

## POSTHUMAN ECOFEMINISM AND CLIMATE ANXIETY IN CONTEMPORARY FICTION: A STUDY OF *THE NEW WILDERNESS*

**Naveed Yousaf**

Lecturer English, Department of English, University of Sargodha

Email: [Naveed.yousaf@uos.edu.pk](mailto:Naveed.yousaf@uos.edu.pk)

**Khan Fida Hussain Khan**

Lecturer English, Department of English, University of Kotli, AJK

Email: [Kfidak@gmail.com](mailto:Kfidak@gmail.com)

**Shagufta Shahnawaz**

M.Phil Scholar, Department of English, Alhamd Islamic University, Islamabad Campus

Email: [Shagunnkhan6789@gmail.com](mailto:Shagunnkhan6789@gmail.com)

---

### Abstract

This paper analyzes *The New Wilderness* by Diane Cook (2020) as a posthuman ecofeminist text to understand how climate fiction (cli-fi) symbolizes ecological collapse, relational survival, and climate anxiety. The study uses the posthuman theory of Donna Haraway (2016) to stress the moral and emotion relationships between human and non-human subjects, displacing anthropocentrism, and emphasizing distributed agency when it comes to survival discourses. The primary textual sequences of the novel were subject to a qualitative textual analytic to determine the theme of gendered ecological vulnerability, female ecological knowledge, and anxiety about climate as an ethical and affective experience. Results indicate the mediation of the nature of the mother-daughter relationship between environmental knowledge and emotional resilience, the active role of non-human agents in influencing the narrative outcomes, and the embodied, multisensory experience in promoting ethical engagement to the ecological uncertainty. Combining ecofeminist and posthumanist insights, this paper shows how cli-fi can prefigure relational ethics, human-non-human relationships, and affective reactions to environmental crisis to provide a more complex sense of survival, care, and agency within the Anthropocene age.

**Keywords:** Climate fiction, posthuman ecofeminism, Diane Cook, *The New Wilderness*, climate anxiety, human–non-human relationality, ecological ethics, gendered survival.

### Introduction

Climate fiction (also known as cli-fi) has emerged as a leading genre of literature, bringing together the cultural, ethical, and emotional aspects of the climate crisis, presenting storylines that underscore the ecological transformation and human reaction to environmental degradation. The use of cli-fi in contemporary form often critiques established anthropocentric worldviews by placing climate change in the context of socio cultural and affective frameworks to invite readers to reflect on multidimensional questions relating to human responsibility, vulnerability and interdependence with non-human systems (Johns Putra, 2016). Scholars observe that cli-fi cuts beyond environmental catastrophe representation by prefiguring emotional states of fear, sadness, strengths of facing ecological uncertainty, thus aiding larger cultural and ethical concepts of the Anthropocene (Bayes & Abbasi, 2025).

The ecofeminism offers a critical approach to the gendered aspects of environmental discourse through the connection between the subordination of women and exploitation of nature through the patriarchal and capitalist regimes. This focus on ecofeminist scholarship highlights how climate change discourses tend to sidelines environmental and gendered issues to privilege the techno scientific solutions and policy framework that may obscure structural inequalities that

influence climate vulnerability (Howarth and Richardson, 2015). Through enlightening the relationship between gender, power, and ecology, ecofeminist voices expose the role of the patriarchal systems as a major cause of environmental and social injustices and, as a result, make ecofeminism an important book method because of the ability to confront hierarchical relationships between humans and nature (Gaard, 2011).

Posthuman ecofeminism builds on the work of traditional ecofeminist criticism by questioning narrow human-non-human divisions and focusing on material and relational contingency of biological, ecological and cultural beings. Inspired by feminist posthumanism, posthumanist thought suggests relocating the autonomous human subject and changing the understanding of agency into being distributed within human and more than human networks (Alaimo, 2016). This theoretical orientation previews relationality, interconnectedness, and ethical interdependence, which is crucial to comprehending how contemporary texts of the environmental change demand anthropocentrism and propose ethical implication to environmental change engagement (Haraway, 2016). Posthuman ecofeminism in the study of literature gives analyzing instruments which are used in addressing issues of how non-human agency is anticipated in a text and how a text is disorganized concerning the customary division of person and nature (Barad, 2007).

