sacrifices she is doing for me. I am so grateful for her pleasantness and goodness in my whole life.

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## Abstract

This study is an attempt to investigate the intersection of environmental and feminist issues in Britain caused by the Anthropocene in a futuristic setting particularly from an ecofeminist perspective using Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* (1998), which is a climate fiction novel that portrays complete social and environmental erosion in the background of events. By intertwining real-world concerns with visionary elements, the current study aims to understand the role of women in the face of environmental changes and technological developments and how the scientific advancements that run out of control changed the nature of life. Moreover, this dissertation aims to examine the ecofeminist issues in Gee's novel with a particular focus on the links between women, environmental disasters, and non-human beings. In addition, it seeks to shed light on the different factors of contemporary society which are the essential roles and relationship of men and women, sexuality, politics and the problem of global warming. Hence, it draws attention to the seriousness of the current environmental crises and deterioration threatening the world.

**Key words:** Climate Fiction, Maggie Gee, *The Ice People*, Anthropocene, Ecofeminism.

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## **Introduction**

One of the most serious problems facing humankind nowadays is climate change. Extreme weather conditions are becoming more frequent, sea levels are rising abruptly, and it is obvious that people need to act quickly to address this global catastrophe. While science and politics face many difficulties in addressing this crisis, literature can also help to shape society's knowledge of the problem and serve as an inspiration for action. In recent years, a new body of literature has emerged in reaction to the climate change. This genre, known as climate fiction literature or cli-fi in short, combines the urgency of a contemporary issue with the imaginative elements of science fiction. In order to freely fantasize about social, natural and technological changes that would shock readers' sense of cultural propriety and widen their consciousness, climate fiction authors frequently look for fresh scientific and technological advancements. They face new challenges in illustrating the potential future of earth through their various literary works. Thus, climate fiction must discuss these ongoing disasters and depict their visions of climate change on a scale that readers can understand.

Narrating climate change in novels and other literary works is one of the most powerful ways to build emotional pliability. As a result, authors have begun writing about this contemporary genre to express their fears of what the world might face with potential consequences that threaten humanity, portraying dystopian themes to paint a somber picture of what the future might look like if people do not take actions. Each work imagines the consequences differently and in a way that gives the reader a complete understanding of imagining realistic and possible solutions to the climate and ecological crisis.

Maggie Gee is one of the British writers interested in societal dynamics and issues in Britain. She shows a genuine concern for the significant environmental changes unfolding worldwide. This concern is vividly reflected in her fictional novels, including notable works such as *The Ice People* (1998), *The Flood* (2004), and *The White Family* (2000). As an author, Gee possesses a remarkable awareness in the social, political, and cultural dimensions that define contemporary society. Moreover, her works offer insightful explorations into the realities and challenges encountered within the modern Britain.

Maggie Gee's literary journey commenced with the publication of her debut novel, *Dying, in Other Words* in 1981, marking the beginning of her illustrious career as a writer. Showing a profound admiration for literature from an early age, she pursued her education at Oxford University, where she diligently gained a degree in English. While her specific path may not have received extensive documentation, her foray into the realm of writing emerged from a deep love for literature. Throughout her remarkable trajectory, this contemporary novelist, essayist, writer and academic has garnered numerous accolades and commendations for her literary contributions. In 2012, she achieved the prestigious distinction of being elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, a venerable honor that celebrates extraordinary accomplishments in the literary community. Notably, her novel *The Flood* (2004) achieved a prominent position on the shortlist for the Orange Prize for Fiction, which is now recognized as the Women's Prize for Fiction, further empowering her standing as a noteworthy writer.

Gee enjoys the art of writing and she is technically creative, yet her writing is frequently self-conscious and highlights the production process. The modernist style is frequently mentioned in relation to her literary style when she often cites Woolf, Nabokov, and Beckett as influences, as well as authors from the 19th century like Dickens and Thackeray. Gee, however, does not in any

way sacrifice content in favor of style and form. Her writing is usually sarcastic and constantly influenced by current political and social topics.

Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* (1998) is a climate change literature that tackles the ideology of ecofeminism which views climate change, gender equality, and social injustice as inextricably linked issues, all of which are linked to masculine domination in society. The novel discusses the most environmental difficulties that can be traced back to the global prioritizing of masculine values. It takes the reader on a journey through two different climatic periods, which serves as its distinguishing point. Saul, the narrator and the protagonist, shares some of the details of his childhood during the onset of global warming in Britain. As the story progresses, Saul enters his adulthood and begins to narrate his married life. However, his marriage falls apart in a society that does not believe in love and marriage between a man and a woman, and with a frightening spread of the phenomenon of homosexuality in Britain. Amidst this chaotic dystopian society where technology has taken over every aspect of life, women rise to defend the environment and protect children from what they see as an irresponsible patriarchal society. This political movement also fights men's obsession with robots. Furthermore, Sarah takes their son Luke away from Saul during the activity of this movement, but soon he takes him back intending to go to warm Africa, as life becomes difficult in Britain after the deadly cold wave. Unfortunately, Saul loses his son during their journey to Ghana and finds himself involved with a group of wild children in an abandoned airport.

This long novel is divided into twenty chapters where it offers a powerful commentary on the importance of ecological preservation, love, and human connection amidst a world in turmoil. Throughout the chapters and pages of the novel, the reader is presented with a diverse array of compelling topics and themes of love, relationships, family dynamics, power and control, and

race, which are expertly explored, each offering a unique lens through which the characters' lives unfold. With her masterful storytelling, Gee seamlessly weaves elements of nature into the narrative, skillfully guiding the reader from a world affected by global warming to the chilling embrace of a new ice age era. The novelist gained resounding praise from esteemed writers and literary figures such as Fay Weldon, Nicolette Jones, Elizabeth Buchan, and Judith Cook for *The Ice People*, solidifying its status as a standout work.

This study is an attempt to highlight the interference of technology and the damage that permeated the environment in motivating women to move forward and emerge in politics to protect nature in Maggie Gee's *The Ice people*. The primary interest of this present study is to shed light on the ecofeminist concerns that are prevalent during the novel's events which take place in two different climates.

The aim of this humble research is to explore the ecofeminist issues that are depicted clearly in Gee's novel. It attempts to maintain a focus on the social complexities that follows the climatic duality and focuses on the impact of political and public concerns on personal and private life. Furthermore, the study intends to give a clear image of the interference of climatic factors in the establishment of new rules in society and create barriers between men and women. Moreover, it seeks to emphasis on the socio-politic life that creates a dystopian society which leads to the separation and feelings' stagnation between the two genders. Hence, this paper draws attention to the negative effects of human arrogance, and the misuse of the technology ignoring its hidden values.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of research studies exploring the theme of climate change in contemporary novels. The urgency and global impact of

climate change have led scholars and researchers to examine how these environmental issues are represented and addressed in literary works. For example, Carren Irr's research paper "Climate Fiction in English" speaks about climate change fiction in general, mentioning many successful authors of this literary genre such as Margaret Atwood and Ursula Le Guin. In addition, she traces the roots of climate change fiction, exploring its prominent figures and the major characteristics of this genre.

Additionally, Adeline Johns-Putra in her article "Care, Gender and the Climate-Changed Future: Maggie Gee's *The Ice People*" has studied Gee's novel from a different perspectives, portraying climate fiction themes besides to other related issues. She proclaims that this novel is a feature of the writer's imagination in exploring family life destroyed by environmental, social and political change (para 14). In addition, she states that it depicts a global environmental crisis as a result of the patriarchal domination and the lethargy of feelings between men and women (para 18).

*The Ice People* has received significant critical acclaim and achieved widespread recognition within the esteemed literary community. On this account, numerous published articles have undertaken the endeavor of analyzing and comprehending Gee's visions, which encompasses a multitude of captivating topics and themes. In her scholarly paper titled "Dystopian Transformations: Post-Cold War Dystopian Writing by Women," Milada Frankova delves into a comprehensive exploration of the remarkable contributions made by women novelists to the genre of dystopia. While Frankova acknowledges numerous literary works by Gee in her discussion, it is *The Ice People* that receives meticulous attention and thorough examination in her study. She analyzes the various issues that arise within the protagonist's society. Furthermore, Frankova scrutinizes Gee's perspective on the unfolding events concerning nature and climate,

unraveling their significance through a deep examination of the novel. In describing Gee's use of nature, Frankova states that, "In it, the vicious circle – nature affects culture, culture affects nature – seems to be taking a tighter and faster grip. Only nature, in its Darwinian, not pastoral image, proves to be much stronger against all odds" (215).

Nigmet Çetiner in chapter six of the edited book entitled *Apocalyptic Visions in the Anthropocene and the Rise of Climate Fiction* examines the plot of *The Ice people*. She argues that the novel reflects society decay with scientific and technological advancements coexisting together with a global ecological crisis (81). Çetiner particularly emphasizes on building a profound understanding about the ethical concerns resulting from the frightening use of technology and artificial intelligence (78). In light of this context, she states that, "As human beings continue to develop robot technology, they appear to rely on human grandeur and ignore the imminent danger they unknowingly unleash on the world along with the rise of technology" (78).

This study is based on an ecofeminist framework to explore the various ecofeminist issues that Gee attempts to cover in her famous novel *The Ice People*. The novel effectively covers environmental crises and sociopolitical problems from multiple angles, making it an appropriate subject for the study of ecofeminism. With both feminist and environmental studies placing growing emphasis on feminism and ecology, analyzing the novel from an ecofeminist perspective is fitting.

Structurally, this dissertation is divided into three chapters, comprising a general introduction, three distinct chapters, and a general conclusion. The primary focus of this thesis is to delve into the ecofeminist issues present in Maggie Gee's exceptional literary work, *The Ice People*. The

first chapter of this dissertation, titled “A Theoretical Framework of Climate Fiction and Ecofeminism,” is a crucial component that sets the foundation for the entire thesis. This chapter is further divided into two comprehensive sections that provide a detailed overview of climate fiction literature and ecofeminism. The first section offers an in-depth definition of climate fiction literature, its origins, characteristics, prominent literary works, and notable writers. Moreover, this section seeks to establish the interrelationship between climate fiction and science fiction literature. The second section is dedicated to ecofeminism, providing a historical context of the term, its emergence, definition, and its notable characteristics.

The second chapter is an exploratory chapter of Gee’s novel *The Ice People*. It is entitled “Investigating Ecofeminist Issues in Maggie Gee’s *The Ice People*”. It delves deep into the ecofeminist themes and concerns that are interwoven throughout Gee’s outstanding literary work, meaning that it seeks also to clarify her ecofeminist perspective. The chapter is divided into two parts, each with a specific focus. The first section, “Care and Race Issues in the Anthropocene” describes the multiple ways in which Gee portrays the concept of care and its various forms in the novel and it serves as well to demonstrate the interconnection between race and ecology and how they intersect at critical points. The second section is entitled “Climate Fluctuations and Gender Separation”. It focuses on the fundamental theme of climate change and its impact on both individuals and society as a whole. It also delves into the gender divide in the novel and how it is affected by the ecological shift. Through this section, Gee’s masterful use of climate change as a central theme throughout the novel becomes evident.

The third chapter is an analytical chapter. It is entitled “Interpreting the Depiction of Ecofeminist Issues in Maggie Gee’s *The Ice People*”. It seeks to give an accurate analysis of the different issues of ecological feminism, and examines the writer’s way in depicting them. It is

divided into two sections. The first section entitled “Climate Change and Ecofeminist Activism” studies the embodiment of climate change and its wider effects on the protagonist’s society. Besides, it deals with reexamining the emergence of women’s movement ‘Wicca’ along with its main adopted principles in dealing with the complications of masculinity domination and environmental crisis. However, the second section entitled “The Inconsistency of Fertility Challenges and Artificial Life” deals with the different angles of technological developments along with the cancers of fertility.

## **Chapter I: A Theoretical Framework of Climate Fiction and Ecofeminism**

Climate change effects are already being felt in various parts of the world. As a result, it has drawn the attention of artists and writers. Hence, the topic of climate change has been covered in numerous works of literature and filmmaking. Climate fiction is one of the literary sub-genres that has recently developed to address this subject. Thus, ecofeminism seeks to address the interdependence between environmental degradation, social justice, and gender inequality by highlighting the parallels and ties between the unjust treatment of women and the abuse of nature. Consequently, in this chapter, in order to understand climate fiction literature, there is a need to give an account of the birth and development of cli-fi and its interrelation with science fiction because it is subject to ongoing debate and criticism, much like other genres of literature. This chapter also outlines the notable characteristics that define the genre, and highlights some of its significant literary works and authors. It examines how writers have used different styles to convey the complex topic of climate change in their creative works. Moreover, it gives an overview of ecofeminism, tracing its origins, defining its core tenets, and delving into its characteristics and its four types.

### **I.1. Theoretical Background of Climate Fiction**

#### **I.1.1. Defining Climate Fiction**

Evidently, the subject of climate change in the field of literature is no longer an uncommon one. The lecturer in English, Adeline Johns-Putra, claims that as literary studies of climate change are now regarded as having a distinct domain of climate change, especially in literary theory or criticism, climate change fiction has subsequently received a lot of popular and academic attention. She further emphasizes that literary scholars have been active examining

these texts as well as discussing the idea of climate change as a cultural occurrence because there has been a real rise in literary interactions with climate change (“Climate Change” 266).

Interestingly, Johns-Putra defines climate change fiction as “fiction concerned with anthropogenic climate change or global warming as we now understand it” (269). She accentuates the central role of human activities in driving environmental change and the urgent need to address this issue. Accordingly, climate change is portrayed in certain works as a phenomenon that requires human involvement as a political, moral, or even psychological issue and these works are typically set in the present day or the proximate future (“Climate Change” 269). To be more precise, climate change is portrayed in certain narratives of climate change fiction as problems with governance, morality, or even the field of psychology, and these narratives typically take place in the immediate present or the forthcoming future to emphasize the urgency of solving these issues.

Climate change-related fantasy has even been labeled as a type of fiction. Since it is a human effort susceptible to human frailty, it is important to keep in mind that species are inherently changeable. The lines between categories are frequently blurred in texts, and genres change over time. In many genres, including science fiction, dystopia, fantasy, thriller, and even romance, as well as in fantasy that is not, it would probably be more true to refer to climate change as a motif. Thus, they are effortlessly identifiable as belonging to a particular category, such as the social or psychological personality studies that are popular among well-known writers like Maggie Gee, Barbara Kingsolver, and Ian McEwan. In this regard, although it is not strictly a genre, climate change fiction labels a significant fresh genre of modern literature and a noteworthy recent literary and publication development (Johns-Putra “Climate Change” 267).

