

**The theme of New York
in *All the Water in the World*:
An ecolinguistic account**

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Abstract

Coastal cities (for instance, New York) are exceptionally vulnerable to the negative consequences of climate change, such as water erosion and flooding. Seemingly, the sad reality of climate change has inspired Eiren Caffall to portray the flooded New York City in her recent dystopian novel *All the Water in the World* (2025). Given its recency, the theme of New York in *All the Water in the World* is fairly unexplored in literary and ecolinguistic studies. In this light, the present paper seeks to address the research gap by means of analysing how the theme of New York is represented in *All the Water in the World*. The representation of the flooded New York in Caffall's novel is analysed through the prism of an ecolinguistic approach developed by Stibbe (2014, 2015). In the paper, the qualitative ecolinguistic analysis of *All the Water in the World* reveals that the theme of New York is represented by means of (i) the scientific framing of the issue of climate change; (ii) the overarching metaphor of human life as the American Museum of Natural History in New York; (iii) backgrounding the antediluvian New York as we know it; and (iv) foregrounding the image of decay. These findings are further presented and expanded upon in the paper.

Keywords

All the Water in the World, climate change, climate change fiction (cli-fi), flooding, New York

Temat Nowego Jorku w powieści *Cała woda świata* z ekolingwistycznego punktu widzenia**Abstrakt**

Miasta nadmorskie (na przykład Nowy Jork) są wyjątkowo narażone na negatywne skutki zmian klimatu, takie jak erozja wodna i powodzie. Wydaje się, że smutna rzeczywistość zmian klimatu zainspirowała Eiren Caffall do przedstawienia zalanego Nowego Jorku w jej najnowszej dystopijnej powieści *Cała woda świata* (2025). Ze względu na swoją niedawność, temat Nowego Jorku w powieści *Cała woda świata* jest dość słabo zbadany w badaniach literackich i ekolingwistycznych. W tym świetle niniejszy artykuł stara się wypełnić lukę badawczą, analizując, w jaki sposób temat Nowego Jorku jest przedstawiony w *Całej wodzie świata*. Przedstawienie zalanego Nowego Jorku w powieści Caffall jest analizowane przez pryzmat podejścia ekolingwistycznego opracowanego przez Stibbe (2014, 2015). W artykule jakościowa analiza ekolingwistyczna *Całej wody świata* ujawnia, że temat Nowego Jorku jest przedstawiony za pomocą (i) naukowego ujęcia problemu zmian klimatu; (ii) nadrzędna metafora ludzkiego życia jako Amerykańskiego Muzeum Historii Naturalnej w Nowym Jorku; (iii) ukazywanie przedpotopowego Nowego Jorku, jaki znamy; oraz (iv) wysuwanie na pierwszy plan obrazu rozkładu. Te ustalenia zostały szerzej przedstawione i rozwinięte w artykule.

Słowa kluczowe

Cała woda świata, fikcja klimatyczna (cli-fi), Nowy Jork, powódzie, zmiany klimatu

1. Introduction

Coastal cities, for instance, New York and New Orleans in the United States of America (the USA), are reported to be vulnerable to the negative consequences of climate change (Griggs and Reguero 2021), which involve severe flooding, coastal erosion, high surge, and hurricanes (Jacob 2015, Siegel 2019). In particular, the flood in New Orleans in 2005 provides a graphic example of the climate change-related impact upon a major coastal city in the USA. In this regard, scientific publications argue that the flooding of New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina was intensified by the negative consequences of climate change (Comfort 2006, Irish et al. 2014, Rohland 2018). Conceivably, the image of New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina has served as a potent impetus to explore the magnitude of the climate crisis that is associated with the flooding of American urban centres in climate change fiction (cli-fi) and multimedia (Cook 2015, Keeble 2019). Obviously, there are multiple representations of flooded cities and urban centres in the Anglophone cli-fi that have little to do with the flooded New Orleans, for example, *The Drowned World* (1962) by James G. Ballard, *The Sea and Summer* (1987) by George Turner, and *Parable of the Sower* (1993) by Octavia E. Butler, to name just a few (Kapranov 2025a, Nuruzzaman, Haque 2024, Woods 2023).

One of the most recent cli-fi novels that depicts the flooding of a metropolis in the USA is represented by Eiren Caffall's (2025) *All the Water in the World*. Set in the flooded New York City of the near future, *All the Water in the World* is evocative of the real-life post-Katrina saga of New Orleans. In contrast to New Orleans, however, the dystopian New York in Caffall's novel is permanently engulfed by the Atlantic. In the novel, the inundated New York of the future sets the scene for the complex dynamics of a family of survivors, who struggle to maintain a semblance of normality in the epicentre of the climate catastrophe. It should be noted that the theme of climate catastrophe in *All the Water in the World* is intricately interwoven with the themes

of family ties, love, chronic illness, motherhood, and adolescence.

