

ANTHROPOGENIC WORLDS OF TRANSFORMATION AND DESTRUCTION: DORIS LESSING'S CLIMATE FICTION DUOLOGY

Kübra Baysal

Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University
ORCID: 0000-0003-0476-4887

INTRODUCTION

Destroyed and scorched with flash floods, fire, drought, famine and unknown diseases, the micro land of Ifrik (Africa) in *Mara and Dann: An Adventure and The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter, Griot, and the Snow Dog*¹ represents the macro-environmental and topographical transformations in the world. The Earth is covered with ice aside from South Imrik (South America) and Yerrup (Europe) which are flooded by the melting ice. The world is struggling with different kinds of disasters in northern and southern hemispheres as a reflection of what Lessing predicted for the future of the real world that she was living in. Through the horrendous picture of Ifrik, the novel recounts the helplessness of the humans in the face of disasters. As induced in the name of civilisation since the dawn of humanity through industrialisation, modern agriculture, modernisation, and technology; in other words, the manifestation of the Anthropocene, the human interference reveals itself with profound impact.

¹ *Mara and Dann: An Adventure* will be referred to as *Mara and Dann*, and *The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter, Griot, and the Snow Dog* as *General Dann*. References to *General Dann* will be indicated with the name of the novel since its e-book version has no page or chapter numbers.

Picturing the horrific state of the surviving human beings and the bizarre changes in the nonhuman nature, *Mara and Dann* and *General Dann* can be taken as examples of Anthropocene fiction “around the turn of the millennium”² although this phenomenon has become popular in the twenty-first century. Anthropocene fiction which is subsumed by climate change fiction (cli-fi) “successfully refigure[s] the historical relationship between fiction and truth-telling: alter assumptions of how humans relate to place; reimagine social and political organization; or rearticulate the global, mechanized, consumer economies of the [twentieth and] twenty-first century”³. Discussing ecological issues and environmentalism have been closely linked with the apocalypse talks, which has become a tradition in cli-fi as pioneered by Rachel Carson’s environmental science book, *Silent Spring* (1962). In this regard, cli-fi functions as the reverberation of the real-life through depictions of “floods, fires, storms, droughts, melting ice and cold spells”⁴.

Introduced by Dan Bloom in 2007, cli-fi is a new literary phenomenon which can be observed in all forms of art and literature. In Bloom’s words, “[a]s the 20th century began to morph into the 21st century in the late 1990s, the global landscape of cultural production started to teem with a cornucopia of fictional ‘cli-fi’ texts in print and on cinema and TV screens, engaging with the local and global impact of man-made global warming”⁵. Cli-fi, which is predominantly seen in the novel genre in popular literature, focuses on the environmental conditions in fictional worlds, conveys specific messages to humanity and governments to change course and take action to slow down the anthropogenic changes on Earth. As part of literature, it presents a platform where “negative potentialities of the world”⁶ are discussed. As such, it builds “a connection between the reader and characters immersed in disastrous global warming” and through this “readers could immediately experience climate change as a threat to their centers of felt value”⁷. Gaining momentum since the 2010s, cli-fi succeeds in raising awareness in people about the environment and is more effective than statistics or numbers. Based on empirical studies, it is deduced that cli-fi readers are “younger, more liberal, and more concerned about climate change than nonreaders of climate fiction”⁸. Hence, climate fiction holds a key position to change the mind-sets of humankind.

Tackling severe environmental problems in a new light, some popular cli-fi novels aside from Doris Lessing’s “Ifrik” novels, *Mara and Dann* (1999) and its short sequel *General Dann* (2005) are Maggie Gee’s *The Ice People* (1998), and Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy: *Oryx and Crake* (2004), *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and *MaddAddam* (2013).⁹ In this respect, as all these climate fiction novels aptly discuss, anthropocentric ways and greed of humankind not only bring forth natural destruction but also put the lives of human beings at risk by creating dystopian landscapes either ruled by dis-functioning anthropocentric governments/organisa-

² A. Trexler, *Anthropocene Fictions: Novel in a Time of Climate Change*, London, 2015, p. 8.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

⁴ M. Grimbeek, *Margaret Atwood’s Environmentalism Apocalypse and Satire in the MaddAddam Trilogy*, PhD Dissertation, Karlstad, 2017, p. 17.

⁵ D. Bloom, “Cli-fi Report Global” (2017), <http://cli-fi.net/index.html> [access: 15.05.2023].

⁶ V.B. Yılmaz, *Mysticism in Aldous Huxley’s “Time Must Have a Stop” and Peyami Safa’s “Matmazel Noraliya’nın Koltuğu”*, “Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Researches”, 19, 41 (2018), p. 72.

⁷ Trexler, *Anthropocene Fictions...*, p. 76.

⁸ M. Schneider-Mayerson, *The Influence of Climate Fiction: An Empirical Survey of Readers*, “Environmental Humanities”, 10, 2 (2018), p. 478.

⁹ A. Johns-Putra, *Care, Gender, and the Climate-Changed Future: Maggie Gee’s “The Ice People”*, in: *Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction*, eds. G. Caravan, K.S. Robinson, Middletown, 2014, p. 127.

tions or devoid of any governance leaving people in complete chaos and insecurity. Written by established novelists, namely Doris Lessing, Maggie Gee, Jeanette Winterson and Margaret Atwood, these novels are also called the “highbrow or literary climate change fiction”¹⁰ for being more artfully conscious and coherent when compared to other cli-fi examples.

I. DORIS LESSING’S CLIMATE FICTION DUOLOGY

Mara and Dann tells the story of two siblings who migrate from the south to the north of Ifrik to survive from unnatural disasters, discover their royal roots and settle in the north with their loved ones at the end. *General Dann* narrates Dann’s adventures after Mara’s death and the emotional and environmental challenges he is set to face as he takes the role of leadership to save the library from the floods and fight the ill-intentioned groups in his community. The odyssey ends with the restored order, eco-consciousness, and hope for a better future. The novels are both set in Ifrik (Africa) in the distant future although the proximity of the disasters depicted in the novels is not far-fetched when the reality of the twentieth and twenty-first-century environmental conditions are considered. As Lessing remarks in the preface of *Mara and Dann*, an ice age freezes life in the northern hemisphere and changes the face of the Earth, which triggers the uncontrollable chain of environmental disasters. In line with this, she recalls the fact that regardless of the greatness of human civilisation, it is eventually the natural disasters that define the path for survival and the direction of escape towards more habitable climates as it happened in the history of humankind several times:

An Ice Age covers all the northern hemisphere ... thousands of years in the future, our descendants might be saying, ‘12,000-year interval between one thrust of the Ice Age and the next, there flourished a whole story of human development, from savagery and barbarism to high culture [Holocene]’ – and all our civilisations and languages, and cities and skills and inventions, our farms and gardens and forests, and the birds and the beasts we try so hard to protect against our depredations, will amount to a sentence or paragraph in a long history¹¹.

Mara and Dann is an attempt to imagine what some of the consequences might be when ice returns and life must retreat to the middle and southern latitudes. Our past experiences help to picture the future. During the hardest of previous periods of ice, the Mediterranean was dry. During warmer intervals, when the ice withdrew for a while, the Neanderthals returned from exile in the south to take up life again in their still chilly valleys¹².

In other words, the grand modern civilisation, even with its technology and advancement, is liable to annihilation and collapse through major environmental disasters such as the arrival of an ice age. Even though humankind has displayed tremendous progress from the beginning to the end of the Holocene, and in the whole of the Anthropocene up to the twenty-first century, they are in constant danger of extinction as proved with the example of the first human beings and all extinct nonhuman animals in natural history. This said, the novelists construct nightmarish ice age scenarios that embody “scientific predictions” and a realistic

¹⁰ A. Johns-Putra, *Climate Change in Literature and Literary Studies: From Cli-fi, Climate Change Theater and Ecopoetry to Ecocriticism and Climate Change Criticism*, “WIREs Climate Change”, 7, 2 (2016), p. 3.