In fact, the emergence of the term “cli-fi” and its widespread usage can be attributed to the influential work of Caren Irr, as highlighted in her research paper titled “Climate Fiction in English.” While the precise origin of the term remains uncertain, Irr points out that journalist Dan Bloom undeniably played a pivotal role, evident in his invaluable website, *The Cli-Fi Report*. According to Irr, the term “cli-fi” gained traction among reviewers during the 2000s and had become a common fixture in media discourse by 2013, as extensively documented in Adam Trexler’s groundbreaking study, *Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change* (2). The rise of “cli-fi” as a widely recognized genre term is a testament to its growing significance in capturing narratives that explore the intersection of climate issues and fiction.

Subsequently, Irr demonstrates that the roots of contemporary climate fiction are plenty, but no account of the genre’s history would be complete without noting its connection to important pastoral prose works, particularly Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* and Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*. Following Irr’s findings, Thoreau’s *Walden*, which is renowned for blending societal parody, spiritual allegory, and an in-depth examination of his site, belongs to a unique genre and many later writers have been inspired by Thoreau’s work despite his obvious warning to his readers not to replicate the plan of living mainly by himself in the woods (4-5).

From another standpoint, Fatma Aykanat, in her doctorate dissertation, points out that the term “cli-fi” is first coined as a new literary genre by the American freelance writer, Dan Bloom. He first used this term in his blog in 2007, playing a remarkable role in making the concept “cli-fi” gains popularity on a global scale (24). Bloom, since then, has brought together academics and students who are interested in visual and printed media dealing with topics related to climate change through the creation of online communities and social media platforms groups that center on “cli-fi” (Aykanat 24). As a result of the increased literary interest in important environmental

concerns, climate change fiction has emerged and a large number of modern novelists from North America, Europe, Australia, and the United Kingdom have also designated to clearly focus on the present or future ecological problems, primarily with the intention of raising ecological awareness and offering cautionary tales for both their contemporary readers who are already experiencing the symptoms of climate change and future generations (Aykanat 24). That is to say, the label “cli-fi” make an appearance to motivate writers, authors and publishers particularly in the literary field to pay attention to literature related to environment as well as embody the realistic picture of the world for what it aches from ecological deterioration.

The professor of English, Alison Sperling, mentions in her academic article “Climate Fictions: Introduction” that Margaret Atwood, a science fiction writer, retweeted widely about the contemporary literary genre in 2012. Since then, climate fiction has been the hub of many academic studies, especially exploring cli-fi capacity to bring about actual planetary alteration and how it comes in a variety of formats, from realism to science fiction, apocalyptic contexts to utopian visions (9-10).

Notably, Axel Goodbody and Adeline Johns-Putra claim that climate change has become a common theme in several novels written in English, French, German, Spanish, Dutch, and Icelandic. They state that even though it may not be the main focus of the plot, it is often portrayed as a factor that contributes to irreparable damage to the natural environment in future storylines (231). To sum up, climate change is a widespread theme in novels across different languages and it is often portrayed as a factor contributing to irreversible environmental damage in futuristic narratives.

Moreover, Goodbody and Johns-Putra propose that the focus on a particular theme is the most apparent way to define climate fiction. Although almost all climate fiction published since the 1970s has dealt with the contemporary expressive object known as climate change, this turns out to be a difficult definition to adhere to because it abandons out books that may not explicitly mention climate change but could be interpreted as dealing with it (231).

### **I.1.2. Characteristics of Climate Fiction**

In novels, climate change frequently occurs in a dystopian or post-apocalyptic future setting. In such literary works, climate change is portrayed not only as an internal or psychological concern but also for its external consequences, commonly as a component of a larger collapse that also includes increased societal division, economic instability, and overreliance on technology. These novels do not overlook the psychological or political repercussions of climate change. However, their primary emphasis lies in portraying the physical dramas and challenges associated with it, rather than delving extensively into the emotional or mental dimensions. Consequently, the central theme that consistently emerges is the daunting task of survival (Johns-Putra “Climate Change” 269).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that a significant number of these novels underscore the crucial role of cross-generational cooperation in confronting and enduring the effects of climate change. Remarkably, works such as McCarthy’s *The Road* and Gee’s *The Ice People* exemplify this theme through the portrayal of fathers striving to protect their sons. Similarly, Hall’s *The Carhullan Army* and Winterson’s *The Stone Gods* draw connections between motherhood and environmental consciousness, highlighting the profound bond between nurturing and environmental awareness (Johns-Putra “Climate Change” 269).

Despite the fact that cli-fi is firmly grounded in the present and committed to developing new stories that are appropriate for the times, criticism of the genre has expertly recorded the persistence of national, masculinity, and anthropocentric tendencies in some of its most significant works (Irr 2). To put concisely, certain works within the genre may exhibit characteristics that are influenced by or reflect nationalistic, male-centered, and anthropocentric perspectives.

Actually, the reliance of cli-fi on capitalist conceptions of social development and the ecological advocacy that motivates it has also come under examination. Some of these representational practices have been passed down from literary forebears like J. G. Ballard, Ernest Callenbach, Rachel Carson, and Henry David Thoreau. For this new genre of novel, Ballard's *Drowned World* has proven to be a particularly challenging wellspring of creativity. Authors of climate fiction "cli-fi" in the twenty-first century have explored the chronology, key protagonists, and ambiance of their storytelling in a quest to adjust the motifs of these predecessors to the demands of the current era (Irr 2).

Diverse subcategories of conjectural and scientific literature have been assimilated into the realm of climate fiction, alongside parodies of ecological activism and innovative amalgamations of reality. In fact, despite the genre's ongoing struggles with inherited constraints, cli-fi authors have valued invention, experimentation, and creativity, and finally, all of their disparate cli-fi efforts are united by the expectation that humanity and the planet can endure the changes brought on by the era of human-induced environmental transformation (Irr 2).

Remarkably, weaving fictional stories into different time landscapes, cli-fi novels delve into the ramifications of climate shifts for human society and the planet as a whole. In this regard, Irr

explains that cli-fi narratives, which can be set in the past, present, or near future of the world, are most often characterized by attempts to portray the effects of severe weather transformation on human life and perceptions. Furthermore, Irr clarifies that cli-fi encompasses a wide range of voices and styles, yet consistently places significant emphasis on the perspectives of scientists, especially when they challenge prevailing environmental beliefs, while also relying heavily on settings such as isolated polar areas, imperiled metropolises, and isles (2).

Besides, Irr touches on explaining the quality of the events of this genre. Events within cli-fi primarily depend on a significant transformation in the environment, such as deluges or the breakdown of food supply chain, while maintaining a fast-paced narrative rhythm that is intermittently punctuated by moments of crisis. Irr asserts that the fluid boundaries between human and nonhuman existences, coupled with the uncertain nature of things, occupy the individual's thoughts due to this transitory state, thereby triggering a sense of fear and anxiety. Collectively, these elements contribute to an apocalyptic perception, sparking substantial debates within the genre regarding the indispensability of guilt, crisis, and redemption as integral patterns, as noted by Irr (2-3).

Moreover, it's worth mentioning that a new genre of non-fictional nature writing has emerged, exemplified in works such as Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*, Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, and Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge*. Hence, this genre, which focuses on the contemplations of a solitary observer in a remote location similar to Thoreau's writing, shares the same captivation with subjective human responses as cli-fi does, and its protagonists, often bewildered, wounded, or traumatized, frequently participate in this hermitic tradition (Irr 4-5).

In the same vein, climate fiction differentiates itself from traditional science fiction through its exploration of alternative historical narratives, in addition to extrapolating technological advancements. Another prominent characteristic of cli-fi is that it often presents near-future or post-apocalyptic scenarios, assuming that the point of change occurs prior to the current moment and relies on outdated imagery, which also alters the genre's temporal focus, shifting it away from future-oriented or alternative science fiction narratives (Irr 7). In particular, cli-fi focuses on reflecting on the past, recognizing that change has already commenced and necessitates adaptation by both humans and other species. Unlike narratives involving time travel, cli-fi rarely permits its characters to mitigate the consequences of climate change or modify the circumstances that caused it to happen (Irr 7).

Seemingly, cli-fi combines elements from different time periods, seamlessly intertwining the past and present, while simultaneously envisioning a future that unfolds gradually. It accomplishes this by challenging the conventional notion of chronology, where the present is imposed onto the past. This perspective suggests that in climate fiction, there is a pivotal moment, possibly recent, that has consequences experienced in both the present and the future. The notion of the malleability of the human body and its susceptibility to environmental shifts becomes prominent again, reflecting the belief that only limited forms of human advancement and influence are attainable in this world (Irr 8).

Generally, climate change is portrayed in novels as a problem to be addressed, as well as a condition that shapes the plot, setting, and character. According to Goodbody and Johns-Putra, it is often depicted as a complex political problem that requires complex solutions, a challenge for humanity's nature of pursuing individual gain at the expense of others and the environment, or a cultural construct to be exploited for ulterior motives. Additionally, climate change is portrayed

as part of the setting, often as one of many dystopian effects in a futuristic, climate-changed world (233-234). In other words, climate change is frequently portrayed in literature as a complex problem that influences the storyline, the location, and the characters. In addition to being a scientific reality, authors examine climate change as a political, ethical, and cultural problem that necessitates sophisticated solutions.

Goodbody and Johns-Putra categorize climate change novels into two distinct groups. The first type is set in either the present or a very close future, while the second type takes place in a futuristic world significantly affected by climate change, depicted as apocalyptic, post-apocalyptic, or dystopian. They explain that these settings draw on existing genres, such as flood stories, polar exploration narratives, pastoral and anti-pastoral forms, and apocalyptic traditions (233-234).

However, climate change works often combine authentic and visionary elements, as they explore both the essential and cognitive dimensions of the matter, thereby grasping readers' attention by presenting climate change as a compelling force that impacts diverse aspects of human existence (Goodbody and Johns-Putra 234). To clarify further, climate change fiction captivates readers with its unique elements, offering diverse facets that make the content highly appealing.

Thence, by integrating imaginative portrayal and embodiment, these works forge a more intimate bond between readers and the climate change storyline, ultimately depicting climate change as something that intimately resonates with readers' lives, irrespective of its explicit representation as a backdrop, storyline, or persona (Goodbody and Johns-Putra 234).

Goodbody and Johns-Putra states that, “Climate fiction that invokes a recognisable present (or very near future), and explores the threat of climate change as an ethical, political, or economic dilemma for the individual, clearly depends on highly conventional and canonical novelistic techniques grounded in identification and empathy with characters” (237). On the other hand, they clarify that futuristic scenarios capitalize on the customary elements of science fiction and its ability to craft peculiar yet cohesive realms, allowing readers to fully engage with these fresh settings and establish a connection with the characters residing within them (237). To summarize, climate fiction uses different narrative techniques depending on the story’s time setting. For present or near-future stories, there’s an emphasis on character and emotion, while futuristic settings use science fiction to create immersive worlds.

Climate fiction depicts various realistic elements in the contemporary world. It rises as a subject theme dealing with environmental issues as well as the radical changes that occur to humans due to climate change. Leyda, Kathleen, et al., in their paper “The Dystopian Impulse of Contemporary Cli-Fi” emphasize this in the following passage:

Even though cli-fi tends to treat climate change as a global threat, narratives often remain on a local level when exploring the impact of natural disasters, foregrounding the survival of the nuclear family and its ways of coping with the crisis. This focus on the nuclear family consisting of father, mother, and children—speaks to the heteronormative anxieties that many examples of both cli-fi and post-apocalyptic fiction articulate and to the traditional values of patriarchy, family structures, and gender roles these texts seem to promote in the face of crisis as if to provide stability and a moral compass for the impending end of the world. (7)

This quotation shows that climate fiction embodies the fact that climate change really poses a threat to the entire world through depicting realistic themes in the literary novels, representing the impact of environmental crisis and how to deal with its framing stability and a moral compass for the impending end of the world. As if it revitalizes how to face with these natural deteriorations.

### **I.1.3. The Literary Works and Authors of Climate Fiction**

Andrew Milner and J.R Burgmann, in their book *Science Fiction and Climate Change*, claim that modern climate fiction is classified as science fiction subgenre for two key purposes. Firstly, they assert that its authors mainly adhere to the meticulously science-fiction writing tradition and the majority of its leading proponents Jean-Marc Ligny in France, Dirk C. Fleck in Germany and Kim Stanley Robinson in the USA (25). To explain further, science fiction writers regard cli-fi literature as a sub-genre of sci-fi literary works. Secondly, Milner and Burgmann reveal that the subjects and users of climate fiction illustrate the structure of feelings which focuses on science and technology, in this context, typically climate science central importance. However, they mention that numerous cli-fi authors like Margret Atwood in Canada or Jeanette Winterson in England tempted to reject the general moniker of climate fiction as a sub-genre because they consider that their work is 'literary' rather than 'genre' fiction (26).

In a pessimistic vision, writers of climate fiction literature have composed works that express their fears about what is happening in the world from climate change, natural disasters and environmental crisis in which some of them have stated that they are as a result of human behaviors. Among the literary works of science fiction that provide futuristic predictions about climate change phenomena and other natural crisis, *The Lathe of Heaven* (1971), which is principally a short science fiction novel written by the American author Ursula Le Guin, yet it

falls under the aspects of climate fiction literature. The novel portrays the onset problem of global warming because of the growing amount of carbon dioxide in the weather; its events take place in the futuristic climate altered world of 2002 and address people's duties as human beings to repair the devastation they have caused to the globe (Goodbody and Johns-Putra 232).

Goodbody and Johns-Putra speak again about another novel that touches under the category of climate fiction, which is *The heat* (1977), by the American novelist Arthur Herzog. The novel presents a gritty group of scientists as they confront the effects of a "runaway greenhouse" (232). To explain further, the novel investigates the notion of global warming and its harmful repercussions on the earth's environment, as the author depicts a bleak future with dire consequences induced by rising temperatures.

After decades, the narratives of climate fiction literature were immediately accompanied by the notable literary work *The Sea and Summer* (1987), published by the Australian author George Turner, that foreshadows the outcomes of the greenhouse effects, glacier melting, and the increasing sea levels in Melbourne's future setting (Goodbody and Johns-Putra 232). Moreover, this story takes place in the far future of Australia and addresses issues related to social inequalities, ecological degradation, and the hidden costs of the patriarchal system.