Currently, however, the aforementioned themes have not been elucidated in literary and ecolinguistic studies. Moreover, there is no published research on how the theme of New York is represented in *All the Water in the World*. The present study, which is further described in the article, aims at unpacking the theme of New York and the way it is represented in *All the Water in the World* through an ecolinguistic lens. It should be emphasised that the study focuses exclusively on the theme of New York in the novel.

The focus of the study is explained by the following considerations. First, the theme of New York in cli-fi is relatable to the public at large (Schneider-Mayerson 2018). Arguably, the readers could readily identify and relate to the theme of New York, which is represented as a flooded and dystopian metropolis (Coghlan 2014). Additionally, the theme of the flooded New York could resonate with the cli-fi readership, who could establish symbolic and visual connections between the flooded New York and other major urban centres affected by the climate catastrophe (Mundler 2022).

Second, the theme of New York in the novel may foster the readers' awareness of climate change disasters and their victims, who reside in a major world metropolis (Poray-Wybranowska 2020, Venkataraman 2020). Presumably, the representation of the theme of New York in the novel may evoke emotional responses triggered by the images of decay, neglect, and socio-economic degradation of the once elite and prosperous city.

Third, the theme of New York in the novel may be of practical use to undergraduate and postgraduate students majoring in Education for Sustainable Education (Bartosch 2021, Kapranov 2025b), English for Specific Purposes (Kapranov, Voloshyna 2023), English literature (Torres, de Picado-Santos 2025), and climate change education (Kapranov, 2025c). Supposedly, the theme of New York can offer a visually recognisable urban locus that is associated with the world-renowned

landmarks and cultural icons that may illustrate how complex urban systems operate in the context of climate crisis (Dubois, Krasny 2016).

In this light, the present study seeks to answer the following research question:

How is the theme of New York represented in *All the Water in the World* from an ecolinguistic perspective?

It should be mentioned quite early in the article that the research question is grounded in the theoretical tenets of ecolinguistics developed by Arran Stibbe (2014, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020). Accordingly, his approach to ecolinguistics is outlined in Section 2 of the article. Thereafter, a review of the literature on cli-fi novels that depict flooded cities is given in Section 3. Following the review, the present qualitative study is introduced in Section 4. Finally, the major findings and conclusions are summarised in Section 5 of the article.

2. An ecolinguistic approach formulated by Stibbe

Given that the theoretical foundations of the present study are informed by an ecolinguistic perspective that is developed by Arran Stibbe (2014, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020), we will dwell upon it in detail in this section of the article. In general terms, Stibbe (2014) regards ecolinguistics as a way of using linguistic tools to uncover “the stories that underpin our current unsustainable civilization” (Stibbe 2014: 117). In other words, the identification of a story as a cultural phenomenon is central to Stibbe’s (2014, 2015, 2019) ecolinguistic approach, in which storytelling is not viewed through the traditional prism of a narrative, but is conceived of as “discourses, frames, metaphors and, in general, clusters of linguistic features that come together to convey particular worldviews” (Stibbe 2014: 117). Essentially, Stibbe (2020) operationalises his ecolinguistic approach as a means of unveiling

cognitive structures in the minds of individuals which influence how they think, talk and act. When stories are widespread across a culture, I call them the ‘stories we live by’. A simple example is the story PROFIT IS GOOD, which appears so commonly in the media that it goes without question: whenever the profits of a company go up the media portrays this as unqualified good news, no matter how ecologically damaging the company is, how badly it treats its staff, or how damaging its products are for consumers. This story encourages reckless profiteering at the expense of people and the environment. A more balanced story would describe the success of companies in terms of a triple-bottom-line of social, environmental as well as economic performance. (Stibbe 2020: 2)

In this light, Stibbe’s (2015) ecolinguistic approach is comprised of the following elements:

- (i) ideology, i.e. *weltanschauung* (the view of the world) by the members of a group;
- (ii) framing, i.e., the structuring and compartmentalising of knowledge;
- (iii) metaphor, i.e. the structuring of knowledge by means of using mappings between two qualitatively different and distinct domains;
- (iv) evaluation, i.e. people’s appraisals of a certain aspect of life;
- (v) identity, i.e. the characterisation of a person based upon their belonging to a societal group;
- (vi) conviction, i.e. people’s beliefs about a particular description of reality;
- (vii) erasure, i.e. people’s views of something as unimportant or unworthy of consideration;
- (viii) salience, i.e. an aspect of life that people regard as important and/or worthy of consideration.

Whilst some of the components of Stibbe’s (2014, 2015) approach are self-evident (for instance, ideology, identity, evaluation, etc.), we should note that Stibbe’s understanding of framing is different from that of Robert Entman (2007). Whereas Entman (2007) defines framing as the process of selection of

a certain element of the issue and presenting it in a specific and often biased way (Entman 2010) in order to orchestrate a desirable reaction to it by the audience (Kapranov 2024a, 2024b), Stibbe's operationalisation of framing seems to be in alignment with Marvin Minsky (1974). Like Minsky (1974), Stibbe (2015) considers framing as a cognitive means of representing a stereotypical chunk of reality.