¹¹ D. Lessing, *Mara and Dann: An Adventure*, London, 1999, p. xii.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. xiii.

warning, for instance: in “Maggie Gee’s *The Ice People* and Doris Lessing’s *Mara and Dann*, the very issue of human responsibility for the climate is superseded when anthropogenic global warming is replaced by a new ice age, leading to the collapse of European civilization”¹³. To put it in another way, the novelists place the scientific facts and their own observations into the plot and convey them through the impacting image of ruined environs presented in their fiction. They tackle the prospect that our world may “one day degenerate into something resembling a vacant lot, where crows and rats scuttle among weeds, preying on each other. If it comes to that, [the question would be] at what point would things have gone so far that, for all our vaunted superior intelligence, we’re not among the hardy survivors?”¹⁴ Likewise, Lessing demonstrates the outcomes of a possible ice age caused by human interference into nature, the state of the survivor human beings and their migration towards other parts of the world in search of basic needs of water, food, and mild temperatures.

I. I. MARA AND DANN

Mara and Dann begins with the emotive state of the siblings, who experience from their early ages, the hard way of life in a transforming landscape. Their first appearance is as children of seven and four years of age taken from the barren town of Rustam at the south bottom of Ifrik. They are entrusted to an old lady, Daima, in the Rock Village that is already turning into a perilous desert like Rustam¹⁵. They are indeed the last of the Royal House which explains why evil-intentioned people are after them. They are forced to change their real names, Shahana and Shahmand, into Mara and Dann, and forget everything about their real identities for years¹⁶. Thus, the novel makes an introduction to the associable survival story of humans through the focal point of Mara and Dann amongst implacable environmental transformations of drought, fire, and flash flood, changing the topography of Ifrik. They grow up in a rough environment that matures them fast, puts them into harm’s way and makes them encounter “all kinds of primitive peoples who live in very poor conditions”¹⁷.

Mara, Dann, and Daima are the Mahondis, or the People, who were “the predominant people all over Ifrik” once¹⁸ and the descendants of the Modern people, or the Europeans. Dann explains to Mara the history of the People and modern civilisation, and he finds the People/Mahondis and their knowledge of directions and maps fascinating¹⁹. The children remain with Daima for six years during which they learn to live with the Rock People, giant water dragons and stingers, flash floods, extreme drought, and the barrenness of the village. In the sixth year, Dann runs away with two men. Five more years pass, and Mara takes care of everything alone, tries to protect both herself and Daima from the scorpions and lizards that come at night²⁰. Everyone else migrated up north and the wildfire is approaching²¹. Dann

¹³ Trexler, *Anthropocene Fictions...*, p. 30.

¹⁴ A. Weisman, *The World without Us*, London, 2007, p. 3.

¹⁵ Lessing, *Mara and Dann...*, p. 5.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 369.

¹⁷ N.R. Aldeeb, *Ecofeminism in Doris Lessing’s “Mara and Dann: An Adventure”*, “AWEJ for Translation & Literary Studies”, 1, 3 (2017), p. 80.

¹⁸ Lessing, *Mara and Dann...*, p. 287.

¹⁹ Lessing, *Mara and Dann...*, p. 88.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 64.

returns to Rock village to save Mara. Daima is already dead, and they escape from the scorched village just in time:

When the fire had passed over the plains, burning up everything, even the earth in some places, would the grass grow again? If not, the insect cities would die, their towers would stand dead and empty, and then... there would be just dry earth everywhere, and the dust clouds would blow about and slowly the Rock Village would be filled with dust and sand²².

In this respect, fire is the third stage (flash flood, drought, and fire) in the cycle of anthropogenic devastation of Ifrik after the ice age. With this, Mara and Dann become just another pair of climate refugees²³ with little food and water, which is how their adventure begins, during which they encounter different races of people. When they trespass the borders of Chelops in the north, they get arrested for contaminating the water. However, they are later pardoned by Juba, the magistrate, and are taken inside the city to serve the Hadrons, the people who look like the Rock People but are well-fed²⁴. In this city, there is an anthropocentric class system: at the top are the Hadrons, the builders of cities including Hadron and Chelops, and then there are the Mahondis they enslaved in the past to be their servants. Likewise, they are extravagant and hypocritical specimens of the *anthropos* wasting food, and water, wearing luxury clothes and jewels for their own comfort and yet ironically, punishing those wasting or contaminating water in Chelops with death sentences. The water is “low in reservoirs,” and people are restless, ready for mutiny for the remaining sources, following the example of other towns in the south²⁵. Mara is disgusted with the gluttonous look of the Hadrons and the way they gaze at her as she is introduced to them as the new girl. They stare at her disconcertedly in a sleepy manner:

Mara even imagined such ugliness, such disgustingness, such beasts of men. The bulging flesh reminded her of the big lizards and dragons ... Each of these beast-men leaned his elbows on a cushion, and they all stared and dreamed, and the air was sickly sweet. There were all kinds of pipes and tubes set out, and some Hadrons used these, but others were chewing black lumps, slowly, the way Mishka and Mishkita [Daima’s milk beasts] had chewed their food – when there was any.²⁶

They have the monopoly of power in Chelops as they became rich through the poppy trade and other crimes that they carried on with the River Towns. Similarly, greed for power as part of anthropocentric philosophy, and survival instincts rule the people in Ifrik regardless of their region or class. Mara realises the hypocrisy of humans when she gets a chance to study the behaviours of Felix and Felissa, the servants in the royal palace that originally belongs to her and Dann. She sadly thinks “it’s the same, wherever you see it, the Hadrons, [Mahondis] or the Hennes, and – did she remember something of the sort in her own family, from her early childhood? Power. The ruthlessness, just hidden by smiles and courtesies. A cold-

²² *Ibidem*, p. 86.

²³ “Climate refugee” is “someone *displaced* against his or her volition because of climate change in, say, rural farming capacity or rising waters along a seacoast or around an island. ... But it could also be someone displaced by a more rapid, sudden-onset catastrophe associated with climate change” (G. White, *Environmental Refugees*, in: *Handbook on Migration and Security*, ed. P. Bourbeau, Cheltenham, 2017, p. 180; emphasis original).

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 135.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 168, 170.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 144.

ness...²⁷ She is discontent with the anthropocentric mindset, power struggle and expectations of the royal palace, so she leaves the palace with Dann to join their lovers in a farmhouse by the Western Sea (Pacific Ocean).

From the same perspective, the people in Chelops, Hadrons and Mahondis are content with their lives and complacent with what is happening in the nonhuman environment in the south: the cycle of disasters moving quickly up north²⁸. This situation reflects the twentieth-century urbanites and the practice of big corporations that deny the existence of the Anthropocene which encompasses the whole chain of environmental transformations and destruction including global warming, natural disasters and extinction of the nonhuman flora and fauna until it is too late to reverse the situation back to normal. At this point, the bitter reality of the Anthropocene is too hard to conceive in the first place. *Homo sapiens* as a species tends to show reluctance in accepting the worst-case scenarios for the future of the world because of their “survival instincts, [which has] honed over eons”²⁹. Likewise, as they have been living through a young age of the Earth, “through the infancy of this new and extraordinary phase of our planet’s history,” the Anthropocene, which is likely to have more consequences than predicted in the long term,³⁰ they are inclined to hold onto ignorance about current environmental and geological transformations. Likewise, the novel as a cli-fi work can be interpreted to demonstrate the human impact in deep time that surpasses past and modern civilisations and extends to future generation,³¹ and discusses “how humans’ actions affect more than just them and determine the planet’s past, present and future”³². To illustrate, Mara and Dann study the modern inventions and objects in the museum that were in practice many years ago and determined the destiny of the future generation. Therefore, the reality of the Anthropocene cannot be flushed into the realm of “Away,” a term by Timothy Morton³³ which symbolises human arrogance and pride because “Away” is the hyperspace where human beings tend to dump anything they desire to rid themselves of, among which is the reality of the climate change and anthropogenic transformation of the nonhuman environment. Thus, the Mahondi kin remains in Chelops since they put all worries “Away”.