In the same vein, the journalist Andrew Milner, in his journal "The Sea and Eternal Summer: Science Fiction, Futurology and Climate Change," discusses the novel of *The Sea and Summer*, and he further states that Turner has published a short story, *The Fittest*, in 1985 when he first starts to investigate the fictional events of the story dealing with the impacts of global warming on his hometown and he soon expands his short story into the full novel of *The Sea and Summer* in 1987 (126).

Remarkably, Lucy Jane Rowland mentions a significant novel that represents the changing weather patterns along with realistic environmental events, in particular Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* (1818), which was written in the aftermath of Mount Tambora's explosion in 1815 and the accompanying "Year without a Summer" (qtd. in Higgins 56). As a matter of fact, the impact of environmental crises in the world has affected writers' visions and inspired them to write literary works that simulate and renew natural disasters in an imaginary way. That is to say, it is not a recent matter, but rather goes back to earlier times.

Likewise, Axel Goodbody clarifies one of the most common dystopian literatures set in a post-apocalyptic society, *The Road* (2006), by the American writer Cormac McCarthy. Yet, the author of this novel does not specify whether the dystopian future has actually caused by climate change (9). To expand more, the researcher, Stephen Keim, in his book review *The Road*, indicates that the chronicles of the novel describe an arduous journey of a father with his little son crossing through a burned landscape and heading south to a hotter weather. Furthermore, Keim states that the narration gives a description of a natural fire calamity sweeping through society and causing the destruction of most living creatures. The father and his son are trying to survive in light of this crisis, as well as facing challenges with finding shelter (1).

Equally important, the professor T. Eswar Rao, in his article "Woman and Climate Change in Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour*," elucidates one of the most prominent climate fiction novels, *Flight Behaviour* (2012), by the American novelist Barbara Kingsolver. Rao reveals that the novel is a fruitful realistic vision of climate fiction literature, as it squarely addresses climate change phenomenon and examining ecological issues and emphasizing the probable influence of global warming on Monarch butterflies. Hence, Rao adds that the story incorporates social and ecological matters along to provide holistic understanding of climate alteration, with a clear

emphasis on the adverse effects of the changing climate on single butterfly species. He further mentions that the hopes of Barbara Kingsolver to use her cli-fi narratives works to inform readers about the perils of climate change, and intends to bring the subject of global warming into focus and assist readers envision the future by relating the experience and portraying its repercussions (72).

With the development of ecofeminism, a branch of literary studies tackle ecological and feminist concerns. Moreover, the writer Patrick D. Murphy, in his book *Literature, Nature, and Other Ecofeminist Critiques*, identifies one of the significant ecofeminist literary works; Margret Atwood's *Surfacing* (1972), which may be considered one of the first ecofeminist novels. In essence, the novel narrates the story of a woman who returns home with her lover to search for her father, who has been missing for years. Suddenly, she discovers issues related to environment destruction and her persecution as a woman. Murphy affirms that Atwood is best known as a writer of imaginative and speculative prose because the majority of her ecological and feminist novels are written in an unrealistic manner, where dystopia and utopia arise based on environmental disaster. Such works emphasize on finding solutions of women's oppression and its relationship to the degradation of the nature (26).

Notably, Murphy mentions one of the most prominent novels that is considered primarily environmentalist and subordinately feminist; *Juniper Time* (1979), by the American author Kate Wilhelm. The novel portrays the duality of impending apocalypses that are faced humankind; global drought with food scarcity caused by ecological contamination, followed by worldwide conflicts resulting from nuclear war. In addition, the plot reveals the story of a girl named Jean who, as a woman, suffered from the persecution of rape and despair, and developed after her misery into a strong environmental activist (27).

Subsequently, Murphy presents another ecofeminist novel that significantly and accurately comprises and blends environmental and feminist matters more than any others analyzed and examined; *Always Coming Home*, which was published in 1985 (27). The novel is written by the American author Ursula K. Le Guin, who is known for her outstanding works in the science fiction and imaginative genres. Her literary works touch on environmental issues, women, politics, and ethnicity. Thence, her writings often examine the interrelationships between nature and sexuality that align with some tenets of the ecological movements, to advance equality among marginalized groups of society and nature as well. Meanwhile, Murphy describes that *Always coming home* narrates the story of a girl who finds herself in a dilemma about whether to choose between her mother's matrilineal community or her father's tyrannical male-dominated society (28).

So most of the ecofeminist novels are characterized by themes related to speculative imaginative fiction occur in the dystopian or utopian sphere that portray the reality of that entire world or the reality of life as a whole.

## **I.2. Overview of Ecofeminism**

### **I.2.1. Definition and Origins**

Ecofeminism is seen as a philosophical and political movement that recognizes the connections between the oppression of women and the destruction of the natural environment. According to Laila Fariha Zein and Adib Rifqi Setiawan, ecofeminism is “a philosophy, an ethic and a movement born of the conjunction and union of feminist and ecological currents of thought” (7). To illustrate this, ecofeminism is viewed as a movement that has emerged from the

intersection of feminist and ecological thought, blending these two perspectives to form a unique philosophy, ethic, and movement.

Nonetheless, Ambika Bhalla offers an interesting interpretation of ecofeminism in her article, “Ecofeminism in Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*,” outlining the fundamental principles and beliefs of ecofeminism, asserting that it entails the notion that the liberation of women is intertwined with ecological values. Furthermore, she emphasizes the significance of women taking a central role in combating the misuse of the ecosystem (qtd. in Collard 1988). In essence, Bhalla’s perspective on ecofeminism highlights the interconnectedness between the liberation of women and environmental concerns. As a woman, she emphasizes the significant role women play in addressing the crisis of the ecosystem.

Aslı Değirmenci Altın offers another important definition of ecofeminism, suggesting that “ecofeminism’s basic premise is that the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature” (qtd. in Gaard 1). Principally, this definition reaffirms that ecofeminism extends beyond the scope of women and nature and encompasses a range of significant concerns.

Altın articulates the goal of ecofeminism, advocating for the cessation of all forms of oppression. She asserts that any endeavor to emancipate women or any other marginalized community will be incomplete unless there is a corresponding effort to emancipate the environment (qtd. in Gaard 1). Precisely, the core idea is that all the attempts to liberate women are meaningless if they are not compatible with the liberation of the environment as well.

The idea that women have a deeper connection to nature than men is a common theme in ecofeminist thought. In fact, the scholars Nigus Michael Gebreyohannes and Abiye Daniel David claim that ecofeminists strongly assert the intrinsic link between humanity and the natural world, emphasizing that women possess profound and intimate connection with nature. According to their perspective, women not only share a uniquely profound bond with nature but also exhibit a greater closeness to nature in various dimensions compared to men (180). Gebreyohannes and David refer to ecofeminism as a literary criticism approach which presents a unique combination of literary and philosophical ideas to examine how nature is portrayed in literature and how other issues of sex, ethnicity, social status, and sexual orientation relate to the representation of nature (qtd. in Legler 1997).

Nevertheless, the writer Sylvia Mayer states that, “ecofeminism addresses environmental problems from a gender-conscious perspective and allows literary and cultural studies scholarship to draw attention to the impact that historically and culturally specific conceptualizations of nature have had on women” (112). From Mayer perspective, the hidden message is requested in finding suitable solutions related to social, environmental and political matters which in turn the main reason behind women’s despotism.

According to Alice Curry, ecofeminism is a transformative movement that emerged in the 1980s in the United States and has since gained global momentum and significant impact. Additionally, ecofeminism has expanded its interdisciplinary discourse, extending its theoretical frameworks into social and political inquiry. Correspondingly, coined as “l’eco-féminisme” by Françoise d’Eaubonne in 1974 in her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*, this term marked a crucial milestone in the development of ecofeminism. Besides, the movement is known for its

commitment to political and social activism, transcending boundaries and encompassing grassroots initiatives and worldwide advocacy for systemic transformation (1-2).

From an alternative viewpoint, Laila Fariha Zein and Adib Rifqi Setiawan assert in their influential work titled “General Overview of Ecofeminism” that the fundamental tenets of ecofeminism were initially articulated by Rachel Carson in her groundbreaking book *Silent Spring* (1962), which played a pivotal role in the eventual prohibition of DDT in the United States. It is noteworthy that the label of ecofeminism has predominantly flourished within the Anglophone world (7). In other words, this observation raises several significant ideas regarding the global reception and dissemination of ecofeminist principles.

Accordingly, although ecofeminism was formally named by Françoise d’Eaubonne in 1974, women from formerly colonized regions were already engaged in environmental activism and movements. For instance, the Chipko movement in India, which was led by women, had begun before the establishment of ecofeminism as a field. Similarly, Wangari Maathai initiated the Green Belt Movement in Kenya in 1977, also before ecofeminism became a recognized movement (Altın 357). Aslı Değirmenci Altın argues that an ecofeminist ethical framework should recognize and prioritize the diverse perspectives of women who may be differentiated by factors such as race, class, age, and ethnicity. In doing so, Altın explains that ecofeminism aims to incorporate the viewpoints of those who are typically overlooked or undervalued in dominant discourses, which can help to develop a more comprehensive global perspective on the interrelated issues of male domination, the exploitation of women, and the environment (qtd. in Warren 151).

### **I.2.2. Types of Ecofeminism**

Initially, Maureen Colleen Ewing in her paper “South African Women’s Literature and The Ecofeminist Perspective” identifies four types of ecofeminism. She argues that it is essential to define the various approaches within the ecofeminist discussion. As a result of the different perspectives on feminism, social alteration, and the relationship of women with nature, ecofeminism has branched up into several subgroups throughout the last twenty years of studies (9). Ewing indicates that these ecofeminist schisms indicate divergent and sometimes opposing viewpoints and political orientations (qtd. in Plumwood 35-36). Generally speaking, ecofeminism has certain types that seek to find different political and social destinations and their interconnection with women and nature.

Furthermore, nature-culture ecofeminism emphasizes on reinforcing the links between women and nature. Maureen Colleen Ewing highlights how society devalues the bonds between women and nature. To improve this perspective, she advises, “putting women back in touch with women’s original ‘wild’ and ‘lusty’ natural world and freeing them from men’s ‘domesticating’ and ‘dispiriting’ cultural world” (qtd. in Tong 256). This quotation stresses on empowering women’s connection with nature and liberating them from the controlling male society.

Likewise, nature-culture ecofeminism strongly advocates that women reclaim control over their life particularly over reproduction by refusing to use artificial fertilization and other scientific technologies. Women who engage with nature whilst asserting their status as active and clever human beings can drastically affect society perceptions of their relationship. These ecological activists promote for both nature and women by emphasizing women’s natural traits as nurturers and carers (Ewing 9-10).

Subsequently, Ewing considers that spiritual ecofeminists is the second type which supports the spiritual relationship within nature and women. This type stimulates women to forsake faiths that primarily emphasize male leadership in favor of earth worship that centers on the unity of the masculine and feminine (qtd. in Tong 261). In this regard, this type incentivizes women to create fair equality among them and men, and encourages them to connect spiritually with nature.

Moreover, another is socialist-transformative ecofeminism, which centers on people who are actively making spiritual as well as material changes to the way they live. Hence, this type calls for social measures, and this is what makes it more active than the other types. However, they posit that people can detach from culture and escape from the social structures of power because they cannot create a life where the capitalist system and power building do not exist (Ewing 12). In view of this, this type emphasizes on the mindset of people's lifestyles in making the spiritual and practical actions along with advocating for the significant stances that are made by the patriarchal system.

Finally, the last type is social-constructionist ecofeminism, which neglects the relationship between women and nature in order to analyze the power systems that cause this negative relation (Ewing12). This type underestimates the importance of the bond between women and the natural world since women focus only on breaking the barriers of male domination ignoring the essence of carrying nature.

### **I.2.3. Characteristics of Ecofeminism**

Remarkably, Alice Curry elaborates that ecofeminism is built on the critical insight that the global ecological crisis is a feminist issue, drawing on feminism and critical ecology to ascertain and establish the presence of related exploitation mechanisms that affect both women and the

environment, and challenging both the theoretical justifications and actual applications of these mechanisms. In addition, Curry asserts that all ecofeminists, despite being influenced by a variety of different strands, some of which are antagonistic and others of which are complementary, center on the fundamental ties between women and the environment (1).

In the same context, Curry states, “ecofeminists frequently adopt a mode of resistant positioning in a hopeful bid to revalue, rather than deny, the woman–nature connection as a caring and transformative response to environmental crisis” (2). This quote is referring to the way ecofeminists approach the relationship between women and nature. They tend to resist the idea that this connection is negative or harmful, and instead aim to re-evaluate it in a positive light. Curry implies that ecofeminism is characterized by an emphasis on the interconnections between gender and the environment, and a critique of patriarchal structures and values that contribute to the degradation of nature and the subordination of women. Additionally, the quote suggests that ecofeminism advocates for a positive revaluation of the woman-nature connection, rather than a denial or rejection of it.

Fundamentally, Curry presents two main perspectives of ecofeminism that have significantly influenced subsequent theories regarding the relationship between women and nature. These perspectives approach the subject in distinct ways, with the first perspective originating from radical feminism emphasizing a bond between women and environment based on physiological factors such as the menstrual cycle, childbirth, and nursing. According to this view, Curry argues that women possess a natural inclination towards nurturing and caring, which provides them with a unique understanding of nature that men lack (3).

However, the first perspective has been critiqued by second-wave ecofeminists who argue against the existence of an innate link between women and environment. Instead, they assert that the treatment of women and nature is influenced by socio-political systems, particularly within a neoliberal capitalist framework. These systems define and restrict women's roles through gender-defined labor, such as child rearing, housework, and food preparation, while also treating the natural environment as a resource to be exploited. Besides, the second perspective considers the intersection of social, historical, and material contexts as the root of male domination, rather than relying on biological explanations as the first perspective tends to do (Curry 3).

Noticeably, the deterioration of the earth and its dangerous outcomes for human existence presents one of the prominent global challenges today, to which ecofeminism has emerged as a relevant approach, aiming to address this issue. Hence, this perspective offers a fresh outlook on the natural world by drawing connections between the historical subjugation of women and the damage of the planet (Bhalla 1). To clarify more, by advocating for environmental conservation and raising women's voices, environmental feminism paves the way for comprehensive solutions that address the root causes of these concerns.