Also, we should, perhaps, specify that Stibbe's (2015) view of metaphor appears quite compatible with the cognitive theory of metaphor, which treats it as a cognitive mechanism that involves a conceptual mapping between the two distinct and unrelated domains (i.e., the source and the target domains), in which one concept is understood in terms of another (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

It should be mentioned that Stibbe's (2014, 2015) notion of salience is in unity with the cognitive linguistic paradigm, which posits that salience is a *linguo-cognitive* element (Boswijk and Coler 2020) that is foregrounded due to its intrinsic properties (bottom-up salience) or determined by contextual factors (top-down salience) (Kapranov 2024c, 2024d). In a similar vein, Stibbe's (2014, 2015) notion of erasure resembles the cognitive linguistic phenomenon of backgrounding, which is seen as the process of treating a piece of reality as non-central, outside of the speaker's focus (Ungerer and Schmid 2013).

Finally, we should clarify the distinction between evaluation and conviction in Stibbe's (2014, 2015) *ecolinguistic* approach. Whereas evaluation is conceptualised as people's emotional reaction to an aspect of life along the basic dichotomy bad vs. good with all the spectrum in between, conviction is related to the factual system, i.e. the facts people believe in (Ma and Stibbe 2022).

3. A review of prior studies on the Anglophone cli-fi novels that depict flooded cities

Before we proceed to the outline of prior studies on cli-fi novels that depict flooded cities, we should mention that

climate change is no longer a marginal topic in literature and literary studies. Climate change fiction, or cli-fi, has gained considerable public and critical attention. Climate change in literary studies, particularly in literary or critical theory, is also now being heralded as a discrete subfield of literary studies. This is more than just a matter of perception and of naming: there has been an actual increase in literary engagements with climate change, and literary scholars have been busy exploring both these texts and the concept of climate change as a cultural phenomenon. (Johns-Putra 2016: 266)

Perhaps, we should specify Adeline Johns-Putra's (2016) view of cli-fi as a discrete subfield. In this regard, Andrew Milner and James Burgmann (2018) note that cli-fi forms part of science fiction rather than constitutes a distinct genre in its own right, given that the role of climate science and technology in cli-fi is akin to the centrality of technology and technology-related science in mainstream science fiction literature.

Irrespective of whether cli-fi is a separate genre or a sub-genre of science fiction, two major types of cli-fi can be distinguished, namely (i) a recognisable and relatively realistic account of the present that is affected by climate change; and (ii) an apocalyptic and dystopian account of the negative consequences of climate change in the future and/or in the near future (Goodbody and Johns-Putra 2019: 234). Interestingly, in both of these two types of cli-fi, flooding and submerged urban areas are depicted as the result of the negative consequences of climate change (Milner and Burgmann 2018). Accordingly, Adam Trexler (2015) argues that the sunken cities in cli-fi testify to the climate crisis, which branches out into the issues of (i) environmental pollution, (ii) the rise of the ocean, (iii) the

melting of the polar ice, and many other anthropogenic factors that contribute to the warming of our planet. Seen through such a complex prism, Caroline Edwards (2019: 211) asserts that flooding in cli-fi may “depict a range of cataclysmic floods [...] as well as the larger-scale and planetary accounts of rising sea levels, global disaster, and pluvial shifts in meteorology”.

Currently, there is a number of studies that uncover a multitude of aspects that characterise flooded cities in cli-fi. Further, we will dwell upon some of them, which focus on analysing submerged cities in the Anglophone segment of cli-fi. For instance, Paul Dobraszczyk (2017) posits that the image of flooded cities is employed to articulate social relations in the cities that bear the brunt of the rising sea levels, such as Melbourne in Turner’s *The Sea and Summer* (1987). Dobraszczyk (2017) argues that the Anglophone cli-fi seems to foreground the relationships between the main characters instead of focusing on the dramatic description of submerged cities. In particular, Dobraszczyk (2017) maintains that the emphasis in *The Sea and Summer* (Turner 1987) is on the relationship between the rich and the poor, given that the city of Melbourne is divided between those affluent dwellers who live on the higher ground in towers and those have-nots who reside in the flood-prone blocks. In other words, it follows from Dobraszczyk (2017) that the description of the flooded Melbourne of the future serves as a background narrative that enables the portrayal of the issue of social injustice. Similarly, Ben De Bruyn (2020) argues that some of the Anglophone cli-fi novels foreground the notion of social injustice that is described against the backdrop of flooded cities. Particularly, De Bruyn (2020) refers to John Lanchester’s *The Wall* (2019), which depicts the flooded urban areas in the United Kingdom (the UK) and the wall erected to protect them. Furthermore, De Bruyn (2020) suggests that the dystopian climate catastrophe in *The Wall* highlights the issues of climate refugees, racism, and social injustice.