As a solution for counteracting complacency of the *anthropos*, the discourse of “a geo-humanities project” can be introduced connecting earth science studies with the humanities, namely “the critical and post-colonial voices that have been pushed back against imperial mappings of the world”³⁴. Facing death would be yet another solution to understand the urgency of the Anthropocene and the need to slow down its pace through the harrowing picture of the fictive worlds of havoc. In this perspective, Mara, and Dann, and other humans, encounter dead or dying bodies each day and try to live in ravaged *environs*, which underli-

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 370.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 185.

²⁹ Weisman, *The World...*, p. 4.

³⁰ J. Zalasiewicz, *The Extraordinary Strata of the Anthropocene*, in: *Environmental Humanities*, eds. S. Oppermann, S. Iovino, London, 2017, p. 129.

³¹ R. Sykes, A. Keeble, D. Cordle, J. Scott, D. De Cristofaro, D. King, A. Rowcroft, N. Srivastava, *Contemporary Studies Network Roundtable: Responding to Robert Macfarlane’s „Generation Anthropocene”*, “Open Library of Humanities”, 3 (1), 5 (2017), p. 7.

³² H. Kaya, *An Ecocritical Approach to „The Book of Dede Korkut and Beowulf”*, “Milli Folklor”, 17, 130 (2021), p. 33.

³³ T. Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World*, Minneapolis and London, 2013 (ebook), p. 32.

³⁴ M. Wark, *Molecular Red: Theory for the Anthropocene*, London, 2015.

nes the presence of death and calls forth Mara's eco-consciousness. While she is studying the rooms in the museum in the centre that preserved precious knowledge about human history, modern artefacts, and inventions, she feels frustrated and helpless about the incorrigibly anthropocentric way of modern *anthropos*:

There was a recklessness about the ways they used their soil and their water. These were peoples who had no interest in the results of their actions. They killed out the animals. They poisoned the fish in the sea. They cut down forests, so that country after country, once forested, became desert or arid. They spoiled everything they touched. There was probably something wrong with their brains. There are many historians who believe that these ancients richly deserved the punishment of the Ice³⁵.

Mara's words explain the phases and the consequences of the Anthropocene aptly. Therefore, as in Mara's case, "[t]o face death is . . . , paradoxically, not to die but to view life differently. By switching from a mode of destruction to one of acknowledging the reality of the world and one's own finitude, life emerges as a reconstructive project"³⁶. Likewise, through the distinct description of natural disasters that put the people of Ifrik in a helpless situation through the constant threat of death, human beings are reminded of the critical condition of their world: "[t]hese times called the Anthropocene are times of multispecies, including human, urgency: of great mass death and extinction; of onrushing disasters"³⁷. The permanent threat of death brings along a paradigm shift towards a more eco-centred perspective in the late twentieth century.

In the following parts of the novel, Mara and Dann are taken hostage by General Shabis and Mara tells him all about her adventures: she left Chelops with Dann. The siblings travelled through the River Towns and encountered masses of dead bodies on the river being eaten by dragons. Realising she is pregnant; Mara got an abortion there with the help of some women although babies are incredibly precious in the new world. Mara observed personally in Chelops that women always tried to get pregnant, but they failed. Likewise, men like Juba were allowed to take another woman³⁸ if their wives could not conceive as his wife, Ida explained: "... something seems to have happened to our eggs; but whether it is the women's eggs or the men's eggs, there is no way of knowing"³⁹. Finally, Mara and Dann are abducted by Shabis' men for the breeding programme, but later become soldiers and companions. At this point, parallel to the conditions depicted in the novel, it is apt to mention that infertility is becoming a serious problem the humankind faces with the global warming as part of the Anthropocene in the twenty-first century. Research conducted by UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability puts forth that "hot weather reduces chances of getting pregnant – and the problem is expected to get worse because of global warming,"⁴⁰ which might explain why pregnancy is a rare condition and babies are highly cherished in the world of *Mara and Dann* and *General Dann*.

³⁵ Lessing, *Mara and Dann*, p. 381.

³⁶ L. Squire, *The Thoughts in our Head: A World*, "Alluvium", 3, 1 (2014).

³⁷ D. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Anthropocene*, Durham and London, 2016, p. 35.

³⁸ Lessing, *Mara and Dann*, p. 155.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 146.

⁴⁰ D. Colgan, *Climate Change Is Making It Harder for Couples to Conceive*, "UCLA Institute of Environment and Sustainability" (7.05.2018), <https://www.ioes.ucla.edu/article/climate-change-is-making-it-harder-for-couples-to-conceive/> [access: 30.08.2021].

From Mara and Shabis's informative conversations, it is also understood that the span of life has also shortened along with the changing climate. People lived longer in the past, which is not the case anymore⁴¹. Human bodies change along with the transformed nonhuman environment. After years-long adventures and mishaps, Mara and Dann finally leave Shabis's camp and resume their travel to the north to find their palace in the Centre. After they meet Felix and Felizza, their royal servants in the Centre in the north, the truth about them is revealed that they are the last members of the Royal House lineage,⁴² and they are expected to marry and have children like the royalty of ancient Nilus did⁴³. The whole situation leaves them in a devastated emotional state.

They visit the museum in the Centre that Felix mentioned which holds all "prototypes of the inventions of the past"⁴⁴ signalling for another age of anthropocentric advancement and progress in the vicious circle of the Anthropocene that will manifest itself as another Ice Age. The Anthropocene is expected to peak as the ice in the northern hemisphere melts and floods the cities, filling up the straits for "[c]ities were as temporary as dreams. Like people," as Mara expresses⁴⁵. The Middle Sea is rising and filling the Rocky Gates, Western Ocean, Nilus, and other dry waterbeds⁴⁶. As clearly specified in the novel, it is the nonhuman environment that controls humankind, not the other way around, despite anthropocentric hubris and nonchalance. The character, Felix, likewise reveals his confident pledge to build the Western civilisation in Ifrik once again: "*The Ice comes The / Ice goes / We go / As the Ice flows ... The Ice will go / Then we shall go / Where the Ice has been / Will be fresh and green*"⁴⁷.

Furthermore, the museum provides Mara and Dann with all the knowledge they need. They discover Britain, historical documents about North Imrik (North America) and northern Yerrup and the history of humankind, from chivalry to the space-age, with all inventions and clothes aside from those that were stolen by rebels from Bilma. They see the remaining spaceships and learn that some of those were sent to space during the apocalypse with people in them and may return to the Earth in an indefinite period⁴⁸. Yet in another room, the posthuman phase of modern civilisation is demonstrated. The modern technology is so advanced that as Mara explains "[t]hese machines it is now believed destroyed their [modern people's] minds, or altered their thinking, so they became crazed"⁴⁹. It reminds of Shabis' words about technological addiction as he talks about how humans invented the guns and progressed forward at a much faster pace and in a shorter time by the modern age: "the whole world was in the grip of a technology that made them slaves"⁵⁰. All this information and evidence from past civilisations confuse and frustrate Mara and Dann, making them realise their own lack of knowledge and the misdeeds of humankind throughout history.