Considerably, the ecofeminist movement places significant focus on concepts of authority, control, and obedience. In addition, Greta Gaard asserts that the fundamental principle of ecofeminism entails acknowledging that the very ideologies permitting the subjugation based on ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, and physical capability also enable the exploitation of the natural world ("Ecofeminism" 1). Furthermore, ecofeminist theorists actively seek to uncover the correlations among sexism, the oppression of the environment, racism, species discrimination, and diverse manifestations of societal inequity (Bhalla 1). Additionally, there is frequently an inherent connection between men and the natural realm that is

marked by a mindset of exploitation, where men are commonly viewed as pillaging both the environment and women solely for their personal satisfaction (Bhalla 2).

In their analysis, Nigus Michael Gebreyohannes and Abiye Daniel David propose that ecofeminism establishes a crucial connection between the exploitation of the environment and the subjugation of gender. They contend that the root cause of these interconnected problems lies in patriarchy. According to their viewpoint, ecofeminism argues that the same detrimental ideology, which permits the oppression of individuals based on factors like ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, physical capabilities, and animal species, is also responsible for the oppression of the environment (qtd. in Gaard 2). In this sense, ecofeminists assert that patriarchy is the foremost catalyst behind the extensive harm inflicted on the environment. Consequently, Gebreyohannes and David assert that ecofeminists advocate that, “no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful until an equal effort is made to liberate nature. As a result, ecofeminists urge the elimination of all forms of oppression” (qtd. in Gaard 2).

In conclusion, climate fiction genre is used to depict a world degraded by climate or to depict a future society transformed by a devastating climate catastrophe. Therefore, ecofeminism is used by many writers to warn people of the danger that threatens their lives. It provides a valuable perspective and set of tools for addressing the most pressing social and environmental problems of human’s time as they navigate the complex challenges of the 21st century. Building on this foundation, the next chapter moves to explore the most prominent ecofeminist issues in the novel by applying the ecofeminist perspective.

## **Chapter II: Ecofeminist Issues in Maggie Gee's *The Ice People***

The previous chapter has already tackled the emerging themes and concerns in climate fiction literature, as well as the growth of ecofeminism theory. These two literary subjects have gained attention due to their critical response to significant ecological crises, patriarchal society, and the simultaneous mistreatment of both women and nature. Moreover, the second chapter of this thesis handles the ecofeminist issues in Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* and aims to clarify the author's visions of these issues through her literary work. The first section focuses on exploring the themes of care and race as prominent issues, which Gee embodies from an ecofeminist perspective through the characters of Saul and Sarah and their chronicles. Meanwhile, the second section emphasizes the duality of climate change in both the Tropical and ice-aged times, as well as the radical changes that occur in the protagonist's society, which are anthropocentric causes in original. This section also delves into the gender segregation between men and women and its impacts on the system and the politics of the society.

### **II.1. Care and Race Problems in the Anthropocene**

#### **II.1.1. The Deterioration in the Aspect of Care**

Gee attaches great importance to care as a fundamental aspect of the relationship to the environment and to one another. Her view centers on the idea that nurturing, supporting and preserving the well-being of both humans and non-humans is critical to building a sustainable and equitable society. This contrasts with the dominant paradigm of control and exploitation that has dominated the relationship with nature and each other for far too long.

In *The Ice People*, the concept of care is indirectly associated with the natural world. Gee shows that care can clash with the environment in unexpected ways, highlighting the complex

and often fraught relationship between the two. The changing atmosphere of the novel serves as a powerful allegory for this relationship, with the concept of care emerging as a major theme and also an issue of ecofeminism. In other words, Gee's portrayal of the events makes this idea possible that the more the climate changes, the more care and its cracking appears between the characters of the novel, and for this the relationship of care with the environment is symbolically depicted.

At the beginning of the events of the novel, the government works to strengthen the bonds between boys and girls. Therefore, Sarah is appointed to undertake this task. However, she faces many obstacles and challenges right from the start, especially with regards to the girls. While boys easily embrace the idea of having a woman to love and care for them in their lives, girls do not see the importance of having a man in their lives and they are not ready to take responsibility of their nurturing sides. This is a huge hurdle for Sarah to overcome, as she strives to find ways to bridge this gap and help the girls realize the value of having relationships with boys. This can be noticed in Saul's narration:

On the whole, though, the boys were more receptive to her message. They saw great advantages in the old roles, in having women to love and support them. The girls, on the other hand, were not all that excited about developing their nurturing sides. She came home very thoughtful after one discussion. She described it to me as she made supper. 'I want to look after kids,' one girl had said, a big, loud creature who spoke her mind. 'I worry in case I never have them. But why should I want to look after a man? They're not babies. And most of them are hopeless. That's what Mum says, anyway.' (Gee 26)

In her article “Care, Gender and the Climate-Changed Future: Maggie Gee’s *The Ice People*”, Adeline Johns-Putra makes it clear that the critical insight of ecofeminism and ecomaternalism is that women are constantly psychologically conditioned to care throughout their lives, starting from childhood and continuing through their roles as wives and mothers. Furthermore, Johns-Putra argues again that this social conditioning is what drives women to be increasingly concerned with the environment (“Care, Gender” para 10).

Care is embodied through the personality of Sarah, as she proves that her care for Saul and her son and her care for the girls she teaches indicate her pure feelings, and therefore, she is more capable of caring for the environment and feeling the pain of nature and neglect because she experiences this feeling from her husband, Saul. However, as Sarah spends more time with the girls, she begins to question the traditional gender roles that dictate women should be caregivers to men. The girls are trying to convince her that men are responsible, and they do not deserve women’s care. This is illustrated in Saul’s discussion with Sarah, he says, “She’d begun to get on better with the girls as she started to understand their point of view. ‘They’re not just jobs,’ she told me. ‘I used to be scared of them because of their violence, the way they beat boys up outside the gates, but they’re quite thoughtful, when you listen to them. I think they have a point about housework, too’” (Gee 26).

Moreover, the conversation takes another turn when this newfound awareness begins to affect Sarah’s personality, as she becomes frustrated and overwhelmed with the domestic duties that are expected of her without Saul’s help, “‘But you enjoy it,’ I said. ‘Partly because you’re so good at it. Your food always looks so beautiful. I mean, you turn that side of things into pure pleasure. I wish those girls could see what you do.’ She didn’t smile, but nodded slowly. ‘It takes a lot of time, though, Saul, you know.’ ‘Time well spent,’ I said, kissing her” (Gee 26). Through this

quotation, signs of change appear in Sarah's perspective towards care, as well as her annoyance, but Saul does not notice this and answers her in a normal way that proves his lack of interest in the matter as if it is something inevitable for her to do.

Additionally, Johns-Putra claims that the emotional events of *The Ice People*, thus, focus on a single nuclear family unit, acting as a factor, impact, or even a microcosm of a larger world-wide issue ("Care, Gender" para 14). To put it differently, the novel focuses on Saul's family and how their psychological problems mirror larger national and global issues. In other words, the novel uses the struggles of Saul's family and the problems between them as a lens through which to view and explore broader societal issues. Saul and his small family and the challenges they face serve as a powerful metaphor for a larger societal issue. Through their struggles, Gee seeks to communicate a critical message about the relationship between human behavior and the environment. As the family's relationships begin to fracture and break down, it becomes increasingly apparent that this lack of care and attention also extends to their surroundings. This parallels the broader societal problem of neglecting nature, leading to an overall deterioration of the environment and its weather. Ultimately, Gee emphasizes on the importance of caring for both our relationships with each other and with the natural world.

As the weather grows colder and more unpredictable, Saul cannot help but notices how relationships between people seem to fray and become distant. The chill in the air seems to seep into the hearts of those around him, making them less willing to show care or compassion towards one another. This becomes particularly evident when Saul spends his time with a group of wild children during the ice era who are more concerned with satisfying their immediate needs than with building meaningful connections. As he watches them run around and play, he can't help but feel a twinge of sadness for the days when he felt a genuine sense of care and love from

those around him. The protagonist, Saul, explains his emotions as follows, “And much of it’s still a mystery to me. How can I explain it to these crazy kids, who live for food, and fire, and sex? How love was so important to us. How tiny shades of wants and wishes made us fight, and sob, and part. How humans had everything, and valued nothing” (Gee 41). In other words, Saul longs for the past when he knows that he is forced to see the wild children’s actions that lack a lot of sense of care and love, and he recognize more the importance of care in this new era of ice.

In essence, similar to other dystopian climate change novels, *The Ice People* deals with a deficiency in how modern society is addressing environmental issues. However, Gee’s portrayal of the future is not simply a critique of the failure to acknowledge the importance of care for the environment. Instead, her unique vision highlights the crucial role that care plays in shaping our obligations towards both the natural world and each other (Johns-Putra “Care, Gender” para 24).

Furthermore, in the dystopian realm of *The Ice People*, the importance of care emerges as an important element that can affect the environmental concerns. The narrative serves as a testament to the huge impact that cultivating a genuine sense of responsibility towards nature and each other can have. According to Johns-Putra, the novel reveals the tragic consequences of neglecting the duty to care and taking it for granted as a means of fulfilling our responsibilities (“Care, Gender” para 24).

### **II.1.2. The Intersection of Race and Ecology**

Gee asserts that there is a strong connection between gender relations, race, class distinction, and culture, and other critical factors, such as climate change and ecological decline. As a matter of fact, these issues are not isolated from each other but rather intricately linked and can impact one another (Bakay 421). Gee’s unique writing style shines through in her ability to seamlessly

integrate the theme of race into the larger narrative of environmental change. By emphasizing the quality of her content, she successfully links natural problems and racial issues in a way that aligns perfectly with the principles of ecofeminism. By doing so, Gee successfully incorporates ecofeminist perspectives into her work, creating a powerful literary experience in *The Ice People* that provokes thought and reflection.

As the second chapter begins, Saul's narrative takes the events to his distant past when he was young, and racial issues become evident from the beginning. With global warming intensifying and temperatures rising, Britain becomes a main destination for many immigrants seeking refuge from the oppressive heat. However, Saul notices a marked increase in black immigrants to Britain in the news. This fact only serves to stoke Saul's already simmering anger. Despite the government's many challenges, his mind is fixating on these newcomers with black skin:

Then the crumbling cliffs and the endless money the government paid to underpin them grew confused in my mind with foreigners. People from even hotter countries were always trying to get in to Britain. The screens showed pictures of the eroded white cliffs, then scenes of dark people, sweating and furious, bullying the immigration officers, shouting and swearing, their black mouths open. Often the army would be called in. (Gee 15-16)

Subsequently, Saul's anger turns to hate towards black immigrants, saying "I started to hate these foreigners" (Gee 16). But the reason towards this hatred is that Saul sees the arrival of black people in Britain as a threat to his well-being. This is partly due to the fact that his family is poor, which makes it challenging for them to enjoy a comfortable life no matter how much efforts they do. In addition to this, Britain is facing a multitude of problems, ranging from diseases to global

warming, which have contributed to many social issues. Saul strongly believes that the influx of black immigrants into Britain hinder the hope for his family to live in a better condition. He feels that their presence exacerbates the existing problems and make it even more challenging to find solutions. Despite his desire for a better life, Saul is convinced that the arrival of black immigrants makes things worse, and this shown clearly when he argues, “There wasn’t enough to share with them. We lived in a three bed brick twentieth century cottage with plasterboard doors that never quite shut, and my parents worked harder than anyone” (Gee 16).

Saul later has a conversation with his mother. He further expresses his hatred towards black people when he reacts, “‘I don’t like black people’... To me they seemed like liars and scroungers who would keep my family poor forever. ‘I hate black people. Why must they come here?’” (Gee 16). Unlike Saul, his mother does not think the way he does and even stands up for black people when she replies, “Saul – they’re not all the same, you know. You can’t go hating black people” (Gee 16).

Interestingly, Saul’s world turns upside down when he discovers that he is not just of one race, but a hybrid carrying the genes of two different races, and this happens through the sudden confession by his mother:

‘You don’t understand.’ She sounded peculiar. ‘Saul, listen ... look ... there’s something ...’ She stared at the ground, her mouth working. Then something burst out like a stone at a windscreen. ‘Haven’t you noticed your father’s black?’  
‘That’s mad,’ I said. It hurt my chest. ‘Yes. Well – half. Your grandpa was from Ghana. He came here as a student, in the last century. (Gee 16)

Saul finds himself forced to research more about his race and finds that the only person who can tell him is his father:

He didn't say a lot, but he touched my arm. We stood together in the airless darkness, with the warm bodies quivering and shuffling around us, and I thought, this might be like Africa, though I didn't have a clue about Africa. What did he say, exactly? That I should be proud (but how proud was he? He had never told me about myself). That the first humans were African (but 'You kids are as British as the next person'). That skin colour was not important (and yet it had 'held me back in the force'). That we were 'the same as anybody else' (yet 'people like us always have to watch our backs'). (Gee 16)

Additionally, Saul's wife also expresses her interest in race, and this appears at the beginning of their first meetings with each other. Inquisitive about his background, she asks him about his ethnicity, showcasing her openness, "I like the look of you. You're – different. You're not just English, are you? What are you? French? Spanish?" (Gee 21). When Sarah observes him more, she finds the answer saying, "You're beek, aren't you. You must be, of course! Tell me I'm right" (Gee 21). In her novel, like many other authors of climate fiction, Gee employs unique language, such as the term "Beek," to refer to individuals of mixed race. However, the word's origin contains an insult directed towards those with Black ancestry. As Saul explains, "Beek was short for bicolor, the French insult that black people themselves had taken over to mean 'mixed race'" (Gee 21). By including this explanation, Gee provides insight into the complex and often contentious issues of race within the novel. By exploring the origins and usage of the term "Beek," Gee highlights the ways in which language can be used as a tool of oppression and exclusion, particularly in the context of race relations. In the same context, it becomes clear that

Sarah's interest in race runs deep, extending beyond her initial curiosity about Saul's background. In fact, race is a central aspect of her academic career, and this is evident when she confesses, "I'm very interested in all that. It was part of my Ethnicities diploma course" (Gee 21).

In her thesis, Gülşat Topsakal states that in Gee's *The Ice People* that despite Saul's change in perspective, he still refuses to accept his African roots and keeps that part of himself hidden. Topsakal further explains that Sarah, who has expertise in ethnicity, is attempting to broaden his understanding by introducing him to literature and films on the subject (68). In this context, the narrator explains:

She ordered what seemed like dozens of films about black history, and urged me to watch them. *The Black Diaspora*, *The Black Experience*, *Caliban in London*, *African Journey* ... She saw at least half before she got bored, but I made excuses not to watch them with her, I didn't want her telling me stuff, teaching me stuff, about my past, I wanted her to love me for myself, I didn't want to be part of black history, I needed to be myself, her man. (Gee 24)

The quote reveals Saul's profound discomfort with his mixed-race identity. He expresses a desire to distance himself from his heritage and disassociate from the history of his racial background.