Whilst the theme of injustice is prominent in *The Sea and the Summer* (1987) and *The Wall* (2019), Matthew Schneider-

Mayerson (2019) points to the absence of climate justice in American cli-fi novels. Particularly, he argues that whereas the major bulk of American cli-fi novels focus on the climate apocalypse, the themes of justice and, specifically, climate change justice are not developed in the recent cli-fi novels in the USA. For instance, whereas Kim S. Robinson's series *Science in the Capitol*, which consists of *Forty Signs of Rain* (2004), *Fifty Degrees Below* (2005), and *Sixty Days and Counting* (2007), shows a flooded Washington, the submerged centre of the USA government is portrayed just as *mise-en-scène* that serves Robinson's primary goals of highlighting political and technological responses to climate change (Schneider-Mayerson 2019). In this regard, Schneider-Mayerson (2019) indicates that Robinson intentionally backgrounds the theme of (in)justice in his cli-fi series.

Unlike Schneider-Mayerson (2019), however, Sylvia Mayer (2025) remarks that Robinson's *New York 2140* (2017) explores the topic of social inequality under the aegis of other issues that permeate the flooded New York City of the 22nd century. In addition, Mayer (2025) emphasises that the setting of Robinson's novel *New York 2140* (2017) facilitates the development of the following themes: (i) people's adaptation to everyday life in the flooded city and (ii) the protagonists' endurance and flexibility of choices that need to be made in the apocalyptic circumstances. Accordingly, Andrew Milner observes that

climate change appears to function in *New York 2140* only as its dystopian *mise en scène*. By the early to mid twenty-second century, sea levels have risen by fifty feet, so that the whole of Lower Manhattan has long since been flooded. The buildings that remain standing are still inhabitable, their lower floors transformed into dockyards, the streets that once ran between them into canals traversed by vaporettoes and water taxis. The city is as thoroughly capitalist as ever. (Milner 2020: 25)

In a way, Mayer's reading of *New York 2140* (2017) is evocative of the recent research article by Oleksandr Kapranov (2025) on

the apocalyptic novel *The End We Start From* by Megan Hunter (2017). Kapranov indicates that the scenes of the flooded London of the near future in *The End We Start From* are described by Hunter (2017) in a manner that is suggestive of hope amidst the dire predicament of the submerged city, in which the protagonists “see nothing but abandonment” (Hunter 2017: 97) on the one hand, and yet, they encounter “families, men and women and children who have managed to stay together” (Hunter 2017: 106) on the other hand. Notably, the protagonist in *The End We Start From* (Hunter 2017) starts

using the first-person plural pronoun “we,” when she narrates about her return to the still damaged yet more liveable London. Presumably, by means of combining the visual descriptor “see” and the plural pronoun “we,” Hunter implies that the image of London, Mother’s home, is shared between herself and her baby. This suggests a glimpse of hope for Mother and other Londoners who have returned to their semi-submerged homes. (Kapranov 2025: 16)

Along similar lines, Kerim Yazgünoğlu (2020) argues that the climate catastrophe in Clare Morrall’s *When the Floods Came* (2015) depicts the protagonists’ daily lives in the flooded city of Birmingham as an apocalyptic scene of survival in the climate-altered environment. Yazgünoğlu (2020) demonstrates that the drastic environmental transformation of the flooded Birmingham with its ruined roads, houses, and gardens portrays a bleak world, in which both horror and resilience form part of the postdiluvian “normal”. Moreover, Yazgünoğlu (2020) alludes to the postdiluvian angst that impacts upon the social fabric in *When the Floods Came* (Morrall 2015), which is characterised by the struggle to survive the aftermath of the debilitating virus as well as the life-changing floods.

Yazgünoğlu’s (2020) interpretation of *When the Floods Came* (Morrall 2015) echoes a fairly recent article by Astrid Bracke and Katie Ritson (2020), who posit that urban flooding in cli-fi novels represents not only a real consequence of the climate crisis, but

also offers insights into the protagonists' inner worlds, captures their nuanced psychological traits, and facilitates the depiction of human behaviour impacted by the breakdown of the world as they know it. Identically, Tom Idema (2020) in his analysis of Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* (2009) claims that the narrative about flooding offers a kaleidoscopic view of a society on the brink of collapse and helps to unveil an intimate portrayal of the protagonists. In this regard, it seems relevant to mention Tonguk Sezen's (2024: 59) view of flooded cities and urban areas in cli-fi, which "serve as an invaluable tool for cultivating a holistic understanding of the intricate interplay between climate change, humanity, and its aspirations for sustainable adaptation" (Sezen 2024: 59).

It follows from the review of the literature that there is a wealth of studies that seek to unpack the way flooded urban areas, i.e. small towns and big cities, are depicted in the Anglophone segment of cli-fi. It also follows from the review, however, that there is no current research on the theme of New York in Caffall's (2025) *All the Water in the World*. Further, in the subsequent section of the article, we present a qualitative study that looks into this under-researched aspect through an ecolinguistic lens.