Mara becomes sad in the museum realising the presence of violence and war in all phases of human history exemplified with the use of bombs and bioweapons (new diseases) that wiped out masses of the population. Considering Lessing's distaste of war due to its

⁴¹ Lessing, *Mara and Dann*, p. 260.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 369.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 374.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 375.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 361.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 375.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 387–388.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 380.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 381.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 248.

tragic impact on her parents and her personal experiences, this part of the novel most possibly refers to the world wars and other warfare in the twentieth century. Modern anthropos destroyed the Earth with wars and nuclear “annihilation” along with all kinds of pollution, eradicating “thousands of species that probably aren’t coming back”⁵¹. Likewise, as in World War I, World War II had an immense environmental impact, altering the cityscapes and landscapes through human intervention⁵². There are obviously more negative effects of warfare such as “damaged and destroyed infrastructure, degraded landscapes and ecosystem services, socioeconomic disruption, refugee populations, and long-term illness”⁵³. After the world wars, warfare destruction continued with the Vietnam War (1955–1975), the Soviet war in Afghanistan (1979–1989), and the Gulf War (1991), which included oil spills and burning oil wells that contaminated the sea, the air, and the earth to a high degree, threatening the human and nonhuman life⁵⁴. All these undoubtedly had an impact on Lessing’s narrative.

Referring to the twentieth-century facts in the novel once again, Mara and Dann get ready to fly to Chelops for the first time by sky skimmer. However, they are shocked to see big-bodied and robust humans, an insect-like herd of men. These people have precisely the same facial features and try to catch Mara and Dann as they apparently find them too attractive to resist⁵⁵. It is the same situation with Hennes soldiers whom Mara sees from the boat on their way to Tundra: “They were heavy, ugly people. Their hair was a pale frizz. They were as alike as insects”⁵⁶. Hence, it is quite possible that through the depiction of these people, twentieth-century nuclear experiments, cloning and genetic mutation are referred to: “A similarly sinister note is sounded with the appearance of a tribe of look-alikes, perhaps the result of twenty-first-century cloning experiments”⁵⁷.

Furthermore, towards the end of Mara and Dann’s adventures in the first novel, they come across sick people in Chombi, a river town struggling with unknown diseases called the water/marsh sickness born of environmental degradation. Upon their arrival at the palace in the Centre, they learn that they are burdened with the huge responsibility of procreating the next generation. Refusing to carry out their duty through a marriage of incest, they opt to be with different partners in a farmhouse by the Western Sea, which provides hope with their touching survival story that has a happy ending.

1.2. GENERAL DANN

General Dann (2005) recounts the adventures of Dann after Mara’s death, with her daughter, Tamar, an abandoned child, Griot and the snow dog, Ruff. Dann is in a desolate situation after his beloved sister’s death. In his responsibility as a prince, he feels burdened with his role of leadership among the survivors in the ever-worsening environmental condition of the Earth for the ice in the northern hemisphere and Yerrup has started melting and flooding northern Ifrik and making the climate colder. Unable to carry on his duty, Dann gets obses-

⁵¹ Weisman, *The World...*, p. 3.

⁵² A.M. Mannion, *The Environmental Impact of War & Terrorism*, “Geographical Paper”, 169 (2003), p. 5.

⁵³ G.E. Machlis, T. Hanson, *Warfare Ecology*, “BioScience”, 58, 8 (2008), p. 730.

⁵⁴ R. Reuveny et al., *The Effect of Warfare on the Environment*, “Journal of Peace Research”, 47, 6 (2010), p. 750.

⁵⁵ Lessing, *Mara and Dann*, pp. 206–207.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 235.

⁵⁷ M. Upchurch, *Back to Ifrik*, “New York Times”, 10.01 (1999), <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/10/books/back-to-ifrik.html>, [access: 15.05.2023].

sed with knowledge and with saving the library, which holds documents of human history in different languages, from the impending flood. Dominated by Dann's adventure, other characters are glimpsed in the fabular plot of the novel. Tamar is after knowledge like her mother and aspires to be a scholar in the future. Griot, whose name calls forth his passion of singing songs⁵⁸ becomes a soldier and governs cities as the second in command to General Dann while Ruff, the snow dog is the most sentimental of all characters, sensitive and intelligent, a true friend for Dann. Accompanied by them, Dann embarks into an odyssey of knowledge and desires to make a change in the new world, or what is left of it, after environmental deterioration, free from wars and human corruption⁵⁹. As a short fabular novel, it "presses home its message that all human civilizations, including our own, eventually come to an end"⁶⁰.

With the cooling climate, the Earth is changing yet again, and it is a new ice age, as *Mara and Dann* pointed at the end. With his bitter life experiences and knowledge about the destruction of Ifrik, Dann is now a general people look up to. His adventures across the frozen northern deserts end with his return to Ifrik and his discovery of the invaluable library that holds the knowledge of human history. Since Mara died during childbirth, Dann is accompanied by Griot, who served him before he deserted his post as the general, builds an army and persuades Dann to find the library in the Centre. At the beginning, paralyzed with the grief of losing Mara and suffering from bipolar disorder which resulted from his opium addiction commencing in *Mara and Dann*, Dann wanders around aimlessly leaving his daughter, Rhea, and his ex-lover Kira behind, visiting the flooded cities in Yerrup, the Bottom Sea, meeting new people, and guiding them by telling his experiences of the old world as tales in *General Dann*. Becoming the storyteller of the communities he visits for a short term, Dann preserves the legacy of his dead sister, Mara, who was in the foreground as the storyteller in *Mara and Dann*. Hence, through storytelling, "a preservation of knowledge, a way of learning, and a satire of [modern] culture" is made in both works as climate fiction, the tell-tales of the contemporary literature⁶¹.

Having lovers on his way and adopting Ruff, Dann remembers his purpose in life when the issue of the library arises. Kira is his great enemy raising a female army against him and bringing slavery back to the Centre. Hungry for power and possessions, she is the epitome of the destructive anthropocentric mindset⁶². In this regard, as in *Mara and Dann*, Lessing's commentary on power relations and the role of humankind in the world can be clearly seen in *General Dann*. Repeating the same mistakes since the first ice age that pushed humankind towards Ifrik, with their anthropocentric ways they trigger another ice age in Yerrup, which was once "prosperous and full of cities, parks, forests and gardens" and the other parts of the

⁵⁸ It means "story-telling" in West African culture and interestingly, Griot encourages Dann to become a hero as he envisions him in his mind as such and makes it happen *Griot*, "Britannica", 30 June (2021). <https://www.britannica.com/art/griot> [access: 15.05.2023].

⁵⁹ G. Bedell, *Ancestral Voices*, "The Guardian", 3 July (2005), <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/jul/03/fiction.dorislessing> [access: 15.05.2023].

⁶⁰ M. Gee, *Fiction: The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter, Griot and the Snow Dog* by *Doris Lessing*, "The Times", 5 June (2005), <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/fiction-the-story-of-general-dann-and-maras-daughter-griot-and-the-snow-dog-by-doris-lessing-77hvm865vqp> [access: 15.05.2023].

⁶¹ S. Wilson, *Utopian, Dystopian, Utopian, Science Fiction, and Speculative Fiction*, in: *Women's Utopian and Dystopian Fiction*, ed. S.R. Wilson, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2013, p. 3.