As the Ice Age begins to impact other European countries, a decision is made to relocate the population to Africa due to its warmer climate. This relocation is ironic given Europe's history of racism, imperialism, and brutal colonization of Africa. However, when the crisis occurs, it becomes clear that a catastrophe of this magnitude does not discriminate based on race, class, or gender. The event serves as an equalizer, challenging the notion of white superiority and

highlighting the shared vulnerability of all human beings in the face of nature's power (Bakay 421).

In this regard, it is understood that ethnic disparities have been greatly transformed and subverted by the latest events when Saul recounts the white people who are attempting to travel to Ghana. While traveling to Ghana as refugees rather than imperialists, white people are made to feel inferior to the black policemen who amusingly observe them. Throughout recorded history, white people have believed themselves to be superior to blacks (Bakay 422). Saul directs his attention to the screen and observes images of immigrants and he does so, he experiences conflicting emotions regarding his own race (Topsakal 70). He further narrates:

The pictures they were showing reminded me of something. People fighting to get past a barrier, uniformed soldiers holding them back. The soldiers were black, the people were white... What did it remind me of? Something from the past that upset and disturbed me –Then I remembered. When I was little, the scenes on the screen that had scared me to death, showing hordes of black people pouring into Britain, coming to take away all we had, with the brave white soldiers holding them back. Only this time, it was all happening in reverse, the negative image of the long forgotten photo. This time the desperate people were white. This time the people with the power were black. And a long-lost part of me started to laugh: it was *my* turn now. *Our* turn now! *Black man's turn!* – Yet I wasn't a black man. (Gee 103)

This quote confirms that Gee's *The Ice People* is a powerful example of how issues of race and ecology intersect and are interwoven. Gee highlights the ways in which racism and climate

change are interconnected, and how these issues of race has huge impact on the events of the novel.

In fact, as Saul witnesses the impact of environmental destruction, his perspective on race starts to evolve. The traditional power dynamics between the center and the margins are challenged, causing him to question his place in the world. While Saul still identifies as one of the ice people seeking to move south, his physical presence allows him to view himself in a new light, opening up possibilities for different subjectivities (Topsakal 71).

## **II.2. Climate Fluctuations and Gender Separation**

### **II.2.1. Climate Change in the Tropical and Glacier Times**

*The Ice People* is centered on the issue of climate change that is brought by the Anthropocene, in which the novelist portrays it in two different climatic periods. The first depicts the world as it is used to be in heat atmosphere, while the other is described as frozen globe. Both take place in Britain where the protagonist, Saul, tells his stories in flashbacks in an abandoned airport with the “Wild Children” to keep him alive. The novel explores the visions of hot climate in the early ages of the protagonist conspicuously during his childhood and adulthood. Saul remembers the days of the old time when the warm weather is there. He says, “Well, as I say, let’s stick to the past. Let’s hear how the old world turned into this” (Gee 13). The past denotes “the Tropical Time” as it is written in the novel, and how it is altered into frozen world where Saul is recounting his narratives. However, he describes how the nature is during his days of hot climate, “Green fields, a sandy track, conkers, the low whirrlap of a wood pigeon’s wings. Black and white cattle. A slaughterhouse, a blank brick building where animals moaned. Climbing a hawthorn and spiking my hands” (Gee15).

Furthermore, Gee's novel incarnates the dawn of two global climatic changes as anthropocentric global warming that is reflected by global freezing. Both are followed by social inversion; whereas the early climate change generates pandemics and civic instability, the Ice Age also results in total demise (Johns-Putra "Maggie Gee's" para 4).

At this point, heterosexual prerequisites allow gender division and conflict. Nevertheless, Saul, like many dystopian protagonists is different; as he preserves a traditional attitude toward love and passion, and he falls in love with Sarah. Yet, their connection becomes strained, and the story tracks its degradation alongside society's descent into gendered culture warfare and ecological devastation (Johns-Putra "Maggie Gee's" para 4). In this context, the novel shows how the tropical epoch has witnessed various social, environmental and civil obstacles. Saul describes how life is in the early 20th century, where he is living in the central of London. The country has seen social crisis, and several serious diseases spread. In addition to, currency collapse which badly affected the government. Within this context, the narrator claims:

(Euro got bad in my early twenties. There were three years of plague that closed the frontiers, a new kind of Ebola coinciding with haemorrhagic sleeping sickness; blazing summers when viruses flourished and civil order couldn't stand the strain as hundreds of victims bled to death in their cars, choking the roads to hospitals. Our government fell, and was barely replaced. Looking back, my late teens were paradise). (Gee 13)

In the other hand, the novel investigates the onset of the Ice Age with its various changes brought by the altered glacier atmosphere on the environment and humans as well. In this regard, the author clears up the beginning of entering Britain into the cold weather as a result of the

earth's climate change. As such, the protagonist discovers some strange data from Antarctica about the planet's condition in his words with Sarah, "They seem to show the ice is getting thicker. I wish I were out there. This woman must've left out some of the variables" (Gee 27).

Accordingly, both Saul and Sarah are affected by the hot weather; they are annoyed because of the heat, and they wish to witness the climate getting cold, this is shown in their words, "What if it's true?" she interrupted. 'I'm sick of this heat. I wish it were true. Imagine it. Having fires in winter like my grandmother did on the island ... This cold fog used to roll in from the sea, it was like walking through clouds, it was marvelous' " (Gee 27). Besides, the protagonist has passion towards loving cold weather, he is dreaming about the idea of feeling cold again and seeing the sheets of snow, "The ice is growing,' I whispered to Sarah. 'It wasn't a mistake. The ice is thickening. Our little boy might even see snow'" (Gee 30).

Meanwhile, Sarah expresses her longing for cold weather when she is talking with Saul one morning about their children's name, "Might not need saving, if it cools down. I think about coolness with such longing. I think about evenings on Coll, you know. Walking barefoot on the cool white sands. We kids used to run into the sea. It was so cold we couldn't stop screaming" (Gee 38).

Gönül Bakay asserts that *The Ice People* describes the way global warming gives rise to the second Ice Age inevitably and she mentions that this assertion as Sepetoğlu states, embraces a scientific basis (419). These words are illustrated clearly in the novel when Gee reveals in Saul's passage:

'GLOBAL WARMING A BLIP', shouted the news texts. 'SCIENTISTS CLAIM POLES NOT MELTING'. This was followed by a flurry of denials from scientists

and politicians all over the world, worried that this freak bunch of results would undo every hard-won environmental resolution. Then the denials were challenged by a third group of scientists known to be paid by big business. (Gee 28)

Besides, the protagonist emphasizes that current temperate climate is only part of a short 'Interglacial' interval. However, he recalls one of the well-known climatologist Lovelock, where he infers from him a scientific fact about the change of the Earth's climate into glacier one, within this Saul reveals:

I suppose climatologists had always known that the temperate climate of recent history was only part of a short 'interglacial' between much longer glacial phases, but climatologists weren't listened to much, except when hacks harassed them for short term predictions. On average, I discovered, there were ten to twelve thousand year warmings between ice ages of a hundred thousand years. And way back at the end of the twentieth-century, the scientist James Lovelock had famously said, in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, that 'if it weren't for the activities of man, the earth would be entering a new ice age.' (Gee 39)

This fact shows that climate alterations are the result of anthropocentric climate change. Hence, it intimates that human history is full of worthy interesting facts that science sheds light on.

Gee succeeds in disclosing the logic with human history visualizing it with the fictional events of the novel. Despite the evidence pointing towards an impending Ice Age, scientists specifically and people generally are too preoccupied with other issues to pay attention to the coming ice weather disaster. As the world turned a blind eye to the warning signs, the tranquility of the

earth's warmth is merely a deceptive lull before the ultimate climatic storm. Gee clears up in Saul words:

But Lovelock was known to be an eccentric, and no one had taken him literally. We were too busy worrying about rising sea levels and the spread of deserts in Africa. Now we began to see the larger picture. Not that anyone was thinking of a new ice age – we just saw the logic in the earth cooling down. As Lovelock had also said, the earth's warm phases, which seemed so agreeable and natural to humans, were more like the planet having a fever. (Gee 39)

This passage also validates the reality of ecological deterioration around the globe, reflecting the climatic changing in many parts of the world.

### **II.2.2. Gender Segregation (Segging)**

In Gee's novel, the duality of climate crisis appears as one of the prominent issues that the novelist tries to reexamine from an ecofeminist mindset. Gee shows that climate change is linked not only to environmental upheavals, but also to changing political and social conditions which in turn have contributed to the creation of multiple pests. Among them, the issue of gender between men and women that has been the pillar theme which the novel is centered more along with climatic ambivalence and its reflections.

On this basis, *The Ice People* exhibits that during the Tropical times the relatedness between the two genders has seen different deteriorating concerns as love and marriage amid them are rare. It depicts that girls are not eager to enter into relationships with boys. Hence, each of them has become living separately from the other sex. Except for Saul and Sarah who are different since they love each other and they show care for each other. However, this relationship does not

last long as the changed weather affects their relation as well as many factors related to Sarah's independent as a woman from masculinity domination.

Otherwise, Johns-Putra indicates that global warming reaches its peak in Saul's teens and twenties, and this is a time when young men and women, experiencing their youthfulness, rather than worry about climatic circumstances. Along with climatic change, society as a whole has seen significant social breakdown epidemics involving illnesses like Ebola and mutant HIVs have nearly close down whole governments, including the United Kingdom. However, Johns-Putra denotes that the younger generation's reaction to all of this is disinterest. The twentieth-century gender conflict has given place to mutual animosity and a trend toward gender segregation, or "segging" ("Care, Gender" para 16).

It is worth mentioning in this novel that there is a fact that boys are comfortable with boys, and girls are comfortable with girls. Still girls want children but not love and sex with the other gender. In their opinions, there is no need to care for men since they are not like babies. Subsequently, this is shown when Sarah says, "As if they would be happier if the whole of life were segged. Boys feel safe with boys, girls with girls. The downside is, the girls want children. And the boys still want the girls to love them. But they don't, and so they try to ignore them" (Gee 27).

Moreover, Saul's feelings towards Sarah are sincere, as he shows all his love and wishes to marry her, but he is afraid of losing her for the reason that society in which they are living is witnessing gender segregation. He fears she will be affected by this society and becomes like other women. Thus, Saul highlights that marriage is rare even before the ice age, and it is not the reason for bringing about the problem of gender distance, "Marrying was rare in the Tropical

Time (though it came back later, with the Troubles and the Ice). In the twenties and thirties, only godlovers got married, plus a few old slows afraid of the future” (Gee 30). The idea of marriage scarcity among men and women is also embodied in the Tropical and the Glacier times as well, and for Saul as a different person who is trying to survive this love with Sarah when he reveals, “But I loved Sarah, and feared to lose her. And I wanted to have what my parents had had” (Gee 33).

Nevertheless, Sarah starts to get affected by gender separation subject and she does not consider marriage an important thing for her, here Saul adds, “As Sarah grew more successful and self-confident, she didn’t see the point of marrying” (Gee 33). Besides, as Saul insists on marriage, Sarah gets annoyed and she considers that marriage is more political rather than personal, “‘It’s political,’ she said, in that overemphatic, self-righteous voice she used when I was being thick. ‘You never see the political angle’” (Gee 34).

As a consequence, gender separation takes a large scale, homosexuality becomes the norm. In this context, in the Ice Age setting, Saul finds a peaceful place far away from the wild children to continue his writing for surviving, and while he is struggling in the cold, he again retrieves his reminiscences about his days with Sarah and “segging”:

Behind my back, the world had been changing. Once I started looking, it was everywhere. Segging had spread into so much of life. Young women were beginning to live with women; men were trying to live with men. Colonies of men took apartment blocks together. Those with swimming pools were especially popular. For many the choice was homosexual, but others just liked the camaraderie, which made them less lonely than before. (Gee 44)

As the world has been altering behind Saul's back, he glimpses that the idea of gender segregation is deeply taking root in his society. Eventually, he recognizes that most of the men and women who have chosen to separate; homosexuality was their inclinations and their instinct that they have to choose to live with.

Once the two genders started to live separately from each other, their relationship has been deteriorated. By reason of girls grow more violent and aggressive, and they are living together in groups, taking care of children while men are mocking them. Saul says, "Again this could get competitive, but the childless ones found a kind of fulfilment. Not that all women were domestically inclined. The gangs of girls who roamed the towers were said to be more violent than the men. Some teenage girls found inspiration in older women's groups which mimicked the men's" (Gee 45).

Generally, the state of men and women living together are rare, mostly because men think women and babies are so much trouble. Saul has confessed to his friend Riswan about Sarah and he gets puzzled saying, "You should be glad, my friend, to be free of the woman! Women and babies make a mess everywhere –' 'Well, she did do most of the cleaning –' 'Men should stick with their own kind, actually. No trouble that way. No shouting, no crying. Tell this woman not to visit'" (Gee 45). To make it more clear, Riswan's reaction serves as a vivid representation of the patriarchal society's outlook and attitude towards women and children. Their sole concern is their own psychological well-being, and they have no regard for their responsibility towards women, whom they view as nothing more than a source of disruption and disturbance to their peace of mind.

Thereby, Gee articulates that as the world has been changing bit by bit, human nature has been corrupted, and homosexuality has become the society's standard for both genders. Saul tells that even his wife Sarah is desired by her friend Sylvie, "Sylvie had wanted to have sex with her. That was the long and short of it. (Whereas Sarah, I suppose, preferred sex with her doctor). In theory Sylvie respected Sarah's refusal, but in practice she sulked a lot and left the washing up and sat at the kitchen table weeping, while her son beat Luke up in front of his mother in an eager, professional way" (Gee 46). This quote shows that even for women who have children, they still want sex with the same gender.