4. The present study

Caffall's (2025) novel *All the Water in the World* is set in the flooded New York of the near future. At that time, the Atlantic has engulfed nearly the entire city, leaving only some of the rooftops as a scanty oasis of life. On the rooftop of the American Museum of Natural History, there is still life with its post-apocalyptic daily struggle to scavenge for available resources. Concurrently, however, the rooftop offers a quiet sanctuary amidst the climate disaster and urban decay. The life in the flooded New York is narrated in the novel by its main character, a girl called Nonie. She describes the flooding, talks about her family members, and retells her escape from the inundated New York to the

country, among other things. Whilst the flooded New York is seen through Nonie's eyes, she, despite her age, provides quite a detailed account of the inundated city.

As previously mentioned, Caffall's cli-fi novel *All the Water in the World* (2025) is recent and, owing to its recency, unexplored from the vantage point of ecolinguistics. In this light, the article presents a qualitative study that aims to analyse the theme of New York in *All the Water in the World* (Caffall 2025) through the prism of Stibbe's ecolinguistic approach. Accordingly, the research question of the study has been formulated (see the introductory part of the article). To reiterate, the research question is concerned exclusively with the ecolinguistic representation of the theme of New York in Caffall's novel.

The present study is informed by the literature, which posits that the theme of New York is quite often represented in cli-fi novels and films (Svoboda 2014, 2016). Paraphrasing Julia Leyda, Kathleen Loock, Alexander Starre, Thiago Barbosa, and Manuel Rivera (2016), we may contend that the theme of New York is deeply entrenched in the role of carrying the dystopian impulse of the contemporary cli-fi novels and, especially, films. It appears pertinent to mention the iconic film *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) with its graphic portrayal of the flooding of New York by the catastrophic tidal wave, which, in turn, is caused by the negative consequences of climate change. Arguably, cli-fi's attention to the theme of New York seems to be accounted for by the fact that

New York is one of the biggest, most populated, and important cities in the United States, so it comes as no surprise that it makes an irresistible target for in-movie destruction. Films don't always erase the City that Never Sleeps from the map, but it's definitely received some interesting attention. (Killham 8 July 2016)

As mentioned in the introduction, the present study is in alignment with the literature, which argues that the theme of the flooded New York is relevant to the readers, as well as cinema

goers and the public at large, who can be enlightened by the impact of the climate crisis on the major urban conglomerates (von Mossner 2020). Based upon the literature, we argue in the study that an ecolinguistic analysis of the flooded New York in *All the Water in the World* may heighten the readers' awareness of the climate change-caused disasters that bring about decay, suffering, and personal tragedies (Fløttum 2017).

Guided by the aforementioned considerations, the qualitative ecolinguistic analysis seeks to unpack the theme of New York in *All the Water in the World* by Caffall (2025) in accordance with the following elements of Stibbe's (2014, 2015) ecolinguistic approach: (i) ideology, (ii) framing, (iii) metaphors, (iv) evaluation, (v) identity, (vi) conviction, (vii) erasure, and (viii) salience. The explanation of these elements is found in section 2 of the article. Anchored in Stibbe's (2014, 2015) ecolinguistic approach, *All the Water in the World* has been read multiple times by the author of the article in order to identify the elements of Stibbe's (2014, 2015) ecolinguistic framework in relation to the novel. The results of the qualitative analysis, their discussion and illustrative material are presented in subsection 4.1 of the article.

4.1. Results and discussion

The results of the qualitative ecolinguistic analysis of *All the Water in the World* by Caffall (2025) are presented in the following sequence. First, in subsection 4.1.1, we show how the theme of New York is represented in the novel in terms of ideology and framing. Thereafter, in subsection 4.1.2, we discuss the types of metaphors that are employed in the representation of the theme of New York in *All the Water in the World*. Then, in subsection 4.1.3, we consider the notions of identity, evaluation and conviction that are associated with the theme of New York in the novel. Finally, in subsection 4.1.4, we regard the notions of erasure and salience that are related to the theme of New York in *All the Water in the World*.

4.1.1. Ideology and framing

Arguably, there seems to be no clearly marked ideology associated with the theme of New York in *All the Water in the World*. We contend that Caffall (2025) does not explicate an ideological basis that could be aligned with the theme of New York in the novel. The vestige of the ideological foundation is, nevertheless, present in the part of the novel that describes Nonie's escape from the flooded New York to the country. During the dramatic escape, the readers are left with the impression that the flooded New York is reflective of Nonie's ideological identity as a New Yorker. However, Caffall (2025) does not specify and/or expand upon Nonie's ideological identity as a city-dweller as far as her political and social allegiances are concerned.

Importantly, the readers do not see a clearly marked ideological beacon associated with the theme of New York that would be indicative of the ideology of climate justice or climate resistance, as found in other cli-fi novels, especially in the British segment of cli-fi (see Trexler (2015)). In this regard, we may argue that the absence of references to climate justice associated with the theme of New York is in line with the prior study by Schneider-Mayerson (2019), who observes that American cli-fi novels do not typically refer to climate justice and/or minimise the issue of social (in)justice associated with the representation of flooded cities.