⁶² *The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter, Griot and the Snow Dog*, "Kirkus Reviews", December (2005), <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/doris-lessing/the-story-of-general-dann-and-maras-daughter-griot/> [access: 15.05.2023].

northern hemisphere while leaving Ifrik and southern lands to the wildfires and floods⁶³. Lessing's viewpoint reflects how nothing changed from *Mara and Dann* to *General Dann* and nature keeps transforming due to the anthropogenic impact.

In a dystopian world ruled by primitivism, violence, and survival instinct, the state of the ice-covered Yerrup is depicted through General Dann's adventures. Dann travels around the southern edge of Europe and observes the wide sheets of ice that flood cities and fill up the Mediterranean, which was once dry. Criticised for lacking action and "subtlety"⁶⁴ when compared to *Mara and Dann*, the sequel reflects the survival struggle of people fleeing from barren Ifrik to the cold and flooded continent of Yerrup. It is "a meandering, episodic book, peopled by disconnected characters, told in pared-down, at times, almost perfunctory prose"⁶⁵. Nevertheless, bringing closure to Mara and Dann's story, it pictures human communities crumbling in parallel to the destruction of the Earth. Foreshadowing the threat of a sub-Saharan refugee flight towards Europe in real life, General Dann accounts the state of Ifrik and Yerrup after a second ice age commences⁶⁶.

Feeling inadequate as a leader, Dann leaves the duty to Griot behind the scenes, who himself deals with psychological and emotional problems from his upbringing as a child soldier but seems to achieve the feat much better than Dann. Facing the visions of a drowning world and the collapse of civilisation, Dann persists in his obsession to gain knowledge as in *Mara and Dann*, and struggles to save the library, which is covered with plastic against the destruction of disasters and fights different races of people on his way. Reaching the library, Tamar and Dann require the support of the scholars, scribes, and savants to decipher the ancient books in different languages but the delicate pages that hold the secrets of all human civilisations turn to dust, which breaks their spirits right before the floods destroy the whole place. In their hands, they have bits and pieces of civilisation: art, geography, philosophy, history and much more. As Dann is desperate, Griot consoles him: "Dann, sir, what has been made can be made again", to which Dann responds reminding the nonchalance of humankind: "And again, and again, and again"⁶⁷. Foreseeing that Kira, her army and Rhea, all of whom are poppy-addicted *anthropos*, will try to take over the rule from Dann if they move to the Tundra together and Rhea will demand her ruling rights in the future, Griot decides that they need to build the civilisation anew and suggests making a new start with the help of "the scribes and everything they wrote down"⁶⁸. The Centre is left to Kira and her soldiers, who as Griot predicted, wreck it with corruption, opium addiction and anthropocentric greed in a short time.

Reflecting fable qualities as in its prequel, *General Dann's* main focus is on Dann while other characters such as Tamar, the future scholar and healer of the society; Griot, acting as a mentor; Ruff, the most emotional and loveable character among all and exceptionally intelligent, with whom Dann makes a connection; Ali, Tamar's tutor, "Dann's physician and

⁶³ D. Lessing, *The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter, Griot, and the Snow Dog*, London, 2006 (ebook).

⁶⁴ *The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter, Griot and the Snow Dog*, "Kirkus Reviews", December (2005), <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/doris-lessing/the-story-of-general-dann-and-maras-daughter-griot/> [access: 15.05.2023].

⁶⁵ Bedell, *Ancestral Voices...*

⁶⁶ M. Arditti, *Saved from the Frost: "The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter, Griot and the Snow Dog" by Doris Lessing*, "Literary Review", July (2005), <https://literaryreview.co.uk/saved-from-the-frost> [access: 15.05.2023].

⁶⁷ Lessing, *General Dann...*

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

Griot's adviser"; Dann's archenemy, Kira, an opium addict and a bitter character; and Rhea, lacking sympathy and emotions like her mother, and also an addict despite being a child, are represented in the periphery⁶⁹. The message the novel carries as a fable is rather striking:

Lessing's novel is a fable, with the lingering, troubling quality of an ancient tale ... If the world ends, all the time, with each death, what is the value and meaning of our thoughts, our literature, our learning? What will be left of us? Even a novelist, who has more than most of us to leave, knows that her work is eminently destructible⁷⁰.

In the face of natural disasters, everything and everyone is susceptible to danger, which *General Dann*, as *Mara and Dann*, underlines as a cli-fi work. Human lifespan shortens in line with the natural devastation. As Ali explains to Dann and Tamar, humans live only forty or fifty years now when in the ancient societies they lived about ninety years⁷¹. At the end of the novel, Dann and Griot set the foundations of a new human civilisation having learned from their anthropocentric mistakes and ruled by science and learning. Although vague, the ending is promising, giving hope for a better future for humanity and the nonhuman environment.

1.3. CLIMATE FICTION IN FOCUS

As a successful example of cli-fi, in *Mara and Dann*, the description of the hostile and uninhabitable southern part of Ifrik presents “a frightening vision of the future of our planet”⁷². In their odyssey, Mara and Dann are terrified with the looming danger of giant animals that have gone through profound changes resulting from the anomalies in the climate: water dragons, stingers, lizards, giant spiders, and beetles that hunt down and smash human beings and surviving animals into pieces. The anomaly in the size of animals in the post-apocalyptic world of the novel can indeed be supported by actual reports of scientists from Stanford University as “a new study purports that one component of evolution – one trend – is consistent: Species keep getting bigger and bigger”⁷³. In the Rock Village, which is the second town in southern Ifrik, there are water dragons, stingers and enormous lizards living underwater in the small ponds and pull “smaller animals in to eat” and attack little children if they are alone and unprotected⁷⁴. Nevertheless, in southern Ifrik, or “down South,” as people of Ifrik call it,⁷⁵ the climate does not change suddenly. It happens with short intervals of abundant and rainy seasons over the period of roughly ten years after Mara and Dann start living with Daima in the Rock Village. In fact, as the man and woman who save Mara and Dann from the rebels recall, there was a long period of drought that wiped out most of the animals a hundred years ago. This one is the second dry period that looks as intense, which makes them worry about the future of humankind and the small number of surviving animals⁷⁶. Thus,

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁰ Bedell, *Ancestral Voices...*

⁷¹ Lessing, *General Dann...*

⁷² Aldeeb, *Ecofeminism...*, p. 81.

⁷³ B. Hays, *Animals Get Bigger as They Evolve, on Land and in the Sea*, “UPI” (19.02.2015), https://www.upi.com/Science_News/2015/02/19/Animals-get-bigger-as-they-evolve-on-land-and-in-the-sea/4151424385609/ [access: 15.05.2023].

⁷⁴ Lessing, *Mara and Dann...*, pp. 41–42.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 77.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

the conditions in the novel reflect the “drought and flooding, altered rainfall patterns and loss of agricultural land ... severe storms, and the spread of disease” in the twenty-first century through Lessing’s pertinent predictions about the future⁷⁷.

Furthermore, human beings and animals live almost normally when they have enough food and water despite the changes in the climate except for Kulik and his sons, who extort the babies of animals from the villagers in the two rainy years⁷⁸. Yet, abundance is acquired only after excessive rainfall that causes flash floods destroying nonhuman animals and plants⁷⁹. Mara cries for the drowning animals, big and small, and feels for the exhausted and thirsty cart bird that suffers a lot as it tries to carry them from Rustam to the Rock Village before the flood hits⁸⁰. It is through Mara’s perspective that the suffering of animals and the ravaged nature are depicted so sensitively, in various details and with a keen eye. In this respect, through Mara’s inward connection to nature and sensibility towards animals, an ecofeminist and New Materialist understanding is revealed, which offers new perspectives regarding the relations of the humankind with the nonhuman environment and their innate connection⁸¹.