The emotive aspect of ecological crisis, sometimes called climate anxiety or solastalgia, includes the emotions of anxiety, confusion, and a sense of existential pathophany as a result of environmental change and loss. The researchers suggest that emotional feelings towards climate change are not singular psychological experiences but are mediated by more sense making socio cultural discourses regarding ecological futures and sense of place (Albrecht et al., 2007). Thus, climate anxiety turns into a cultural and affective phenomenon that only literature can express through the experience of characters, the structure of the narrative, and an emotional response, which allows readers to experience the emotional reaction to an ecological crisis (Smith, 2022). Through understanding climate anxiety through this conception, the cli-fi blooms as a fertile territory, where the interaction between narrative, emotion, and the environmental concern can be analyzed.

*The New Wilderness* by Diane Cook (2020) is one example of a cli-fi novel which blends an ecological disaster with a complex human story, and it is the narrative of a mother and a daughter enduring a post- devastated world. The embodied novel futurities of survival, family ties, and tension between human wants and the environment, welcomes a novel reading which prioritizes relations ethics and emotional attachment to environmental change (Cook, 2020). According to literary critics, this text conveys the idea of ecofeminist critical dystopia, emphasizing interdependencies between humans and the more than human world, with the female characters facing patriarchal systems of power and ecological precarity (Sarıkaya Şen, 2023). These readings show that the story of Cook does not only inoculate with climate anxiety, but also reformulates relationships between humans and nature in a manner that makes posthuman ecofeminists interested.

Through a posthuman ecofeminist approach to *The New Wilderness*, this paper places the novel in a larger literary context that seeks to challenge the paradigms of anthropic-, and patriarchal-centered literature. Speculative fiction writing in modern times has been analyzed more and more as a way in which its women protagonists challenge the conventional humanist notion of being and replace it with more holistic conceptions of being with both human and non-human subjects (Sarwar, 2025). The method is also similar with the recent academic demand on the focus on stories that prioritize ecological justice, relationship entanglement, and affective reactions to the issue of climate change, showing that cli-fi may become a crucial place where literature intersects with cultural conceptualizations of the Anthropocene (Alaimo, 2016).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Climate change has heightened awareness of environmental disasters worldwide, which has led to general climate anxiety. The posthuman ecofeminist approaches to these anxieties have not been fully explored in contemporary literature, especially climate fiction, yet their combination can be regarded as an essential location to address them. *The New Wilderness* by Diane Cook (2020) depicts ecological breakdown, highlighting the interconnected experience between women and the non-human agency and intergenerational survival. The posthuman ecofeminist theory, expressed by Donna Haraway (2016), posits the anthropocentric limits and brings out the moral meaning of relational entanglement between human beings and other entities. Whereas ecofeminist views enable the study of gendered ecological frailty, the posthuman framework as advanced by Haraway goes beyond this to highlight distributed agency, interconnectedness and moral obligations on more-than-human networks. Although this framework is relevant, there are limited researches describing how modern cli-fi, including the novel by Cook, enact these notions to reflect climate anxiety, relational ethics, and the disruption of human-centered hierarchies.

This gap restricts knowledge of how contemporary stories restructure the relationship between humans and nature, prefigure female agency, and question patriarchal and anthropocentric structures. This paper will fill a theoretical and literary gap in cli-fi literature by using Haraway's (2016) posthuman ecofeminist lens to examine how *The New Wilderness* expresses climate anxiety, relational ethics, and gendered survival. The paper shows that literature can be used to clarify the ethical and affective aspects of ecological crises, reorient human nature-relationships, and dispute long-established power structures.

### **Literature Review**

Climate fiction, also known as cli-fi, has become an increasingly important genre of literature that informs the cultural response to climate change by articulating environmental changes and their impacts on human and non-human worlds. Cli-fi narratives tend to stimulate ethical and affective responses to ecological crises via non-traditional science communication and focus on lived experience, moral urgency, and relational responsibility in the Anthropocene (Johns Putra, 2016). Moreover, cli-fi disrupts conventional forms of literature with speculative futures to highlight technological optimism and human dominance over nature, attracting the theme of loss, survival, and change (Hashmi and Tariq, 2025). Also evidenced in cross cultural studies, cli-fi has the ability to express localized climate concerns and ecological worries beyond Western frameworks and stress the global applicability of the genre.