Again, Gee accentuates that homosexual society disrupts the understanding of gender and nature, as the weather has altered into frozen world; it reflects the way women and men deal with each other. For instance, Sarah leaves the house with Luke, leaving behind her Saul alone. Little by little Saul begins to be influenced by homosexuality when his friend Riswan offers him to go to a club named "Gay Scientists Club", he tells that, "Riswan was probably gay, that I'd known him for years and noticed nothing, the Gay Scientists Club I had nearly gone to, my sense that everything was changing, crumbling, and nothing was what I thought it was. 'Am I very old-fashioned? Am I just thick?'" (Gee 49). In this regard, Saul narrates:

Men, for Sarah, were just something to use. I found myself telling most of this to the bald and muscular men at the Gay Scientists. They laughed a lot, and were basically friendly. They liked me, I felt, they did not despise me, we were all men together, we could be free ... Richard and Nimit and Riswan and Timmy. Plump pale Billy, handsome Paul ... Ian with his clique of body built clones. Too many new names for me to get right. Bristle scalped, smiling men in leather, welcoming me to a safe new dream. (Gee 50)

Notably, Saul feels that time is running out and he has to keep writing again about his life. He narrates the days of his late forties and thirties, where Sarah grows stricter towards men, “She grew bitter against men, though not always against me. She had a life with women that I didn’t understand, didn’t want to know about, never asked. Sometimes she stayed away for days. And who looked after Luke, when she didn’t come home?” (Gee 52).

Undoubtedly, Saul becomes essentially attracted to homosexuality, as he commences to go to the club a lot for devouring time and having fun. He feels that it is the only place for him which makes him feel that he is not different, not embarrassed and not humiliated as he used to feel. For that, he befriends one of the gay boys named Paul. Nonetheless, he is astonished by his abnormal behavior:

Once or twice I let a sweet young lad called Paul give me relief in the massage room, though it didn’t take away the loneliness. I admit I enjoyed it. It was very exciting. He was tall and slender with beestung lips and a mischievous, appealing smile, rather feminine as well as boyish. His hands were marvellous; he understood men. It made me feel that I still had a body. And everyone seemed to be doing it, in those days. But another part of me felt dismayed. Did I really believe we were all bisexual? The people who said so all seemed to be gay. (Gee 55)

Admittedly, Sarah’s character grows more and more depicting the dissimilar concerns of ecofeminism. As the protagonist mentions that Sarah is becoming independent, dealing with mysterious women who are interested in caring for children. Furthermore, Juno is one of these women leading ‘Children’s Commune’. Gee identifies the Commune as a place where women are

living together taking care of the children. Yet, Saul seems pessimistic about the Commune. As Sarah gets upset, Saul seems worried about the future:

‘Of course,’ said Sarah. She was getting annoyed. ‘So what happens when the boys turn into men? They will do, you know. I’m a scientist.’ (And I suddenly thought of the club, as I sneered, as I heard my smug, unhappy voice sneering. I remembered the Scientists, and Paul, and my secrets, and I thought, is this what we’re coming to? Is this the future for men and women? Are we going to live apart for ever, in endless, wanking loneliness? (Gee 63)

This chapter particularly shows how Gee portrays the British dystopian society and the world at large under two different climates in *The Ice People*. Climate change has played a fundamental role in the emergence of many social, political, and environmental problems. The novelist adeptly describes various ecofeminist concerns and illustrates how they destabilize in the events of her novel. In Gee’s world, ecological feminism matters are not merely referenced; rather, they are vividly depicted through events of the past and near future. As a result of this exploration, the final chapter focuses on how Gee depicts these ecofeminist concerns.

### **Chapter III: Interpreting the Depiction of Ecofeminist Issues in Maggie Gee's *The Ice People***

In this chapter, the focus is on examining Gee's unique approach to addressing important social and environmental issues through her imaginative lens. Specifically, this analytical chapter investigates Gee's different ways of involving women's concerns in her writing while also studying the impact of climate change on society and its different aspects. Moreover, the chapter scrutinizes how artificial life is portrayed as a tool of oppression against the environment and women. In Gee's novel, technology is used as a patriarchal means of harming both women and nature. Furthermore, the novel highlights the issue of fertility, a prominent theme that ecofeminists focus on.

#### **III.1. Climate Change and Ecofeminist Activism**

##### **III.1.1. Frozen Future and Ecological Issues**

What sets climate fiction writers apart is their unique ability to link the changing climate to other topics and interests in a creative and engaging way. They use their imaginative skills to relate climate change to the issues and conflicts that arise in their stories. In the case of author Gee, she skillfully uses the conditions of climate change to attract readers' attention on ecofeminist problems. By doing so, she does not only portrays the impacts of climate change on a dystopian British society, but also she depicts the issues that ecofeminism is concerned with.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the protagonist, Saul, observes that the initial manifestations of worldwide climate change are already noticeable (Bakay 421). His memories of his childhood offer a poignant portrayal of the challenging circumstances that prevailed in Britain

at the onset of a Tropical climate. He describes the extreme rise in temperature and the resultant sensitive issues that plagued the country:

All they ever seemed to talk about was the shortage of water and the heat. I was muddled about it, aged twelve. On the one hand there was never enough water, and watering your garden from the tap was a crime. 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. (Gee 15)

Through his vivid recollections, Saul paints a picture of a nation struggling to cope with the devastating effects of the Tropical climate.

Likewise, Saul's account of surviving with the group of wild boys illustrates how the cold weather is a curse rather than a blessing. He depicts the harsh realities of their situation to the point that surviving is a hard task as he explains, "By day we keep busy. If you're not busy, these days, you die" (Gee 13). The danger of death can come from many sources, not just from enemies. In fact, as harsh as it may seem, the cold weather can be equally deadly. In this regard, Saul confesses more, "I loved it, once, that little wind. In the Tropical Time, it came like grace. Now it's the wind that takes the dying. Comes like a blade to finish them off" (Gee 43).

Notably, as Gee continues to depict the harshness of the cold weather, she takes the readers on a journey beyond the surface-level observations. In such difficult conditions, where even speaking can be a risk to one's health, words are a luxury. As Saul reflects, "In the new Days, people don't risk words. If you open your mouth, the ice blows in, hurting the teeth no dentists care for. Drying your throat. Piercing your soul. Filling your heart with loneliness" (Gee 44).

Furthermore, as Saul reflects on the age range in the Tropical and Ice Ages, his thoughts turn to a more personal memory to the time when his father fell ill and death loomed near. At the time, Saul considered his father's age of ninety "early" for death. But in the current Ice Age, where even basic survival is a constant struggle, the notion of living to such an age seems almost unfathomable. People barely make it past their forties, their bodies worn down by the constant cold and scarcity of resources. Expressing his grief, Saul says, "Ridiculous, now I think about it: that ninety wasn't old to us. Now people die at forty or fifty, if they survive the cold that long" (Gee 53).

Additionally, due to the harsh, frigid climate, there is a severe lack of food, causing the wild children to turn to cannibalism in order to stay alive. Saul narrates this disturbing truth in his words, "Now Kit is offering me a leg. 'Take it, old man! Save it for you!' Long, fringed with blackened, gamey meat, glistening in the light of the fire, its shape unpleasantly familiar. Sometimes I eat, but today I'm not hungry. I want to feel human, as I once was" (Gee 17). Upon closer examination of this quote, it becomes clear that Kit offering Saul a leg of meat is a powerful depiction of the desperation and brutality that the people in the novel must endure in order to survive due to the frozen weather. The description of the leg of meat being "unpleasantly familiar" in shape, implying that it reminds Saul of other instances where he may have eaten human flesh.

In the tenth chapter of the novel, the coming Ice Age signs of the impending cold weather begin to emerge in Britain which is suffering from the effects of global warming like many other parts of the world. These initial indications serve as a stark reminder of the long-anticipated Ice Age, which scientists have predicted for years. As the novel unfolds, Saul is taken aback by the

sudden arrival of winter weather, which has replaced what should have been a typical summer season:

After the elections, we expected summer, but there was a curious patch of real cold. The summer scanties were in the shops, but people were walking around in coats, some of them heirlooms, twentieth-century furs that hadn't been out of the cupboard for decades, and laughingly showing off the goose pimples they were feeling now for the first time. (Gee 88-89)

This quotation demonstrates the sudden shift in weather and people's response to it as reminder of the larger issue of climate change and its coming impact. The fact that people are wearing old-fashioned coats that had been kept in storage for decades depicts the complacency and lack of preparedness that many of them have when it comes to facing the consequences of their actions on the environment. For years, humans have been using fossil fuels and emitting greenhouse gases without fully considering the long-term effects of their actions. As a result, they are now facing a crisis that requires urgent attention and collective action.

In the same vein, Gee's warning about the dangers of global warming is coupled with the possibility of an ensuing Ice Age, which could bring unforeseen difficulties and hardships. Saul notes the role of people's indifference in contributing to the disaster. Although the government sets aside a significant budget to prepare for these issues, Saul observes that the initial twenty-year timeframe proved to be insufficient as several years passed without any meaningful action being taken (Bakay 421). Likewise, "We won't have a society if we destroy the environment" (Baratta 8).

In the novel, Gee uses the climate change as a means of depicting the disastrous consequences of humanity's neglectful attitude towards the environment. As the weather becomes increasingly harsh and unforgiving, it causes significant changes to the environment, leading to a huge change naturally, socially and politically and the most prominent one is the scattering of families. Saul, too, is afflicted by the same condition, "I'd lost my wife, I'd lost my family, and now we were losing all the things we were used to, so familiar we hardly noticed them, hot summer nights, orchids, fruit trees" (Gee 94).

Moreover, Gee examines the results behind neglecting the environment, as the changing climate from heat to coldness causes Britain to fracture socially into three unequal classes, which are represented in a pyramid structure. Saul provides insight into this division in the following passage:

Our society was an amorphous pyramid, with the Speakers perched precariously on top, then the relatively successful people, who had jobs and houses and educations and elected the Speakers and contributed to Comtax and paid their district council to keep order. Underneath them were the Outsiders and Wanderers, a great stirring, floating base of people with nothing. (Gee 94)

More importantly, as the icy weather persists on the British society, Gee's portrayal of the environment conveys a sense of disintegration and decay. Every aspect of the natural world seems to be falling apart and deteriorating with the passage of time, "Lochs on the mainland began to freeze over, rivers stopped flowing, food crops failed, orchards whitened and weakened with frost" (Gee 102). By employing an ecofeminist perspective in her writing, Gee effectively portrays the impact of environmental degradation on British society, which is already on the

brink of collapse. Through this lens, she emphasizes the interconnectedness of social and environmental issues. Gönül Bakay further explains that the breakdown of order in Britain leads to widespread chaos as governments lose their authority, social unrest ensues, and people resort to fighting each other for basic necessities such as food (420). In this context, Saul says that “Cars wouldn’t start, there were endless power cuts from grids that couldn’t cope with the surge in demand, deliverymen died in exposed country places, and there was a spate of suffocations in cities among people who had over insulated their houses” (Gee 102).

### **III.1.2. Wicca’s Politics versus Men’s Techno-capitalism**

‘Wicca’ is a political women’s movement that has emerged from the ‘Children’s Commune;’ it rises as a reaction against technology and its hazardous impacts that have been left on nature and humans. Its prominent leading figures are Sarah, Juno, and Briony ‘Wicca’s Weapons Officer’ along with other strong lesbian women under the slogan of “*Revere the Goddess, and harm none ... We are of the Earth, and of Nature*” (Gee 75). Besides, the main purpose of this movement is to protect women’s rights and take care of children and nature together with total negligence for men. Also, it seeks to abolish robot ‘Doves’ and everything that embraces technology.

Intrinsically, after gender segregation, things have altered in the novel, as Sarah and her son, Luke, have spent too much time in the ‘Commune’ throughout the time of her separation from Saul. Hence, she becomes more associated with politics and she joins ‘Wicca’ women’s motion as a powerful figure in defending nature. Saul discloses in his words:

Wicca. I still shiver, remembering their name. I confess I occasionally browsed through Sarah’s study, when she was away for too long a stretch, just to be sure

that her desk was all right, and I found a pamphlet that would have seemed farcical, if it had not included her name, high on the masthead with Juno Jakes's. It was a ghastly amalgam of many things. First, a wacky female nature worship, centering on 'the Hidden Goddess'. (Gee 74)

The imagery of this quote highlights that Wicca's women have attributed themselves to nature as their spiritual source respectively for their strong care for environment. However, Sarah's character is portrayed as a powerful symbol of the emerging ecofeminist movement that challenges male-dominated power structures, patriarchal norms, and technologies that cause environmental harm. She embodies the principles of the movement, advocating for the protection of the natural world and rejecting the harmful technologies made by men. Her character serves as a powerful reflection of the intersection of feminist and environmentalist movements and emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the impact of gender and power in shaping human's relationship with the environment.

Similarly, Wicca encourages women to work and live together separated from men so as not to take responsibility for their care as well as to become more independent from patriarchy, particularly, as Sarah keeps Saul in distance, "And Sarah kept me at a distance from the Commune and Wicca and the whole damn thing, mostly because I was a man, I suppose. It embarrassed her greatly, being married" (Gee 75).

Generally, the anonymity and hatred is mutual between women and men. While lesbian women in "Wicca World" do not accept men as partners in life, fathers to their children, or even as lovers, "The nub of it was, they were through with men. They didn't want us as lovers, or fathers, or friends. The ideas were banal, the logic nonexistent, the rhetoric feeble, laughable ..."

(Gee 75). On the other hand, men also detest women and call their ecofeminist movement 'Wicca' and all women involved as witches, "They had changed their name now, the witches' coven, they were no longer the Children's Commune. They had taken the name of their political arm, and would henceforth be known as Wicca World, which she assured me meant 'wise women of the world', not 'worldwide witches', thank you, Saul"(Gee 76).