Similarly, as depicted in the novel, in the extremity of the transforming climate, there are either dry seasons or seasons with sudden rainstorms dropping excessive rain, both of which negatively impact and harm the human and nonhuman populations. Therefore, after the brief abundant periods, long periods (four years) of drought and famine arrive. Waterholes become dry, and the river close to the village no longer runs, which is when animals turn on one another⁸². The behaviour and diet of animals change as herbivores become carnivorous and scavenge for food and eat whatever they find, whereas the lizards and scorpions grow extremely large as the climate gets hotter and they prey on people while they are sleeping in their houses or tear out the corpses if they are not buried properly inside the wells⁸³. At this point, Jan Zalasiewicz’s argument about the mutation of nonhuman animals in the time of the Anthropocene appears to be valid: “Animals can evolve to be smaller as well as larger sizes. This will depend on what particular circumstances they find themselves in and what the selective pressures on them are So there will be future thin rats, future fat rats, slow and heavy rats, fast and ferocious rats, probably future aquatic rats”⁸⁴. In this respect, the evolution of giant animals in Lessing’s fictive world is a metaphor which is not a far cry from scientific predictions for the future state of animal species. Similarly, the state of transformation or mutation goes for the people in Ifrik. As Mara and Shabis discuss how Mahondi babies do not look like Mahondi anymore, they decide that humans have undergone changes like animals for unknown reasons: “Mara: So what happened? Why?” / Shabis: “Nobody knows. Why are those scorpions you told me about, and the spiders and lizards, changing?”⁸⁵ At this

⁷⁷ R. E. Benedick, *Human Population and Environmental Stresses in the Twenty-First Century*, “Environmental Change & Security Project Report”, 6 (2000), p. 6.

⁷⁸ Lessing, *Mara and Dann*, p. 60.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 10–11.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

⁸¹ V. Kirby, *Natural Convers(at)ions: or, What If Culture was Really Nature All Along?*, in: *Material Feminisms*, eds. S. Alaimo, S. Hekman, Bloomington, 2008, p. 234.

⁸² Lessing, *Mara and Dann...*, p. 60.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, pp. 66–67.

⁸⁴ H. Nicholls, *Rats as Big as Sheep? The Anthropocene is no Laughing Matter*, “The Guardian”, 5.02 (2014), <https://www.theguardian.com/science/animal-magic/2014/feb/05/giant-rats-big-sheep-anthropocene-earth-geological> [access: 15.05.2023].

⁸⁵ Lessing, *Mara and Dann*, p. 251.

point, one scientific finding shows that “long-range migration and concomitant population replacement or admixture have occurred often enough in recent human history [so] that the present-day inhabitants of many places in the world are rarely related simply to the more ancient peoples of the same region”⁸⁶. In other words, the ancient human DNA has obviously undergone some changes and mixtures due to different variables, which explains the changes in different human races in the novel. Furthermore, when they are nearing Majab, Mara and Dann pass several dry streams and witness the brutal survival struggle of insects and scorpions⁸⁷. Later, they stop at a deserted town which is taken over by spiders the size of a child attacking one another inside the houses, and scorpions and lizards holding the streets.⁸⁸ Likewise, giant beetles keep strategic points and encircle the sky skimmer that Mara and Dann need and plant their eggs inside.⁸⁹

With a parallel perspective, human conflict is an inseparable aspect of the Anthropocene, as pictured in the works of climate fiction. In *Mara and Dann* and *General Dann*, after the drought seizes the south of Ifrik, there is a struggle for survival among human beings, which brings about all kinds of violence. To put it in another way, “floods and droughts, reduction in water resources, rising sea levels, changes in ecosystems” inevitably give rise to severe problems of “food production and security, [and] human health”⁹⁰. Initially pictured with the rebellion against the Mahondi royalty in Rustam and the greed of Kulik and his sons amongst other Rock People who also desire gold and other valuables Mara and Dann have, and Kira’s rebellion against Dann, the nature of human conflict is revealed through constant threat of theft, attack, warfare, and rape throughout the novels.

Mara is disguised as a boy while they are travelling to Majab by boat for fear of being raped and introduces herself as Maro, Dann’s brother, although people get suspicious of her gender because of her slender body⁹¹. Afterwards, they see a grave full of corpses since there was a war for the control of water. They meet other climate refugees who pose a threat to them as Mara and Dann have valuables such as a knife, yellow roots, and water cans⁹². Therefore, in the novel, social conflict is an issue as serious and urgent as the natural transformations *per se* because the “broken rule of law and crazed, dehumanized ransackers are the real impetus to flight”⁹³. The human conflict takes root in Rustam long before Mara and Dann are born. It is then that the effects of the anthropogenic climate change start to be felt: “When the rains began to stop, and there was no food, and the wars began ... Daima ran away from a war”⁹⁴. In this context, through the early instances of natural disasters, previous human extinctions in human history foreshadow the sixth mass extinction, which is most likely to arrive as part of the Anthropocene:

⁸⁶ J. Pickrell et al., *Toward a New History and Geography of Human Genes Informed by Ancient DNA*, “Trends in Genetics”, 30, 9 (2014), p. 379.

⁸⁷ Lessing, *Mara and Dann*, pp. 76–77.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 105, 111.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 179, 204.

⁹⁰ B. Brath et al., *Climate Change and Resource Sustainability: An Overview for Actuaries*, “Canadian Institute of Actuaries” (2015), pp. 13–16.

⁹¹ Lessing, *Mara and Dann...*, p. 104.

⁹² *Ibidem*, pp. 105, 116.

⁹³ Trexler, *Anthropocene Fictions...*, p. 80.

⁹⁴ Lessing, *Mara and Dann...*, p. 96.

Early regional civilizations – Mesopotamia in the Near East, Mohenjo Daro in Southwest Asia, the Mayans of Central America, and possibly the Anasazi in the southwest of what is now the United States – collapsed due to a likely combination of overpopulation and scarcity or depletion of arable land and water supply ... environmental effects caused by deforestation and by gradual salinization of irrigated land ... Many centuries before the Aswan High Dam, Herodotus wrote of salinization in the Nile Delta. Much later, rapid industrialization in Europe and North America was accompanied by severe local pollution of air and water⁹⁵.

Hence, all the changes in nature reflect the mass destruction of human and nonhuman life on Earth. However, before it brings an end to humankind as predicted, environmental devastation always results in the human conflict which leaves individuals in a helpless and vulnerable condition deprived of “any real control over and individual responsibility for disastrous outcomes”⁹⁶. In other words, after the calamities unfold, human beings begin to be controlled by environmental conditions and in that case, tend to ignore societal rules of modern civilisation and the humanitarian approach. Showing sympathy or mercy to another human being, let alone an animal, is seen “superfluous” in the majority of Ifrik. For example, Mara stops herself from crying even when Daima dies, for she needs to save the water in her body⁹⁷. After harsh experiences on the road, she sees people killing one another for small pieces of food, a few drops of water or a simple object, and people hunted by giant beasts,⁹⁸ Mara is numbed just like everyone else in the case of tragic incidents. For instance, she witnesses a lizard eat a woman from the group of travellers on the road and feels nothing⁹⁹. Likewise, there is no solidarity or sympathy among human beings, even for babies or children. Among the travellers, Mara sees an undernourished boy dying¹⁰⁰ which is when she decides not to have a child considering the state of the world.