The ecofeminist theory is historically linked to the oppression of women with the exploitation of nature and suggests that these two types of oppression have common patriarchal origins, thereby affecting both environmental degradation and inequality (Howarth and Richardson, 2015). Ecofeminist detractors note that ecological destruction represented in the climate fiction should be seen in conjunction with matters of gender, class and race since the historical implications of environmental disasters overwhelmingly affect marginalized populations. This intersectional view highlights how the climate discourse can work to address social justice and address the dualisms of nature/culture on which the historic environmental exploitation platform was built.

Posthumanism challenges anthropocentric beliefs through highlighting relational ontologies that decenter the autonomous human subject, making interconnection with non-human agents a puzzle of note. An important thinker topic in the field of posthumanism and ecofeminism is Donna Haraway, whose works advocate the necessity to understand human-non-human entanglement and ethical obligations of multispecies co existence (Haraway, 2016). The posthuman ecofeminist framework as sketched by Haraway repackaged agency as a network of human and non-human relations, binaries of hierarchy were shaken and a new mode of thought was invited regarding the relations of relationality, materiality and ecological ethics.

The method has important consequences when reading stories that negotiate on climate change, as it foreshadows the way that stories can depict entangled worlds in which human and non-human actors make joint futures.

Following this, posthumanist theorists like Fox and Alldred (2019) suggest that posthumanist theory highlights material entanglements and dynamic agency, which would allow climate fiction to be read in a way that considers more than human agency and ethicality in ecological interdependencies. These viewpoints complement ecofeminist readings by putting human-non-human relations in terms of intricate agencies and responsibility, and provide critical resources to analyze texts that describe ambivalent ecological worlds. An excellent example of how to view the cli-fi in posthuman ecofeminist analysis, then, is their opportunities to unsettle anthropocentric storytelling, with the aim of revealing a sense of ethical relationality.

Climate anxiety is the emotional and psychological distress faced by cognition of ecological degradation and the uncertainty of the future. This emotional experience has been captured by the term of solastalgia that was introduced by Albrecht et al. (2007) as the suffering of environmental transformation within the perceived world of his/her own life. Identifying climate anxiety as a cultural impact allows researchers to investigate how stories make emotional reactions to the disruption of the environment, not as a personal pathology but as phenomena of shared affects where socio cultural contexts influence phenomena. Recent affect and literary work underscores the idea that the narrative techniques of climate fiction often preempt affect of loss, fear and uncertainty, thus implicating readers in experiences of embodiment of climate crisis and cementing the ethic and political practices of climate anxiety (Smith, 2022).

*The New Wilderness* (2020) by Diane Cook is the canonical representation of the modern cli-fi which presupposes forthcoming ecological decline, fragility of humanity, and relationship survivability. The concern of the narrative that centers on a motherdaughter dyad, struggling with the destruction of the environment, can be seen as a site of affective resilience and dependency on each other, and makes the novel a powerful text to be analysed with posthuman ecofeminist theory. *The New Wilderness* represents the environment as a moving power, which influences human decisions and the emotional existence, put into question traditional humanist accounts of control and domination. The novel has been viewed through the prisms of ecofeminism and posthumanity by literary critics as the nods to patriarchal and capitalist hierarchies where Cook questions the feminine and masculine roles and engages with the interdependence of the ecological system (Sarikaya Şen, 2023). All these readings demonstrate that the novel does not merely dwell on climate anxiety but reborrows human-nature relationships and that these reborkey human-nature relationships tapped into the relational and ethical priorities of Haraway.

By devising alternative eco political imaginaries, for instance proposing an eco feminist subjectivity to supmask dominance, scholars like Hatzisavvidou note that climate fiction can be approached as hosting alternative political imaginaries of eco (2024). To some extent, cli-fi in this perception serves as a tool not only of aesthetic fiction but also of imagining socio ecological change. The seminal contribution by Mehnert (2016) indicates that climate change discourses bring out the ethical issue and this makes one ponder over human responsibility to the future of the planet. The importance of cli-fi research in terms of its ability to provide a middle-ground between scientific, ethical, and cultural discourses is highlighted by interdisciplinary studies of cli-fi, according to which, narrative analysis is at the heart of the environmental humanities.