Meanwhile, Sarah becomes more integrated into 'Wicca World' as she takes her son, Luke, with her away from her husband. However, her character has succeeded in adopting Wicca's various standards, principles, and ideologies. From this perspective, Wicca shows another alternative manner that aims to inculcate feminine concepts while caring for male children with the sake of destroying all masculine notions. Otherwise, Saul keenly wants to see Luke. Thus, after many attempts, he gets to see his son through Briony. The protagonist recognizes that his son is different than he used to be when he was a child, since his features incline to feminine characteristics. The power of Wicca authority reaches the limits of transforming the boys into girls through what is called 'Coccon'. Saul is suspicious about this 'Coccon' and he perceptively asks his son:

'I know,' he said, as if it was obvious. We hugged again. My heart was still pounding. They were all crazy. The world had gone mad. And what was this 'Cocoon'? Were they turning into insects? 'I did once want to be a girl,' he continued. 'I mean, it's not that horrible, being a girl. Just a bit stupid,' which made me laugh. 'Girls are hopeless at football, and maths.' (Gee 86)

Nevertheless, Wicca's collective women have participated in the election in order to gain a decent position more than men. So they make publications on the screens under their protesting

“Vote for Wicca. Wicca Cares” (Gee 87). Saul delves into the process of women’s participation in the elections, expertly outlining the diverse ways in which they have contributed to the field:

Wicca World stood in the elections. There must have been money behind them somewhere, because they bought screen time on several channels. Sarah didn’t stand as a candidate, but hovered in the background as Mother of the Party. Doubtless her old screen connections helped. She was interviewed several times, very upbeat. We were on the verge of a ‘caring revolution’ ... Mother of the Party! Ha, I thought. I could tell the world a thing or two about her mothering. (Gee 87)

It is significant to mention that the novelist symbolically refers to women as the essence of nature, the carers and the source of reproduction for better future. Her concept of ecological feminism reflects women’s values by standing up against all those who abuse nature. From this sense, Wicca women have appeared on the screens as environmental protectors. However, Saul in the other side is with his friends in the ‘Gay Scientists Club’ watching the screens and laughing about women’s performances:

We roared with laughter when one of their campaign films came on at the club. It showed radiant, kindly, soft focus women (I recognized Briony’s face among them) dancing in a caring ring, in green fields, around a herd of blonde children. The voiceover spoke about ‘revaluing nature’, ‘nurturing the future’; ‘the future is green’. We would ‘bloom again’ with the ‘cooling earth’. We would ‘give thanks to the Goddess’ for water (some footage of flowing rivers, with laughing women drinking from them), clean air (shots of blue sky, and clouds) and earth (a troop of

women digging, with spades, old fashioned twentieth century spades, in rich black earth, among red berried bushes. (Gee 87)

This quotation gives clear understanding that women's screen shows reflect different perceptions of how to deal with the various ecological crises through reviving the planet and makes nature green without any impurities.

After Wicca has won the elections, it takes a political stance in the European court that prevents the development of robot 'Doves' with random mutations and this exemplifies the movement's anti-technological orientation, "Wicca had no statutory powers to make laws, but they could petition the Euro court or instruct our own courts to appoint a commission. They announced they were drafting legislation applying to all future robot manufacture. No robot could be fuelled by organic matter or attempt problem solving through random mutation" (Gee 95).

From this context, Adeline Johns-Putra articulates that Wicca political authority plays on feminine concerns in the aftermath of the harmful occurrences made by the Doves towards humans. Hence, from previous events, robots have been disallowed. To men, the Doves represent the successful masculinity borrowing of feminine care and responsibilities that has been applied for artificial intelligence. Likewise, for women, they reflect a defective imitation of a naturally feminine quality and characteristics ("Care, Gender" para 21).

During the chronicle events, an opposing movement has appeared against Wicca's women politics labeled as "The Manguard" to advance technological developments as well as giving value to the marginalized men. Saul implies in his words that, "Wicca World were under huge pressure, the elections were coming in the next few weeks and they were almost certainly going

to lose to the Manguard coalition of male liberationists. Sarah had too much on her plate to listen” (Gee 105).

Johns-Putra adds again that Wicca movement has failed to deal with the ongoing ice crisis due to its embroilment in polemics with Manguard competitors. However, both groups get involved in an all-out reversal of Saul and Sarah’s long-running feud. Thus, gender issues and conflicts are revealed to be an awfully intractable dilemma in which difference exist in both “old-fashioned” globe of family quarrels and gender segregation of the new ice age while environment still suffers unexpected danger (“Care, Gender” para 20).

### **III.2. The Inconsistency of Fertility Challenges and Artificial Life**

#### **III.2.1. The Patriarchal Lens on Artificial Life**

According to ecofeminism, the patriarchal society gives great valuable importance to the field of technology and to the artificial intelligence that centers on the development of the most advanced robots. In addition to, it evokes irrational exploitation of various economic hubs that has awful potency on nature and humans as well. This capitalist system has its sovereignty in controlling societies from different angles through imposing recent forms of exploitation and oppression. Hence, it contributes to the destruction of these communities as well as the ecosystems that create social and ecological crises. However, the author’s depiction of artificial life in the novel highlights that men are obsessed with technology and with the non-humans. Her point of view is centered on how masculine perspective has failed in recognizing the value of technology, which has become an outstanding danger to women and nature the more it is developed.

At the beginning of *The Ice People*, in light of the collapse of civil order, the protagonist finds himself fascinated by machines and all what is unnatural. The words that demonstrate Saul's amusement with artificial life initially appears in chapter two:

I found I had a gift with machines. They were alive to me, and entirely absorbing, like the aphids I once bred in a matchbox. I was fascinated by artificial life, by the huge range of mobots in the college labs, the multi travellers, the swarmers, the sorters, though my speciality was nanotechnics, working with invisibly small molecular machines. I had delicate powers of manipulation that helped me pass out with high honours. (Gee 19)

In other words, Gee embodies the idea that the patriarchal society is infatuated with artificial life and the tremendous technological advancements that build a passion for love of leadership, control and power.

Thence, men's love and affection for technology are presented indubitably through the "Gay Scientists Club"; particularly, when Saul finds pleasant leisure with his friends in the club, "And when we were tired of talking, or dancing, or working out in the fabulous gym, the machines were waiting, infinitely yielding. The net expanded through the rows of screens" (Gee 50). That is to say, men are desperately waiting for the machines where they can live with them peacefully. Hence, Saul expresses his keen interest in advanced robots, once he has watched the news on the screen for the first time about 'mobots', a highly developed robots which has the ability to speak and work along with the potential that facilitates human life effortlessly. Saul reveals, "After decades, nearly a century of trying, human beings had succeeded in making 'mobots', cute little

domestic animats. Robots available 'to every home'. Robot cleaners. 'Robot friends'. They cleaned, cleared rubbish, walked, talked" (Gee 55).

Significantly, *The Ice People* sheds insight on the Doves multifunction robots which indicate the representation of the patriarchal society notably through Saul's character. Additionally, he abruptly expresses his enthusiasm for buying a new Dove to his wife and his son:

They were dogsized or toddlersized, like household pets. They looked vaguely like stumpy winged birds, but the TV camera hadn't lingered long enough for me to tell. They could dust, wash floors, recycle rubbish ... And the cost was pitched low enough for everyone to buy one (the Outsiders could never have afforded them, of course, but then, they had no homes to clean). No more than the cost of a cheap car. I remembered the slogan: 'A Dove in Every Home.' (Gee 57-58)

By deconstructing this passage, Saul's admiration for the Doves presents the greediness of the patriarchal community to live a sumptuous life depended on artificial intelligence ignoring all what is natural.

However, Sarah refuses everything related to technology since she is hesitating about having a Dove at home, "If she refused, she would upset her son. 'You need never get cross about housework again.' 'Um,' she said. 'I mean, that's good. It just ... doesn't seem quite natural, to me'" (Gee 58). Thereby, there are two different viewpoints between feminism and patriarchy. First of all, feminism supports nature and detests all what is associated with technology and artificial intelligence, and this is shown clearly through the reaction of Sarah when their son Luke asks about the Dove if it thinks like humans, "'Does the Dove think?' Luke continued, interested.

‘Yes—’ I said. ‘No—’ said Sarah” (Gee 64). Sarah’s and Saul’s responses are contradictory due to the feminine and masculine various perspectives.

In fact, Sarah and Saul decide to go out in a picnic with their son, Luke, and the Dove with them. When Luke wants so eagerly to switch on the Dove during their picnic, the robot starts to feed on the grass:

Turning, I saw Luke and Sarah gazing at the Dove in astonishment. It was squatting on the grass, and the sound had shifted to the gentle slurping it made when feeding. ‘I put it on “RefuelRecycle”, said Luke. ‘It’s doing it. It’s feeding off the grass.’ His face was triumphant, but Sarah’s was uneasy. ‘I don’t think you should do that, should you? Go on, switch it off. I mean, it’s not our grass.’ She appealed to me. ‘Saul, it doesn’t feel right.’ ‘I don’t see what harm it can do,’ I said, though I was shaken, I didn’t know why. (Gee 66)

The quote conveys the writer’s vivid image about feminism’s fears of the danger of technology to nature through Sarah’s reaction, which shows a lot of care towards nature since she doesn’t like the idea of harming the grass. In this context, the character portrays a broader vision of further environmental detrimental caused by technology as well as its repercussions on human life.

Conversely, Saul seems fine with harming nature as he symbolizes patriarchal society.

Interestingly, Niğmet Çetiner in her article “Dystopias of Reproductive Nightmare: *The Ice People* and *The Children of Men*” contends that *The Ice People* depicts the dreadful implications of a human-caused worldwide environmental crisis on nonhuman species. Similarly, the social relations of the individual characters resemble the situation of society as a whole. Hence, the novel implies the horrific technological advancement and science that negatively affect nature

and societies by running out of control and demolish everything, if not employed for the welfare of the whole including human beings and nonhumans (Çetiner 647). In view of this, Gee deeply incarnates the cons of technology and its perilous impact on the environmental resources. On the one hand, Sarah's love for nature makes her avidly dream about living isolated in the country far from everything that is artificial. Thus, her character reflects feminism's love for nature. On the other hand, Saul makes her see that artificial life has been rooted in all things. This fact is addressed distinctly through Saul's words:

She felt she should have a place in the country. She 'loved nature', whatever that meant. I tried to make her see that now nothing was natural, that the flowers she loved had been selectively bred to make them bigger and longer lasting, that even the hills behind the Northwest Borders, which we could just glimpse from our fourth floor window, were covered with genetically modified crops. (Gee 71)

By analyzing the context of this quote, Bakay proclaims that, "Techno-capitalist society has wreaked havoc on nature, and everything has become artificial" (419). That is to say, capitalism has significantly contributed in damaging the environment along with the raze of civilizations and human beings as well.

In short, Saul's society develop new types of robots among them 'Sexbots'; a highly advanced robotic sex dolls that have human features and organs used for sexual desire. Men turned into the Sexbots since women have chosen to be isolated from them, and they become more independent in their ecofeminist movement 'Wicca':

There were 'Sexbots', though we didn't find out exactly what they did that evening because our screen had the automatic KC (kiddiescleanup) function that

blocked out any mention of sex, and neither of us could remember how to unlock it before the moron had passed on to the next, but from his face and gestures the Sexbots were on heat. (But I have three Sexbots in my store. They look battered, and used. They look ... undesirable. No one would dream of having sex with them). (Gee 73)

Consequently, Gee implicitly informs the reader about the dangerous outcomes resulting from artificial intelligence. In the tenth chapter, the signs of technology that is run out of control start to show up more as the Doves have evolved significantly. They began to show more aggressive and harmful behaviors. Saul notices hostile action from a Dove towards young baby in the screens:

On the big day, I went to the Gay Scientists to watch the race and drink beer with my friends. Halfway through the race we were shrieking with laughter at an unfortunate Frenchman who waggled his bottom, when they interrupted the programme with a news flash. A Dove in Scotland had torn off the leg of a newborn baby in front of its mother. They switched off just in time to save the baby's life. (Gee 90)

Thus, Saul finally confesses the fault of what has been happening and realizes that the Doves are mutating, "It was only later that my guess was confirmed. I began to realize that the Doves were mutating. Back at home, a refrain began in my mind; human error, human error. Mistakes had been made" (Gee 90).

### III.2.2. The Problem of Fertility

Ecofeminists place significant importance on issues related to child care and advocacy for children's rights. In *The Ice People*, the scarcity of children is presented as a pervasive issue that British society has normalized and failed to address. However, technological advancements offer a potential solution to this problem through the development of medical treatments, machines, and drugs that work to improve fertility. This reflects the broader tension between the man's desire for control over nature and the recognition of the interdependence of human and non-human life. Gee raises important questions about the ethics of technological intervention in the natural processes of reproduction and the potential consequences of such interventions.

At the onset of the novel's events, Saul narrates his experiences during his twenties, revealing that the issue of fertility had already been a concern, but it has since escalated to a critical level. He states that, "The problems with fertility had started to get worse. The screens were full of alarming statistics" (Gee 18). In this corresponding context, Bakay elucidates that the majority of animals have gone extinct, and families have fragmented, leading to separate living arrangements for men and women. As a result of a prevalent homosexual culture, there has been a decline in fertility rates, causing a scarcity of children (419). Saul implies indirectly that the decreasing fertility rates may be due in part to a lack of sexual relations between men and women "Which wasn't very often because it wasn't easy to get women to have sex, what with segging, and mutant hivs" (Gee 19).

In light of this, as the British society in *The Ice People* continues to grapple with the implications of advancing technology and its impact on their lives, Gee has serious concerns about the risks and consequences of scientific intervention into the realm of human reproduction.

As Greta Gaard and Lori Gruen observe that, “The dangers of scientific intervention into the bodies and lives of women is particularly acute in the area of new reproductive technologies” (243).

It is worth noting that there are a variety of methods available for treating infertility or fertility problems, ranging from scientifically developed interventions to alternative treatments such as “Batteries,” “Eggboxes” and “Techfix,” as Saul mentions. Seeking to overcome their fertility issues, Saul and Sarah turn to a specialized clinic for help. However, it is later revealed that Saul is the one with the fertility problem, dashing their hopes of conceiving a child. Despite this setback, Sarah offers comfort to Saul by pointing out an important fact that, “The majority of men have semifertile sperm” (Gee 34). By analyzing the issue of the prevalence of male infertility in the novel, Gee challenges the assumption that men are inherently fertile and thus entitled to reproduce. This challenges the dominant patriarchal narrative that men are the ultimate decision-makers and have the right to exert control over both women and the environment.

According to an ecofeminist perspective espoused by Karen J. Warren in her book *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It is and Why It Matters*, “The historical pervasiveness of patriarchal domination of women and nature has led some ecofeminists to suggest that androcentrism (male-centered thinking) is the root cause of environmental destruction” (22). In essence, ecofeminists argue that the historical oppression of women and nature is rooted in the same patriarchal structures that have led to the degradation of the environment. This connection is particularly relevant to the issue of fertility, as many of the factors that contribute to infertility are also linked to environmental crisis.