Whilst the ideological basis in *All the Water in the World* is non-confrontational, nearly non-existent, and devoid of references to climate justice, the framing of the theme of New York in the novel is unequivocally marked by the scientific approach to elucidating the issue of climate change (Kapranov 2024c). We contend that the theme of New York in *All the Water in the World* is represented via a scientific approach to the issue of climate change, which posits that anthropogenic activities contribute significantly to the melting of the ice, the rise of sea levels, coastal erosion, heatwaves, and other climate change-related phenomena. The scientific framing of climate change seen

through the eyes of Nonie is simplistic, yet in its simplicity it reflects the major points of the negative consequences of climate change, cf.

- (1) Storms always came. They took things. They took things before I was born, Mother and Father told me that: bits of the coastline, glaciers, reefs, whole islands, cities – San Juan, Miami, the Azores, Shenzhen, Mumbai, the Philippines, Bangkok, Abidjan, Nagoya, New Zealand. They took water from the inland and gave it to the sea, crops failed, forests caught fire, tall mountain ranges burned with the trees along their ridges. People moved to places where the food was. Countries filled and emptied until the people themselves were the floods and the droughts. Mother and Father watched it happen on their laptops, reading articles, looking at pictures of loss side by side on the couch on Trench Street, the electric off and on. (Caffall 2025: 18)

Essentially, we can infer from the passage above that Caffall's (2025) account of the issue of climate change is in alignment with the canonical approach to the climate crisis that is found in scientific publications and the majority of cli-fi literature in its Anglophone segment (see Milner and Burgmann (2018)). To an extent, we may posit that Caffall's (2025) framing of the flooded New York via the scientific frame is in agreement with the studies (Edwards 2019, Johns-Putra 2016, Mayer 2025), which suggest that American cli-fi novels seem to be firmly based upon the science-related framing of climate change as an anthropogenic phenomenon. Presumably, Caffall (2025) intentionally frames the novel via the scientific frame of climate change, given that she specifies on several occasions that Nonie's mother works as a scientist at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. And, as a scientist, her mother reads articles on climate change (see excerpt (1) above) and appears to be cognizant of the scientific approach to the issue of anthropogenic climate change.

Whilst ideology and framing provide an important yet rather general anchoring of *All the Water in the World* in the science-based framing of climate change that is not characterised by the reference to climate (in)justice, a more nuanced and detail description of the flooded New York is evident from the metaphors in the novel, which we analyse further, in subsection 4.1.2 of the article.

4.1.2. Metaphors

The analysis reveals that the theme of New York in *All the Water in the World* is marked by the conceptual metaphor HUMAN LIFE IN NEW YORK AS THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY. This metaphor is reflective of the mapping from the source domain THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY onto the target domain HUMAN LIFE IN NEW YORK. The metaphor is embedded into the representation of the theme of New York as a devastated cityscape, in which a few surviving New Yorkers huddle together on the rooftop of the museum. In the museum itself, there are several exhibit halls, which illustrate the emptiness of the flooded New York, as seen in excerpt (2) below.

- (2) The blank corridor from the library was a zero, no windows, flayed carpet, anonymous walls without feature. At the end of that hallway was the Hall of Vertebrate Origins, where Bix and Mano and I used to play. Eight years since the floods took the rooms of the museum down to crumbling. The Hall of Vertebrate Origins had windows up high, but it was hard to see in, the tall space full of raw echoes. Many of the exhibits were packed up in The World As It Was, and there was obvious emptiness everywhere. (Caffall 2025: 25)

Notably, in (2), we encounter the explanation of the metaphor HUMAN LIFE IN NEW YORK AS THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY. The domain of THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, which is structured by the concept of exhibit halls, enables the mapping onto the concept of life in New York as Nonie

knows it, i.e. onto the domain HUMAN LIFE IN NEW YORK. This metaphor can be seen as an attempt to represent the theme of New York as a sheer memory, which is compartmentalised as the museum's halls that are empty and unwelcoming. We may infer from (2) that the theme of New York gets represented in the novel as a lifeless artefact that is exhibited in the empty museum hall.

Another metaphor that we encounter in the initial chapters of *All the Water in the World* is also related to the American Museum of Natural History. Nonie, as well as her family and other survivors, refer to it as AMEN. For Nonie, however, AMEN is not a mere acronym, it is a metaphor for prayer and hope, cf.