Bayes and Abbasi (2025) also note that cli-fi has the power to reverse colonial and patriarchal paradigms, not only by giving voice to marginalized groups but also by emphasizing a variety of ecological experiences. This is in line with wider-ranging environmental humanities

literature that demands providing Global South and Indigenous voice in climatic narratives, opening up conceptions of ecological crisis and cultural accountability. Such intersectional and decolonial views make reading cli-fi enriching by predetermining various manifestations of socio ecological vulnerability and strength, and calling to critical readings of climate that focus on structural inequity, and interrogate Western hegemonic discourses of climate.

To examine climate fiction, scholars are progressively emphasizing the importance of considering ecofeminist and posthumanist concepts. The kinds of integrative methods, exemplified by such ways of narration, are destabilizing of hierarchies, non-human agency and pre-emptive of ethical relationality. The posthuman ecofeminist perspective of Haraway, specifically, allows better understanding of how climate fiction, in particular, can help depicting distributed agency and ethical interdependencies, to provide a solid theoretical framework to examine narrative tactics that tap into climate anxiety and ecological relationality.

The literature demonstrates that climate fiction is an important narrative mode used to look at the ecological crisis, human vulnerability and moral interdependency. Nevertheless, the lack of scholarly work that specifically examines how the posthuman ecofeminist theory can inform climate anxiety, non-human agency and gendered survival in cli-fi literature (as seen in *The New Wilderness*) is a gap that exists in the scholarship. This paper fills this gap by incorporating ecofeminist and posthuman insights to offer a holistic approach to the analysis of the way Diane Cook promises climate anxiety and ecological relationality through a lens of Haraway informed.

### **Research Methodology**

The current research design is a qualitative study that relies on textual analysis driven by the paper *The New Wilderness* (2020) by Diane Cook with a posthuman ecofeminist perspective. This analysis is interpretative and attempts to interpret what the novel conveys about women, non-human agents, and ecological undoing instead of trying to measure or quantify variables. The qualitative approach will enable a subtle exploration of climatic anxiety, survival and environmental matters ethics, and one will see how these themes are integrated into the story layout and character relationships.

The posthuman ecofeminist theory of Donna Haraway (2016) is the sole approach that guides the study as it regards relationality, distributed agency, and ethical interactions with non-human worlds. The framework proposed by Haraway critiques anthropocentric structures which emphasize the inter-relationship of humans, animals and ecosystems whilst anticipating moral obligations to non-human beings. With this lens, the dynamics of the gendered aspect of survival, the non-human agency, and the passing on of ecological knowledge across generations can be analyzed. Additionally, the theory of Haraway offers a conceptual framework to comprehend that climate anxiety is an affective and ethical issue in the Anthropocene, and that correlates human experiences of environmental pressure with larger ecological dynamics.

The data to be used in this study comes from selective textual analysis of *The New Wilderness* as the primary data. Some of the key components to be considered are the descriptions of the wilderness and the dangers it involves, the lines between the mother and daughter, descriptions of the fauna and other non-human actors, and the situations of surviving in extreme conditions. These discursive aspects are evaluated to demonstrate ecological, social, and gendered aspects of the text expressing posthuman ecofeminist theory. The secondary data will be scholarly books, peer-reviewed articles, and dissertations on posthuman ecofeminism, climate fiction (cli-fi), and climate anxiety, which will serve as both theoretical and contextualization of the analysis.

The research uses thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) which is organized into three themes that can be said to be interrelated based on the framework presented by Haraway. The initial one, gendered ecological vulnerability, dwells upon the role female characters play in negotiating environmental risks and stresses caused by climate change and identifies the intersection of gender, power, and ecological precarity. Women labor and eco-knowledge in the second strand looks at how female characters sustain the ecosystem, promote survival, and intergenerational transfer of knowledge. Climate anxiety and ethical interdependence is the third strand and explores how the narrative describes emotional, ethical, and relational reactions to the ecological collapse involving human and non-human actors.