Crime is indispensable to the post-apocalyptic communities of Ifrik. Even Mara and Dann resort to it when they rob a couple of their food and water for their own survival on their way to Chelops and cause their death. Similarly, the young men, five Mahondis, who take Mara and Dann to Chelops on sky skimmer demand more payment in a threatening way at each stop that scales from food, water, and fruits to valuables like tunics, water cans and an axe¹⁰¹. As Daulis from the city of Bilma, informs Mara and Dann, the Centre is weakening which will, in turn, weaken the government in Tundra. He tells them how they stole all kinds of weapons and sky skimmers from the Centre¹⁰². Likewise, Griot and Dann resort to different crimes as children and young soldiers in *General Dann*, which explains their disturbed psychology as adults.

As works of climate fiction, in the fictive world of *Mara and Dann* and *General Dann*, the twentieth century is referred to in terms of technological inventions, advancement and rapid population increase, which in fact is expected to be around eight million by 2050¹⁰³. Scientific progress and advanced technology brought about such inventions as the combu-

⁹⁵ Benedick, *Human Population...*, pp. 5–6.

⁹⁶ Grimbeek, *Margaret Atwood's Environmentalism Apocalypse...*, p. 20.

⁹⁷ Lessing, *Mara and Dann...*, p. 80.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 124.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 119.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 113.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 123, 126.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, p. 400.

¹⁰³ Benedick, *Human Population...*, p. 7.

stion engine, the car, plane, powerful steam, and water turbines so that all kinds of transportation could be provided for public service¹⁰⁴. Thus, “new demands arose, concerning ore mining, metallurgy, fuel exploitation, and finally product machine tools-industry”¹⁰⁵ all of which are increasing the pollution of air, water, and land, and changing the face of the Earth. In this context, remnants of modern transportation are mentioned as a valuable heritage from the modern civilisation in the novel. Thus, Mara and Dann travel by what is left of the modern transportation, a boat, a sky skimmer, and another boat with a sun trap (solar panel) to get to the northern part of the country. Likewise, the train and the plane (all ten of which were set on fire by the rebels during a coup in a place called Bilma¹⁰⁶ are referred to in Mara’s conversation with other Mahondi women in Chelops. They are seen as fascinating inventions from the past, which induced the radical change in climate all around the world, including Ifrik to a great extent.

After the apocalypse, along with the constant natural devastation, people in Ifrik reverted from modern civilisation back to a primitive way of life in which they form “semi-tribal colonies and behave aggressively ... lose contact with all scientific knowledge, and lack any familiarity with culture or art. Some cities were splendid, but now they are either destroyed or submerged by floods”¹⁰⁷. For instance, they do not have the precise knowledge of the geography of the world or of Ifrik for that matter. While they are resting in a town in Karas, Dann draws a map himself by roughly guessing the location of the main geopolitical points¹⁰⁸. The secondary reason why Mara and Dann desire to go upward north so much aside from their survival instinct is their passion for knowledge and their hope to find learned people who can answer all their questions about the past and the present¹⁰⁹.

Then again, throughout their respective odyssey, it is evidently observed by the end of the first novel that Mara and Dann are completely different personalities. They give disparate reactions throughout their adventure. The two of them are different as “compassionate, motherly Mara is able to overcome the traumas of climate refugeeism, while emotionally blunted Dann finds only psychological dead ends”¹¹⁰. Nevertheless, the ending is promising with lots of human touch and love “by making the hero and heroine able to reach their destination”¹¹¹. Lovers are reconciled since Mara is with Shabis, Dann with Kira from Chelops, and Daulis with Leta, the albina whom Daulis saved from the brothel. Moreover, Mara is pregnant with Shabis’s child and Kira with Dann’s although it is Mara and Dann, who indeed love one another. Still, it is hopeful with the three couples living by the Western Sea (Atlantic) in a farmhouse. They pursue a normal, healthy life with natural resources and animals, their

¹⁰⁴ M. Mosley, *50 Great British Inventions*, “RadioTimes”, special edition (2018), http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/rv/fiftygreatestinventions/50_greatest_inventions.pdf [access: 15.05.2023], pp. 2–22.

¹⁰⁵ J. Folta, *What to Do with the 20th Century in the History of Science and Technology?*, “Acta Historiae Rerum Naturalium Necnon Technicarum”, New Series, 9 (2007), p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ Like the name Ifrik, which Lessing coined inspired by Africa, Bilma was named after a namesake place on the world map. It is the same situation with Sahar (The Sahara) and the two rivers of Ifrik: Cong and Nilus (The Congo and the Nile) (Upchurch, *Back to Ifrik...*). Likewise, South Imrik stands for South America and Yerrup for Europe.

¹⁰⁷ Aldeeb, *Ecofeminism...*, pp. 80–81.

¹⁰⁸ Lessing, *Mara and Dann...*, p. 287.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 252.

¹¹⁰ Johns-Putra, *Care, Gender...*, p. 128.

¹¹¹ Aldeeb, *Ecofeminism...*, p. 79.

companion species¹¹². Likewise, General Dann gives hope with the foundation of a non-anthropocentric and/or multispecies society and the promise of future generations guided by learning. Therefore, while reminding human beings their faulty actions with anthropocentric origin in cli-fi novels, *Mara and Dann* and *General Dann* emphasise the morals of love, care, and environmental ethics. In fact, the message is clear: “love will let us save, survive, or escape an ecologically degraded planet” as the only possible alternative to the gloomy perspective of the apocalypse¹¹³.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Doris Lessing's *Mara and Dann: An Adventure and The Story of General Dann, Mara's Daughter, Griot, and the Snow Dog* as twentieth and twenty-first century cli-fi novels, display the progress and the direction of Anthropocene as Lessing predicted for future generations based on what she observed in real life. Set in Ifrik, thousands of years later from the present, the novels tell the survival story of siblings, Mara, and Dann, as they try to reach the northern part of the country for it is the only habitable place with water after an ice age hits the northern hemisphere and the whole European civilisation collapses. Later, Dann's respective adventure with other characters in a similarly collapsing world is given. In this respect, the novels aptly expose the negative impact of humankind on the nonhuman environment and powerfully recall that the future imagined in the novels may not be too distant, which raises eco-consciousness in human beings through the depiction of the sudden unnatural ice age and destructive environmental disasters such as flood, fire and drought devastating the whole world on the macro-level as represented with the cosmic world of Ifrik. Through the depiction of the modern technology and inventions that are mostly lost to the disasters, the novels address the modern human, specifically the anthropos, as those responsible for the current state of the real world through Lessing's opinion on the matter. Considering the twenty-first-century world, which is stricken with extreme environmental degradation and the COVID-19 pandemic, these climate fiction works now matter more than ever as they underline the vitality of leaving the anthropocentric mindset behind and adopting an environmentally conscious approach at once as the only possible ways to salvage the world. *Mara and Dann* and *General Dann* encourage fruitful human action to slow down the pace of the Anthropocene, which is an urgent matter on the twenty-first-century agenda.

¹¹² Lessing, *Mara and Dann...*, pp. 399, 407.