- (3) We still lived in the place we called Amen, what has been the American Museum of Natural History. Time made us shorten the name. We said “A-M-N-H”, for the whole place – the ancient rooms we tended, the collections we protected – then “Amen”, when it only meant the village we made on the roof of the museum library, the name a prayer to keep us safe. And we were safe up there a long time. (Caffall 2025: 3)

In (3), we can distinguish the metonymy THE ACRONYM OF THE PLACE FOR THE WHOLE PLACE TO LIVE IN, which, in turn, is employed in the conceptual metaphor THE ACRONYM AMEN AS A PRAYER TO KEEP THE SURVIVORS SAFE. The metaphor that is built upon metonymy in (3) contributes substantially to a more nuanced representation of the theme of New York in the novel. Arguably, the presence of metaphor and metonymy in *All the Water in the World* supports the literature (Bracke and Ritson 2020, Idema 2020, Kapranov 2024c, Sezen 2024), which suggests that the representation of climate change, inclusive of the climate crisis, is broadened by the mental imagery associated with metaphoric and metonymic devices in the text (Kapranov 2024d).

Apart from metaphor and metonymy, the notions of identity, evaluation and conviction help the readers to visualise and

comprehend the theme of New York in Caffall's (2025) novel. We analyse these notions in subsection 4.1.3 below.

4.1.3. The notions of identity, conviction and evaluation

We argue that the theme of New York in *All the Water in the World* is represented, inter alia, by the city's Gothic identity, which is characterised by abandonment, decay and desolation. Indeed, the flooded New York fits the mould of belonging to a cohort of Gothic cities, which are typically described in the Anglophone Gothic literature as haunted, menacing, and even nightmarish (Mighall 2007). We have already encountered a Gothic representation of New York with its haunting emptiness in excerpt (2), e.g. "The blank corridor from the library was a zero, no windows, flayed carpet..." (Caffall 2025: 25). Furthermore, Nonie remembers the fact that during the storm she and her family "ran for the museum library below us, the windowless stacks, safe as a thick-walled bunker, dark, mold-smelling and caked in lonely days and nights spent waiting out storm" (Caffall 2025: 7). Additionally, the Gothic identity of New York is evident from excerpt (4), which illustrates danger, decay, and desolation, e.g.

- (4) The roof was the only way to survive the rotting city, the people who might break a window and get into Amen until they saw there was nothing that would feed them. We were high on the roof, safe from people with guns or dogs, the old buildings rotting and dangerous below (Caffall 2025: 10).

After another storm, Nonie notes that the flooded New York is not only rotten, but broken and neglected, and just a haunting memory of its former grandeur:

- (5) Debris swirled and rose in the water – headphones, water bottles, flotillas of paper, broken birds, photographs. In the mud of the park after a storm, photographs surfaced, bleached and peeling, evidence of lives in The World As It was, lives that

included trips in planes, cakes with candles, people in fresh clothing with white teeth and no idea what was coming, a child on a three-wheeled bicycle, a newborn screaming with a red face faded pink, a man holding it, on the edge of laughter, eyes slapped wide, joy pouring out of his smiling mouth. (Caffall 2025: 58)

It follows from (4) and (5) that the Gothic identity of the flooded New York is associated with the references to decay and destruction, which amplify the city's Gothic feel, e.g.

- (6) I looked back at the hole where the roof once was, saw another funnel hit, sending a wash of rubble over us. In place of Amen there was only the black of all the clouds. In that blackness I heard a scream behind the ringing in my ears ... (Caffall 2025: 16)

In (4)–(6), the Gothic identity of the flooded New York projects upon the life of people in the inundated city and influences their convictions in the sense postulated by Stibbe (2014, 2015), i.e. people's beliefs about a particular description of reality.

The notion of conviction in relation to the theme of New York in *All the Water in the World* is subtle. Specifically, Caffall (2025) does not pretend to pigeonhole what New Yorkers believe in and what the city itself believes in. However, the notion of conviction comes to the fore in a basic yet potent form of believing in survival, as seen in (7) and (8).

- (7) We had a garden in the Park. When we went, we carried the two guns we had left, the ammo we saved, the ones who knew how carried bows we made or scavenged. We grew food. We went out. We came back. When we were lucky, the empty city echoed around us, dog packs off hunting deer. (Caffall 2025: 10)
- (8) Rolling blackouts, waves of refugees heading north and west, army everywhere, gas rationed, food scarce, the president in a huge ship offshore. In Old City they built floodgates that kept the sea outside, blocked the ocean getting up the river,

made the city an island we lived inside, a bowl that flooded up from the sewers when the storms came. (Caffall 2025: 18-19)

We may infer from (7) and (8) that the theme of New York involves the ethos of survival in the flooded city. In other words, we may argue that both (7) and (8) illustrate the desire of the city and its inhabitants to survive amidst the worst climate catastrophe imaginable. Their survival, however, does not entail any belief in the government or the system, as emblematised by excerpt (9):

- (9) The city made noises as it died. No one went out. I could hear gunshots if we got close to windows. I could see fires at night in the buildings, smoke in the air. There were soldiers. Soldiers didn't pay attention to the museum. No one trusted soldiers at Amen. We didn't come out. We didn't leave the collections. We didn't leave each other. Then there weren't any more soldiers. Everywhere was flooded or burning. (Caffall 2025: 37)

In (9), the theme of New York is represented by adding a distinct evaluative component, e.g. "The city made noises as it died" (Caffall 2025: 37). Nonie describes the death of the flooded New York, which she metaphorically sees as a creature that does not die silently. On the contrary, it communicates the agony of its death by making heart-wrenching noises.