The analysis process is comprised of a close reading of the text, in order to identify the passages related to these strands, code the passages based on their thematic relevance, group the codes into larger groups, and interpret the findings by the prism of posthuman ecofeminism. This approach helps the work to establish patterns of meaning that prove how Cook criticizes anthropocentric and patriarchal structures, presupposes the idea of ethical responsibilities with non-human agents, and relies on climate anxiety as the primary affective and ethical issue.

The study presents a narrow and strict examination of how posthuman and gendered ecological issues were addressed in *The New Wilderness* by applying the posthuman ecofeminist approach by Haraway. The methodology enables a thorough perception, of how the narrative demonstrates human-non-human interdependencies, ethical obligations, and the affective aspects of climate anxiety, to be part of the wider discourse of climate fiction and the environmental fiction in the Anthropocene.

### **Data Analysis**

*The New Wilderness* by Diane Cook (2020) is a representation of contemporary climate fiction (cli-fi) that combines ecological collapse, affective experience, and relational survival in a posthuman ecofeminist paradigm. This paper, through close textual reading of some of the crucial passages, will define the narrative strategies that Cook uses to highlight the constrain of human and non-human agencies, morality of relationality and gendered aspects of existence in environmental precarity. The three interconnecting strands include gendered ecological vulnerability, relational survival and intergenerational knowledge as a trait of ethical and affective engagement, which serve to structure the analysis.

### **Gendered Ecological Vulnerability**

Agnes and her experiences in the wilderness provide the prefiguration of the gendered aspects of ecological vulnerability. Her relations with Jake in the high desert show not only the physical vulnerability of the location, but the affective dangers of human relations in times of stress.

***“Agnes pulled her legs up into a knot. She toppled, sank, laughed. She splashed her hands to right herself.”*** Her instability is embodied in her negotiation, and this is captured in a story.

The emotional and relational uncertainty Agnes feels in the world where the collapse of ecology upsets classical standards of safety and care is reflected in this physical vulnerability.

The vulnerability of Agnes is also mediated by the love of her mother, Bea. The article shows how the role of maternal care is both an emotional and environmental stabilizer:

***“Her mother’s body quickly warmed the bed; then the heat melted Agnes and she curled herself into her mother. She had missed this feeling.”*** The warmth of the body of Bea and the process of

cuddling in her remind us of a multisensory and affective recovery, underlining that it is not only the ability to overcome the dangers posed by the environment, but also the ability to sustain a relationship (as well as emotional) force. This corresponds to posthuman ecofeminist theory, which assumes that human survival and moral agency is dispersed in networks of relationality that extend to both other humans and more-than-human actors.

Gendered labor of survival is more than emotional care to practical ecological knowledge. Bea teaches essential survival tactics, guided by experience and watching of non-human actors.



Agnes suggests, *“If we follow the animals, they’ll show us where the water is,”* and her mother responds with recognition, *“That’s a good idea, sweetheart... But we’ve got a solid plan here we’re going to follow.”* Although Bea first of all redirects Agnes to keep on the track of the laid down plan, her recognition of the child experience in the form of its ability to see signifies an openness to distributed agency and ecological sensibility. This dynamic provides a medium through which female characters mediate the environmental knowledge and thus illustrates the fact that gendered survival in cli-fi is not only viable but also based on relationships and ethical principles.

The element of Bea managing her survival is also a signal to how women negotiate the demands of the structural provisions of the ecological systems and the societal systems on survival. She reflects on her City life, thinking of scarcity and adaptation: *“I drank a little, honey. It’s really too expensive to drink it all the time... Cold, creamy. Like cold spring water and animal fat.”* This memory is full of both material survival tactics and emotional intelligence as Bea measures out her revelations so that they do not overwhelm Agnes. In this case, the story prefigures the production of knowledge and affective care through women work, and places ecological frailty as gendered and mediated by social structures.

### **Relational Survival and Intergenerational Knowledge**

The novel of Cook highlights how the knowledge of survival can be passed down through embodied, affective and narrative means. This dynamic is especially demonstrated in the underwater sequence: *“Her mother dropped too and looked at Agnes trying hard to stay upright with the teacup in her hand. She smiled and pointed down, down, down and launched herself deeper. Agnes surfaced to get more air and then followed her mother.”* The text reveals that the survival skills are not only cognitive, but also vivid, with participation of the senses and relationship with other people. Water is an ecological element of interdependence and a social component of posthuman relationality.