¹¹³ Johns-Putra, *Care, Gender...*, p. 128.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Aldeeb N.R., *Ecofeminism in Doris Lessing's "Mara and Dann: An Adventure"*, "AWEJ for Translation & Literary Studies", 1, 3 (2017), pp. 78–85.
- Arditti M., *Saved from the Frost: "The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter, Griot and the Snow Dog" by Doris Lessing*, "Literary Review", July (2005), <https://literaryreview.co.uk/saved-from-the-frost> [access: 15.05.2023].
- Bedell G., *Ancestral Voices*, "The Guardian", 3 July (2005), <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/jul/03/fiction.dorislessing> [access: 15.05.2023].
- Benedick R.E., *Human Population and Environmental Stresses in the Twenty-First Century*, "Environmental Change & Security Project Report", 6 (2000), pp. 5–18.
- Bloom D., "Cli-fi Report Global" (2017), <http://cli-fi.net/index.html> [access: 15.05.2023].
- Brath B. et al., *Climate Change and Resource Sustainability: An Overview for Actuaries*, "Canadian Institute of Actuaries" (2015), pp. 4–56.
- Colgan D., *Climate Change Is Making It Harder for Couples to Conceive*, "UCLA Institute of Environment and Sustainability" (7.05.2018), <https://www.ioes.ucla.edu/article/climate-change-is-making-it-harder-for-couples-to-conceive/> [access: 30.08.2021].
- Folta J., *What to Do with the 20th Century in the History of Science and Technology?*, "Acta Historiae Rerum Naturalium Necnon Technicarum", New Series, 9 (2007), pp. 3–15.
- Gee M., *Fiction: "The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter, Griot and the Snow Dog" by Doris Lessing*, "The Times", 5 June (2005), <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/fiction-the-story-of-general-dann-and-maras-daughter-griot-and-the-snow-dog-by-doris-lessing-77hvm865vqp> [access: 15.05.2023].
- Grimbeek M., *Margaret Atwood's Environmentalism Apocalypse and Satire in the MaddAddam Trilogy*, PhD Dissertation, Karlstad, 2017.
- Griot, "Britannica", 30 June (2021). <https://www.britannica.com/art/griot> [access: 15.05.2023].
- Haraway D., *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Anthropocene*, Durham and London, 2016.
- Hays B., *Animals Bet Bigger as They Evolve, on Land and in the Sea*, "UPI" (19.02.2015), https://www.upi.com/Science_News/2015/02/19/Animals-get-bigger-as-they-evolve-on-land-and-in-the-sea/4151424385609/ [access: 15.05.2023].
- Johns-Putra A., *Care, Gender, and the Climate-Changed Future: Maggie Gee's "The Ice People"*, in: *Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction*, eds. G. Caravan, K.S. Robinson, Middletown, 2014, pp. 127–142.
- Johns-Putra A., *Climate Change in Literature and Literary Studies: From Cli-fi, Climate Change Theater and Ecopoetry to Ecocriticism and Climate Change Criticism*, "WIREs Climate Change", 7, 2 (2016), pp. 266–282.
- Kaya H., *An Ecocritical Approach to "The Book of Dede Korkut and Beowulf"*, "Millî Folklor", 17, 130 (2021), pp. 31–43.
- Kirby V., *Natural Convers(at)ions: or, What If Culture was Really Nature All Along?*, in: *Material Feminisms*, eds. S. Alaimo, S. Hekman, Bloomington, 2008, pp. 214–237.
- Lessing D., *Mara and Dann: An Adventure*, London, 1999.

- Lessing D., *The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter, Griot, and the Snow Dog*, London, 2006 (ebook).
- Machlis G.E., Hanson T., *Warfare Ecology*, "BioScience", 58, 8 (2008), pp. 729–736.
- Mannion A.M., *The Environmental Impact of War & Terrorism*, "Geographical Paper", 169 (2003), pp. 1–22.
- Morton T. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World*, Minneapolis and London, 2013 (ebook).
- Mosley M., *50 Great British Inventions*, "RadioTimes", special edition (2018), http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/tv/fiftygreatestinventions/50_greatest_inventions.pdf [access: 15.05.2023].
- Nicholls H., *Rats as Big as Sheep? The Anthropocene is no Laughing Matter*, "The Guardian", 5.02 (2014), <https://www.theguardian.com/science/animal-magic/2014/feb/05/giant-rats-big-sheep-anthropocene-earth-geological> [access: 15.05.2023].
- Pickrell J.K et al., *Toward a New History and Geography of Human Genes Informed by Ancient DNA*, "Trends in Genetics", 30, 9 (2014), pp. 377–389.
- Reuveny R. et al. *The Effect of Warfare on the Environment*, "Journal of Peace Research", 47, 6 (2010), pp. 749–761.
- Schneider-Mayerson M., *The Influence of Climate Fiction: An Empirical Survey of Readers*, "Environmental Humanities", 10, 2 (2018), pp. 473–500.
- Sykes R., Keeble A., Cordle D., Scott J., De Cristofaro D., King D., Rowcroft A., Srivastava N., *Contemporary Studies Network Roundtable: Responding to Robert Macfarlane's 'Generation Anthropocene'*, "Open Library of Humanities", 3 (1), 5 (2017), pp. 1–46.
- Squire L., *The Thoughts in our Head: A World*, "Alluvium", 3, 1 (2014).
- The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter, Griot and the Snow Dog*, "Kirkus Reviews", December (2005), <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/doris-lessing/the-story-of-general-dann-and-maras-daughter-griot/> [access: 15.05.2023].
- Trexler A., *Anthropocene Fictions: Novel in a Time of Climate Change*, London, 2015.
- Upchurch M., *Back to Ifrik*, "New York Times", 10.01 (1999), <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/10/books/back-to-ifrik.html>, [access: 15.05.2023].
- Wark M., *Molecular Red: Theory for the Anthropocene*, London, 2015.
- Weisman A., *The World without Us*, London, 2007.
- White G., *Environmental Refugees*, in: *Handbook on Migration and Security*, ed. P. Bourbeau, Cheltenham, 2017, pp. 175–191.
- Wilson S.R., *Utopian, Dystopian, Ustopian, Science Fiction, and Speculative Fiction*, in: *Women's Utopian and Dystopian Fiction*, ed. S.R. Wilson, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2013, pp. 1–6.
- Yilmaz V.B., *Mysticism in Aldoux Huxley's "Time Must Have a Stop" and Peyami Safa's "Matmazel Noraliya'nın Koltuğu"*, "Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Researches", 19, 41 (2018), pp. 71–82.
- Zalasiewicz J., *The Extraordinary Strata of the Anthropocene*, in: *Environmental Humanities*, eds. S. Oppermann, S. Iovino, London, 2017, pp. 115–132.

SUMMARY:

Depicting a world stricken with an ice age in the North and drought in the South, Doris Lessing's *Mara and Dann: An Adventure* (1999) recounts the survival story of two siblings, Mara and Dann, amidst un/natural and societal havoc. The sequel, *The Story of General Dann, Mara's Daughter, Griot, and the Snow Dog* (2005) pictures the dramatic transformations both in the nonhuman nature and the protagonists' lives after the devastating disasters in the first novel. Migrating among thousands of people from the south towards northern Ifrik and passing through desolate lands scorched with drought, fire, flood, and diseases in *Mara and Dann*, the protagonists mature as they learn to live in a perilous and erratic world populated with survivalists solely focused on personal gain. Through the horrendous picture of an Ifrik parched with drought in the South and frosted with a solid layer of ice at the top north, the novel pictures the helplessness of humankind through Mara and Dann's quest for life in the face of unstoppable and inevitable environmental calamities. With the melting of the ice in the Northern Yerrup and the flooding in the Northern Ifrik, *General Dann* delivers Dann's struggle to cope with his personal loss as the world changes once again, and the climate gets cooler. Obsessed with knowledge and set on to save a library, he races against time, human beings, and the hostile nonhuman environment. In this light, this study aims to analyse Doris Lessing's climate fiction (cli-fi) duology, *Mara and Dann: An Adventure and General Dann and Mara's Daughter, Griot, and the Snow Dog* as climate fiction novels reflecting the destructive impact of climate change on humans and nonhuman nature in the anthropogenic conditions of the fictional world, which is not a far cry from our world in the twenty-first century.

KEYWORDS:

climate fiction, the Anthropocene, transformation, natural disaster, Doris Lessing