However, the theme of New York is also associated with positive evaluations. The positivity is restricted to what Nonie refers to as Old New York. Whereas Old New York was heavily patrolled by the army, it still had roads, electricity, and grocery stores. The positive evaluation of Old New York comes to the fore only several times in the novel. Otherwise, the evaluative component of the theme of New York is represented by a mixture of angst, haunting, and decay. Hence, we may contend that the negative evaluation of New York is salient in the novel. Further,

in subsection 4.1.4 of the article, we discuss the notions of salience and erasure.

4.1.4. The notions of erasure and salience

The notion of salience is operationalised by Stibbe (2014, 2015) as an aspect of life that people regard as worthy of consideration. In this light, we posit that AMEN, i.e. The American Museum of Natural History, is one of the most salient features associated with the theme of New York in *All the Water in the World*. AMEN is amply described in the novel (see excerpts (2), (3), and (4)) as the place to live, as a symbol of hope, and as the last abode before Nonie and her family have to flee the flooded New York. The salience of AMEN, arguably, is sustained by the metaphors HUMAN LIFE IN NEW YORK AS THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY and THE ACRONYM AMEN AS A PRAYER TO KEEP THE SURVIVORS SAFE. Additionally, the notion of salience of AMEN is corroborated by the conceptual metonymy THE ACRONYM FOR THE WHOLE PLACE TO LIVE IN, which we have already discussed in the article (see subsection 4.1.2).

Another salient feature that appears to be quite recurrent in the novel is the representation of the theme of New York in a Gothic manner, which is reflective of desolation, decay, and haunting. The Gothic-like portrayal of the flooded New York by Caffall is strangely evocative of New York as Gotham in the Batman comics. However, the major difference between the flooded New York in *All the Water in the World* and New York as Gotham is that there are no superheroes in Caffall's novel who are able to mitigate the climate change catastrophe.

Whilst the Gothic aura associated with the theme of New York forms a salient feature of the novel, there are several important facets of the flooded New York that are backgrounded, or in Stibbe's (2014, 2015) terminology, erased by Caffall. As we have already noted in the article, the representation of Old New York before the apocalyptic flood is sidelined or erased in the novel. Furthermore, the notion of erasure in *All the Water in the*

World concerns the so-called climate justice. Typically, climate justice is portrayed through the lens of the innocent people who do not contribute to the negative consequences of climate change themselves but, nevertheless, seem to bear the brunt of the negative impact of the climate crisis (Schneider-Mayerson 2019, Mayer 2025). Whereas Caffall (2025) implies that Nonie and her family are innocent in terms of their contribution to climate change, she, however, does not expand upon their suffering as innocent victims. Moreover, there are no explicit representations of New York as a collective entity that contributes to the climate catastrophe by emitting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere or neglecting sustainable ways of living in harmony with the environment.

Similarly, the principles of social justice are erased in the novel. They are barely present in the form of a very vague reference to people who have to loot in order to get some food. In other words, Caffall (2025) hints at the issue of climate change-related hunger but never explores it in detail. Additionally, we should observe that whereas Caffall briefly mentions that the flooded New York gets split among racial gangs who fight for resources, this mention is a fleeting one-off occurrence. The racial divide is never fully unpacked by Caffall in relation to the theme of New York.

5. Conclusions

By means of applying the ecolinguistic approach developed by Stibbe (2014, 2015), we have established that the theme of New York is represented in the novel by the scientific framing of the issue of climate change. We argue that the theme of New York is framed along the canonical lines of climate change sciences in order to portray the flooded New York in a realistic manner. At the same time, however, the ecolinguistic analysis has revealed that there are no ideological representations that could be associated with the theme of New York in the novel.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from the ecolinguistic analysis of *All the Water in the World* consists in Caffall's use of metaphors that are reflective of the deep philosophical issues of life on this planet and of what it means to be human in the midst of the climate catastrophe. We contend that the metaphors HUMAN LIFE IN NEW YORK AS THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY and THE ACRONYM AMEN AS A PRAYER TO KEEP THE SURVIVORS SAFE assist the readers' comprehension of the danger a human being can experience in the vortex of the climate catastrophe.

Yet, the final concluding remarks should emphasise that whilst the old antediluvian New York as we know it is backgrounded or erased in the novel, the Gothic portrayal of the flooded New York is foregrounded. Particularly, the Gothic references to decay, destruction, as well as haunting seem to be salient in the novel, in which the theme of New York acquires a distinct Gothic feel. To conclude, we posit that the theme of New York in *All the Water in the World* is represented in a relatable, vivid, and recognisable manner to the readers. Finally, we may posit that the theme of New York in Caffall's cli-fi novel *All the Water in the World* facilitates the readers' understanding of the climate change catastrophe by foregrounding the images of decay and survival in the dystopian future.

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