The trying to hold on to the hair of her mother at a distance caused by the water helps to underline the role of the relational ties as the key to survival as the central events in the novel: *“She tried again, and her mother dodged her hand and smiled... She scowled back at Agnes. But then her face turned panicked and she yanked Agnes to her, grabbed her by the waist, kicked her up to the surface.”* As depicted within the story, relational care is comprised of guidance and protection whereby the mother is used as an ethical and ecological anchor within a confusing environment. Such interactions are comprehended as evidence of the distributed nature of agency in posthuman ecofeminist analysis, where survival is constructed out of human and environmental networks.

Another channel of intergenerational knowledge is the mother-daughter dyad. Memories of the City and the wilderness are remembered by Bea, uniting the ecological situation of the past and present: *“Somewhere in her deepest memory, she recalled that... the only way to feel better was to crawl into her mother’s bed. To learn anything about the world, about life, or about her, Agnes had to nestle alongside her.”* In this case, Cook describes knowledge as embodied and relational; the knowledge is passed on by touch, proximity, and affective experience, which strengthens the posthuman ecofeminist views of relationality and distributed agency.

Furthermore, the mother enables not only ethical but also practical interaction with the agents that are not humans. The idea Agnes has about trailing animals as the way to find water reflects the new ecological literacy: *“If we follow the animals, they’ll show us where the water is.”* Even though Bea does redirect her at first, the story confirms what Agnes has observed and shows that ecological knowledge is co-created between human and non-human entities. This narrative stresses the fact that the survival of generations through intergenerational attunement to social and ecological networks places relational and affective competence at the core of managing climate-induced precarity.



### Climate Anxiety as Ethical and Affective Engagement

Agnes experiences in the wilderness are reflective of the affective aspects of climate anxiety. The story locates emotional reactions to ecological uncertainty within the context of individual and collective phenomena. The sequence in the dry lakebed highlights the destabilization of knowledge in the environment: ***“It was an enormous lake, or had been at one time. Now it was just a lakebed. No, a former lakebed... On the map it was a quenching bright blue.”*** Agnes and the Community face the contradiction between expectation and reality that points to the embodied experience of a lost ecology. The anxiety that is provoked by the uncertainty of the environment is reflected in the exhaustion, dehydration, and disorientation, which denote the cultural and affective anguish of solastalgia.

In relation to climate anxiety, this text portrays it as being relational and ethical. Bea is a knowledgeable also affective sensitive leader: ***“She had never really wanted to be here in the Wilderness. Agnes knew that. But her mother became stern, scary. ‘No,’ she snapped. ‘We can never go back.’”*** The sternness is a strategic intervention, shaping not only physical survival but also ethical decision-making, reflecting the relational responsibilities embedded in ecological awareness. Agnes’ subsequent reflection, ***“But if we have to. Where else would we go? Her mother paused... ‘I would take us to the Private Lands,’”*** demonstrates how relational trust mitigates anxiety, integrating ethical foresight with affective reassurance.

Climate anxiety also emerges through embodied and multisensory perception. In the swimming sequence, Agnes experiences both fear and awe: ***“She looked across at her mother and saw the artery at her throat pulsing. With each thrum in her mother’s neck, she heard a thrum in her ears... The only sound beneath the water was the beating of their own hearts together.”*** The story makes ecological stress a living expression, in which the human body finds sympathetic response to the environment and relational signals. In this case, Cook presents climate anxiety not as the individual feeling, but as a locus of moral and interpersonal awareness, emphasizing the ethical value of paying special attention to other humans and non-human agents.

### Posthuman Agency and Non-Human Interactions

*The New Wilderness* involves non-human agents that are active participants that manipulate the results of survival and the movement of the plot. The environment is an engaged partner and not background music. As an example, as the Community passes the Basin, the text stresses environmental directions and restrictions: ***“They marched them back into those high desert places where they’d spent so many years... Where they walked them, the game was scarce. And so was shade. It was hard to imagine the route choice wasn’t intentionally cruel.”*** The mediation of the environment by means of the Rangers offers control over human behavior and is an example of distributed agency encompassing humans, non-humans, and ecological systems.