Remarkably, Saul and Sarah feel a sense of urgency to conceive a child, so they decide to try the alternative fertility options, ultimately opting for the revolutionary techfix way. Within this particular situation, Saul attempts to articulate their decision to entrust themselves to the care of medical professionals and scientific advancements explaining, “We had plenty of money, at any rate. We chose the top clinic, the best known doctor. Dr. Zeuss had a global reputation. We put ourselves in his hands completely. We made love when he told us to; abstained when he told us to; ate and drank and slept to order” (Gee 35). Hence, as Saul and Sarah embark on the artificial fertility method, they find themselves transformed into unwitting subjects in a series of complex medical experiments. Their bodies are subjected to a range of cutting-edge devices and procedures, each one designed to enhance their chances of conceiving a child:

We whizzed through the tunnels nearly every morning before five am to be injected or tested, making changes of plan at a split second’s notice if the doctors told us they needed us, if eggs could be harvested or sperm donated or any other bits of us removed and twizzled. We said ‘Yes’ to everything. We’d held out too long, and now we yielded our bodies completely, our private parts, ourselves, our money. (Gee 35)

This passage accentuates how Gee’s emphasis on the issue of fertility encapsulates the broader concerns of ecofeminist thought regarding the control of technology over all spheres of life, including the human body.

From an ecofeminist perspective and a reproductive justice framework, Gaard argues that, “Feminists have lost discursive control over the word “choice”: instead, the term has been commodified and sold back to women as consumers of the new fertility-enhancing technologies”

(105). The novel brings to light the stark reality of how women's bodies are often objectified and exploited by the medical industry, science and men, reduced to mere vessels for carrying fetuses. The character of Doctor Zeus embodies this callous attitude, as he fails to disclose the potentially harmful side effects of the techfix procedure to Saul and Sarah until they know afterwards:

We ignored it when a thick package arrived from Dr Zeuss's Fertility Clinic pointing out, 'as a routine precaution', some of the postnatal complications that had been found to occur 'slightly more frequently' with techfix conceptions. There were pages of detail, most of it hair-raising. 'This is obscene,' said Sarah, furious... If there were all these problems, why didn't he mention them when he was monitoring us every day?' (Gee 37)

Actually, the pain and suffering experienced by both Saul and Sarah is undeniably significant, but it is Sarah and their child who bear the brunt of the ordeal. Sarah is forced to endure the harrowing experience of both abortion and difficult childbirth which reflects the danger of depending on reproductive technologies. With regard to this matter, Gaard confirms that, "These technologies have significant harmful "side" effects on the physical and mental health of the women who "choose" them, as well as on the infant "products" they create" (105).

The problem of fertility is a complex topic that can have profound implications for men and women alike. The social and cultural expectation that children are the glue that binds the genders together can be a double-edged sword. Women, in particular, find themselves grappling with the emotional burden of infertility of men, which drive them towards alternative forms of solace, such as seeking refuge in nature. In contrast, men turn their interest towards technological life. These divergent approaches to the challenges of fertility exacerbate tensions and hostilities

between the two genders, further perpetuating a cycle of separation and discord. Saul following words confirms this:

And that was at the root of all that happened, of course. That's why men and women hated each other. The kids had been the glue that held us together. When babies stopped coming, the men got the blame. The women felt thwarted, and abandoned us. And so we moved further and further apart, and turned into parodies of ourselves – the shaven headed, giggling, machine loving men, the shorthaired, short fused, furious women, shriving themselves with nature worship. (Gee 88)

To conclude, this chapter depicts of the diverse issues of ecofeminism that Gee admirably portrays it in *The Ice People*. She fruitfully identifies the different tangible impacts of climatic alteration of Saul's society. However, it is concluded that the intervention of technology has contributed in addressing the problem of fertility in light of gender segregation and the scarcity of children. In fact, it is noticed that the techno-capitalist system shows its controlling side even in dealing with sterility conditions. On the one hand, Wicca ecofeminist movement gives great importance to taking care of children and nature together along with advocating women's rights. On the other hand, Wicca emphasizes in taking strong stance to demolish the Doves leads to neglect the real deal with the ongoing environmental crisis.

## Conclusion

Climate change and the serious disasters resulting from it are among the major concerns for societies, as they have far-reaching consequences on ecosystems, economies, and infrastructure. The ecofeminist analysis of Gee's *The Ice People* highlights the central issues prevailing during the two distinct climatic periods. In fact, what distinguishes Gee's world is the climatic issues that raise women's attention to the extent of the damage caused by the patriarchal system.

This dissertation investigates the development of climate fiction literature in general and climate fiction novel in particular. The first chapter highlights the literary forebears of cli-fi, including J.G. Ballard, Henry David Thoreau, Rachel Carson, and Ernest Callenbach, who have had a profound impact on the genre. Their representational practices have influenced contemporary writers who continue to draw inspiration from their innovative styles and powerful messages. Their writings have not only challenged readers to think critically about the important ecological issues, but also served as a call to take action and effect to make meaningful transformations in society.

The chapter, also, tackles the development of Ecofeminism. Historically, the term Ecofeminism was first coined by the French feminist write, Françoise D'Eaubonne, in her outstanding literary book, *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974). However, before this term become widespread in all the political and social fields, particularly literature, some ecological movements have emerged in the colonial areas of Africa and India, organized by women activists in defense of nature and women's rights. Among these movements, the Chipko movement in India, and the Green Belt movement in Kenya were founded by a group of women as a response to attempts to spoil nature and oppress women. Additionally, ecofeminist movements have arose

in the United States of America with the aim of advocating for the same rights as ecological feminists in the late eighties. Therefore, some researchers believe that the origins of ecofeminism may be traced back to the emergence of these ecological motions.

Ecofeminism is considered as an umbrella that covers a unique diversity of different feminist attitudes and trends that extend their roots to various and sometimes competing social, political, environmental and ethical theories and practices, reflecting diverse perceptions on the nature of contemporary ecological problems and their solutions. This theory critically abhors the capitalist and patriarchal society that centers on the oppression of both women and nature, and aims to liberate women from the shackles of the controlling masculine society along with preserving nature and creating gender equality. Consequently, ecological women activists regard the female earth as a nurturing mother since it has strong bond with women; they work as protectors in urging care for the environment.

However, as ecofeminism is a significant theme in the literary studies, the novel that is regarded as the first ecofeminist work belongs to Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* (1972), which deals with concerns related to women, nature and environmental degradation. Besides, another well-known ecofeminist work is Ursula K. Le Guin's *Always Coming Home* (1985), and Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. All of these works are important to analyze from an ecological feminist perspectives.

The second chapter of this work focuses on identifying the environmental and climate-related problems within *The Ice People*, exploring the intricate matters of ecofeminism as a kind of concern which this perspective has been addressing since its inception. The research, primarily, centers on examining the deterioration of care within the British society, encompassing

individuals as a whole, with a particular focus on Saul and Sarah. The erosion of the caring side between both genders serves as a microcosm of the larger societal perspective, emphasizing the significance of establishing a connection between interpersonal care and care for the environment. This is crucial because the fragility of care directly mirrors the effects of climatic changes. Race, on the other hand, emerges as a central matter that Gee aims to emphasize. The issue of global warming initially triggers the migration of individuals of African descent, specifically, from Africa to England. It is noteworthy that the protagonist himself is of mixed race, which leads to internal conflicts within him. One side of him desires to disregard the truth, while the other side yearns to confront and accept it. Gee skillfully portrays women's interest in race through the character of Saul's mother, and later extends this theme to Sarah's character. Following the onset of a severe cold wave, the direction of migration reverses, with white individuals; seeking refuge in Africa to preserve their lives. Saul, including many others, decides to go to Ghana, the land of his ancestors.

Furthermore, Saul's society in the Tropical and Glacial times reflects the results of global warming and anthropometric activities that lead to social, environmental and political challenges. These two periods greatly impact the unity of love between the protagonist and his wife, Sarah, along with ecological upheavals. The Tropical period shows rare relationships between men and women, as both the genders follow 'segging' as their main emphasis, and they choose living separately from each other except for Saul and Sarah who still hold old-fashioned way of living. They gave birth to their only child, Luke, but soon their relationship crumbles to the worst due to the freezing climate and society's contradictions. Equally important, women take care of the children in the 'Children's Commune' along with taking care of nature. However, they strongly

detest having relationship with men and taking care of them. As a result, homosexuality has become the norm in *The Ice People*.

The third chapter of the dissertation examines Gee's skillful depiction of the essence of ecofeminist concerns through her authentic portrayals in *The Ice People*. The central focus is the impact of the freezing weather on individuals and societies where survival and living a long life becomes difficult. Besides, the lack of the basic resources of livelihood due to the iced climate divides society into three social classes, dispersing people and fracturing their interpersonal connections. Moreover, Wicca ecofeminist movement serves as a powerful allegory for the environmental activists in real life. It adopts a distinct political principles and strategies through Sarah's character as a rebuff to the deep-seated techno-capitalist society. Amidst the unfolding narrative, Wicca aims to establish constraints that focus on protecting nature and children, inclusive of advocating women's rights and encourages them to become more independent. In addition, it works to destroy the Doves. However, during Wicca's winning in the elections, a masculine anti-movement named 'The Manguard' emerges as a reaction against Wicca, in which it retrieves their standards in freeing the usage of technology.

Through the events of the novel, artificial life contributes in creating multiple crises in the social and environmental center. Socially, it depicts men's tendency to use 'Sexbots' robots for their sexual desires, in which it demonstrates the distortion of the human's basic instincts through their great attachment with the non-human. Likewise, it portrays the potential ability of these robots in hurting humans and animals. Ecologically, it depicts the harmful consequences of the irrational use of technology that causes malformations to nature. In other terms, the Doves symbolically presents men's proclivity with technological developments and sovereignty. From this context, Gee has obviously succeeded in reflecting the emerging technological progress and

its negative effects on the environment and social life. Moreover, the novelist discusses the sensitive topic of fertility within the novel. The majority of men in the story are portrayed as being semi fertile, but the huge amount of disproportionate burden is falling on women's bodies due to the procedures and treatments required for conception. Notably, Gee's narrative incorporates scientific facts, unveiling the tangible effects of medical advancements and reproductive technologies, particularly concerning their impact on the health of the child. This issue of fertility creates a significant divide between genders, as women are finding no use in having men in their lives. As a result, they focus on nurturing nature instead.

At the end of the novel, readers are immersed in a profound experience, feeling and capturing what it means to stand on the very brink of civilization's collapse and the unraveling of the global system. The ambiguous end of the story leaves room for interpretation and invites discussion among readers. Gee does not explicitly state whether life will improve and civilization will flourish once more, or whether it will take a darker future. As a matter of fact, the style of the novel's end is not something new in Gee's writings. Similarly, the fate of Saul is left in doubt, whether he truly reached his end or not. The issues in Saul's life in the novel mirror the challenges present in contemporary society and politics, as well as environmental and climatic changes. This close parallel between the issues in the protagonist's life and the realities of the readers' life and their own societies serves as a powerful reminder of the fragile life they cling to as it may fall at any moment.

When readers read *The Ice People*, they realize that male society's arrogance and selfishness in devoting ownership, control, and evolution are the main factors that lead to the destruction of civilization, environment, the unity of families, and the entire world as a whole. However, whatever how much humans invent and develop technology, they will inevitably fail to grasp the

importance of the matter. Reflecting upon the results gained from this research, women have played a significant role in confronting technological developments through their contributions to ecofeminist movements that advocate for the liberation of nature and children from the specter of artificial distortions. They call for nurturing the environment through reducing the anthropocentric activities that threaten the whole globe. Another outcome is, scientific and technological progresses have caused damage for nature and changed the relationships between men and women, resulting gender segregation. Hence, the patriarchal society is overly preoccupied in artificial life. Thus, it screws up to recognize the environmental damages and the horrific warning alerts.

*The Ice People* raises awareness about the severe consequences of climate change, engaging readers emotionally and personally. By presenting climate issues alongside other problems, it helps individuals to understand the impact on their lives and calls for action from both individuals and governments.

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## Résumé

Cette étude est une tentative d'enquêter sur l'intersection des problèmes environnementaux et féministes en Grande-Bretagne causés par l'Anthropocène dans un cadre futuriste, en particulier d'un point de vue écoféministe, en utilisant le roman de Maggie Gee, *Les Gens de glace* (1998), qui est un roman de fiction climatique qui dépeint des aspects sociaux et l'érosion de l'environnement en arrière-plan des événements. En mêlant des préoccupations du monde réel à des éléments visionnaires, la présente étude vise à comprendre le rôle des femmes face aux changements environnementaux et aux développements technologiques et comment les avancées scientifiques incontrôlables ont changé la nature de la vie. De plus, cette dissertation vise à examiner les problèmes écoféministes dans le roman de Gee, en mettant l'accent sur les liens entre les femmes, les catastrophes environnementales et les êtres non humains. Elle cherche également à mettre en lumière les différents facteurs de la société contemporaine qui sont les rôles et les relations essentiels des hommes et des femmes, la sexualité, la politique et le problème du réchauffement climatique. Ainsi, elle attire l'attention sur la gravité des crises environnementales et de la détérioration actuelles qui menacent le monde.

**Mots clés:** Fiction Climatique, Maggie Gee, *Les Gens de Glace*, Anthropocène, Écoféminisme.

## ملخص

هذه الدراسة هي محاولة للتحقيق في تقاطع القضايا البيئية والنسوية في بريطانيا الناجمة عن الأنثروبوسين في إطار مستقبلي خاصة من منظور نسوي إيكولوجي باستخدام رواية ماغي جي "شعب الجليد"، وهي رواية خيال مناخي تصوّر تدهورًا اجتماعيًا وبيئيًا كاملاً في خلفية الأحداث. من خلال تشابك اهتمامات العالم الحقيقي مع العناصر المتصورة، تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى فهم دور المرأة في مواجهة التغيرات البيئية والتطورات التكنولوجية وكيف أدت التطورات العلمية التي خرجت عن السيطرة إلى تغيير طبيعة الحياة. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى دراسة قضايا النسوية الإيكولوجية في رواية جي، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على الروابط بين المرأة والكوارث البيئية والكائنات غير البشرية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تسعى إلى تسليط الضوء على عوامل المجتمع المعاصرة المختلفة، والتي تتضمن الأدوار الأساسية والعلاقة بين الرجال والنساء، والجنسانية، والسياسة ومشكلة الاحتباس الحراري. و بالتالي، تجذب الانتباه إلى جدية الأزمات البيئية الحالية والتدهور الذي يهدد العالم.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الخيال المناخي، ماغي جي، "شعب الجليد"، الأنثروبوسين، النسوية الإيكولوجية.