The fact that non-human guidance is recognized by Agnes confirms posthumanist thinking: ***“We should just follow the animals. They’ll show us where the water is.”*** The assumption of anthropocentrism is destabilized by the ascribed heuristic value of non-human agents, Cook foreshadows the moral imperative to care about non-human networks. This is coherent with Haraway’s (2016) posthuman ecofeminist assertion that agency is decentralized among human and more-than-human beings, and that ethical practice is achieving a quality of care toward all players in eco-networks.

### Embodiment and Sensory Engagement

The novel representation of ecological relationality is focused on embodiment and sensory perception. Human and environmental interactions are negotiated in a multisensory way in Agnes underwater experience: ***“The weight from the water above and around her kept Agnes upright and allowed her occasional moments to sit and sip without needing her arms to stay***

*under.*” The form is transformed into a place of study, amalgamation, and spiritual involvement. The ethical and ecological awareness is mediated by sensory immersion, through touch, sight, and proprioception, and the posthuman ecofeminist frameworks can help realize the relational ethics of the embodied experience.

### **Intersections of Gender, Emotion, and Ecology**

The ecological and emotional reality is indivisible with gendered experience in the novel by Cook. The vulnerability of Agnes, her relational attentiveness, and emotional intensity are seen through the prism of her young female character and her struggle with environmental anxiety: *“She felt youngest again... To learn anything about the world... Agnes had to nestle alongside her [mother].”* The centralized female labor, relationship ethics and intergenerational knowledge of the mother daughter dyad may just be vital in determining the coping and sustaining of emotions as well as ecological literacy.

In addition, the ecological understanding cannot be separated and combined with the affective element. Agnes desires, attention and fear are (intertwined) with her descriptions of the surrounding world, crying out that gendered perception and relationships care were necessary elements of survival. The strategic direction, emotional awareness and ecological savvy of Bea reveals a feminist ecological ethic future-grounded in relationality, ethical responsibility and care as a mode of negotiating climate-induced precarity.

By examining the chosen textual snippets, *The New Wilderness* is introduced as a posthuman ecofeminist cli-fi novel, which predicts distributed agency in the future. Non-human agents are not just some background elements, but they actively influence strategies of survival and events of the narrative. The wilderness, the animals and the environmental signs, are part of the process of guiding the Community movements and decisions, showing that the agency is decentralized among both humans and the actors, more-than-humans. Such a decentering of the human subject coincides with posthuman ecofeminist values in that issues of ethics and efficiency of relating to the non-human world are emphasized.

Gendered relationality, steering the focus of the novel, is characterized by the role of female characters in relationship mediation and the influence they have on localising, and on the sustainability of environments. Bea is practical and emotional in her guidance, an aspect that shows the hard work having to survive in a crumbling system of the ecological environment. How she treats Agnes reveals that it is not exclusive skills but also relationships, as well as intergenerational learning and skills in building trust, which are needed to survive. Through foregrounding female experience, the narrative presented by Cook associates ecological competence with relational and gendered networks with focus on the interrelationships between care, survival and the environmental literacy.

Besides, *The New Wilderness* portrays climate anxiety as moral and emotive. The uncertainty surrounding environmental ecology, in the emotional feelings of the characters toward it, fear, frustration, and longing, influences the morality in their actions and the connections established among them. The feeling of worry and longing, especially upon communication with her mother, to which Agnes can be exposed, is an example of the way affective states connect deeply with the survival tactics. Such a combination of feeling and morality makes climate anxiety not a psychological response, but a socially and ecologically grounded dynamic that informs behavior and promotes an awareness of both human and non-human beings.

The story continues to incorporate embodiment and sensorial immersion as the key strategies of knowing the relationality of the environment. The experiences underwater, as well as the encounters with the wilderness, of Agnes show that conventional multisensory involvement is the mediator of ethical, relational and ecological insights. The direct bodily immersion in the environment enables characters to experience relationships among each other, deciphering environmental signals and working in complicated ecological settings. To place the body,

affect, and ecological knowledge as inseparable, which Cook focuses on, she focuses on the inseparability of body, affect and ecological knowledge within the climate survival context. Lastly, through the novel, anthropocentric hierarchies are also challenged by inciting human preeminence over nature. Survival is not much given as the subjugation of the wilderness but in unity with it, and before relational morality exists the care, attention and co-survival. *The New Wilderness* has shown the ability of cli-fi to express relational perseverance, moral accountability, and climate apprehensions with a lively and empathically rich portrayal by combining ecofeminist and posthumanist insights. The relationships between mother and daughter, non-human agency and embodied experience combined to show how a survival during Anthropocene is co-constituted by human and more-than-human networks, which can be utilized to exemplify the ethical practice of addressing environmental crises in literature.

### Conclusion

*The New Wilderness* by Diane Cook is only an illustration of how modern cli-fi can express complicated ecological and relational issues in a posthuman ecofeminist position. It is shown through textual analysis that the novel foreshadows distributed agency, making animals, landscapes, and other non-human agents dynamic and influential in determining the narrative outcome and human survival tactics. The mediation of environmental knowledge and relational resilience through feminized characters, especially those of Bea and Agnes, discloses the gendered aspects of survivability in environmentally risky situations.

Climate anxiety is another affective and ethical reaction to environmental uncertainty brought out in the narrative. The emotional expressions, fear, longing, and grief cannot be separated with practical and survival contents, explaining the constructions of human and non-human entanglement in forming ethical action. Embodiment and sensory involvement further deepens relational and ecological perception, emphasizing the necessity to use multisensory methods of perception of the world as a method of surviving ethically and passing experience to the next generation.

Lastly, *The New Wilderness* disrupts anthropocentric hierarchies by essentially describing survival as interdependent and not dominative. By focusing on relationships-based networks, providing care and attention, the novel presents a perspective on the ecological interdependence and moral co-survival which accuses the classical humanistic accounts which posit a person as central in stories. The current study supports the view that when considered through posthuman ecofeminist lenses, cli-fi is able to help readers see the affective, ethical and ecological aspects of the Anthropocene in a complex way and offers an alternative, more detailed picture of how human-more-than-human relationships change under climatic conditions.

### References

- Alaimo, S. (2016). *Exposed: Environmental politics and pleasures in posthuman times*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Albrecht, G., Sartore, G. M., Connor, L., Higginbotham, N., Freeman, S., Kelly, B., ... & Pollard, G. (2007). Solastalgia: The distress caused by environmental change. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 15(S1), S95–S98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10398560701701288>
- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke University Press.
- Bayes, T., & Abbasi, R. (2025). Emotional ecologies in contemporary climate fiction. *Journal of Environmental Humanities*, 17(2), 45–67.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Cook, D. (2020). *The New Wilderness*. Simon & Schuster.

- Fox, N., & Alldred, P. (2019). *The SAGE handbook of social research methods*. SAGE Publications.
- Gaard, G. (2011). Ecofeminism and climate change. In R. P. Peet & M. Watts (Eds.), *Environmental justice and sustainability* (pp. 35–56). Routledge.
- Haraway, D. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.
- Hashmi, S., & Tariq, N. (2025). Technological optimism and speculative futures in climate fiction. *Global Literary Studies*, 18(3), 57–79.
- Hatzisavvidou, S. (2024). Imagining eco-political futures: Ecofeminist subjectivities in contemporary climate fiction. *Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies*, 6(1), 112–130.
- Howarth, S., & Richardson, T. (2015). Gender, environment and policy: Ecofeminist perspectives. *Environmental Politics*, 24(3), 423–441. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2015.1016547>
- Johns Putra, K. (2016). Climate fiction: Narrating climate change in literature. *Green Humanities Review*, 8(1), 15–32.
- Mehnert, F. (2016). Climate change and ethical responsibility in literature. *Environmental Humanities*, 7(2), 75–98.
- Sarikaya Şen, B. (2023). Ecofeminist dystopia and relationality in climate fiction. *Literary Ecocriticism*, 12(4), 78–95.
- Sarwar, F. (2025). Women protagonists in speculative fiction and posthuman ethics. *Journal of Contemporary Literature*, 19(1), 102–119.
- Smith, L. (2022). Affective engagements with climate anxiety in literature. *EcoCritical Studies*, 14(2), 88–106.