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T.C.  
VAN YÜZÜNCÜ YIL ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ



İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI

YÜKSEK  
LİSANS TEZİ

AN ECOCRITICAL APPROACH TO MICHAEL CHRISTIE'S  
*GREENWOOD*

KADİR ÖGEN

İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI  
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AN ECOCRITICAL APPROACH TO MICHAEL CHRISTIE'S *GREENWOOD*

M.A. THESIS

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VAN – 2025

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**MICHAEL CHRISTIE'NIN *GREENWOOD* ADLI ESERİNE EKOELEŞTİREL BİR  
YAKLAŞIM**

**YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ**

**HAZIRLAYAN  
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**DANIŞMAN  
DOÇ. DR. MEMET METİN BARLIK**

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## KABUL VE ONAY

Kadir ÖGEN tarafından hazırlanan “**An Ecocritical Approach To Michael Christie’s Greenwood (Michael Christie’nin *Greenwood* Adlı Eserine Ekoeştirol Bir Yaklaşım)**” adlı tez çalışması aşağıdaki jüri tarafından OY BİRLİĞİ ile Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalında **YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ** olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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bildirir, aksi bir durumda aleyhime doğabilecek tüm hak kayıplarını kabullendiğini beyan ederim. (28/04/2025)

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### **MICHAEL CHRISTIE'NIN *GREENWOOD* ADLI ESERİNE EKOELEŞTİREL BİR YAKLAŞIM**

#### **ÖZET**

Bu tez, iklim değişikliği bağlamında kuşaklararası etik sorumluluk kavramını iklim kurgu (cli-fi) edebiyatı üzerinden incelemektedir. Çalışmanın merkezinde, Michael Christie'nin *Greenwood* adlı romanı yer almaktır, romanın çok katmanlı eşsiz anlatı yapısı çevresel felaketlerin tarihsel kökenlerini ve geleceğe etkilerini kuşaklar arası bir bakış açısıyla ele almaktadır. Çalışmada, çevre etiği, doğa tasavvuru, ekolojik hafıza ve kuşaklararası adalet gibi kavramlar, eserin sunduğu anlatı bağlamında çeşitli karakterler aracılığıyla analiz edilmiştir. *Greenwood*, 2038 yılında başlayan ve geriye dönük şekilde ilerleyen eşsiz anlatı yapısıyla, insan-doğa ilişkisini hem bireysel hem de kolektif düzeyde sorgularken; çevresel sorumluluğun yalnızca bugünkü kuşaklara değil, geçmiş ve gelecekteki bireylere de ait olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Bu bağlamda tez, edebi kurgunun yalnızca bir anlatı aracı değil, aynı zamanda etik farkındalık yaratma potansiyeline sahip güçlü bir ifade biçimini olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** ekoeleştiri, kuşaklararası etik, etik, iklim kurgusu, iklim-kurgu, bireysel etik sorumluluk, kolektif ahlaki sorumluluk, iklim değişikliği, çevre etiği, anlatı yapısı.

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### **AN ECOCRITICAL APPROACH TO MICHAEL CHRISTIE'S *GREENWOOD***

#### **ABSTRACT**

This thesis attempts to examine the concept of intergenerational ethical responsibility in the context of climate change through climate fiction (cli-fi) literature. The study examines Michael Christie's most recent novel *Greenwood*; the multi-layered unique narrative structure of the novel addresses the historical roots and future effects of environmental disasters from an intergenerational perspective. The thesis examines concepts such as environmental ethics, understanding of nature, ecological memory, and intergenerational justice through various characters in the context of the narrative presented in the novel. With its unique narrative structure that starts in 2038 and progresses backwards, *Greenwood* questions the relationship between humans and nature at both individual and collective levels, emphasizing that environmental responsibility belongs not only to today's generations, but also to individuals of the past and future. In this context, the thesis reveals that literary fiction is not only a narrative tool, but also a powerful form of expression that has the potential to increase ethical awareness.

**Key Words:** ecocriticism, intergenerational ethics, ethics, climate fiction, cli-fi, individual ethical responsibility, collective moral responsibility, climate change, environmental ethics, narrative structure.

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## INTRODUCTION

Preceding and following the dawn of humanity, the planet Earth, its nature in particular, has seen many significant annihilations by itself. Mass extinctions, big asteroid impacts, ice ages, and many other natural elements have played some vital roles in ecological alterations in geological history of the planet. However, upon leaving their long-standing culture of hunter-gatherer routine, once human beings started to settle down, things took a turn for the worse for the nature. *Homo sapiens* initiated the process of harnessing nature for their own benefits, to the detriment of abusing, destroying, affecting, and being affected by the very environment. Advent of Industrial Revolution has taken a ghastly damage to flora and fauna and has led to immense shifts in the planet's atmosphere, which is came to be known as 'climate change'. Towards the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there had been two great wars that also made matters worse for the already suffering planet. Especially with the fast-developing technology and mass production age, there emerged another room in the hall of ages: Anthropocene, namely the age of man. Human activity on the planet has been so tremendous that the very geological time humans are now in is being called by themselves. Perhaps the most remarkable transformation, however, has occurred in the relatively recent past. In the period that began after World War II and is referred to in the literature as the 'Great Acceleration', the human population doubled in just half a century, exceeding 6 billion by the end of the 20th century, while the global economy grew more than 15-fold during the same period. This unprecedented human-induced expansion has had serious environmental consequences, from the emergence of dangerous climate change to the triggering of the sixth mass extinction in Earth's history (Gardiner & Thompson, 2016, p. 2). Moreover, recent centuries' ecological systems – the planet Earth overall – have never seen such massive destruction in their geological history by human beings when compared retrospectively. Human beings have only recently known they have been affecting the home they are inhabiting and especially that they are being affected by it directly. Many varied cultures, politics, histories, religious doctrines and so forth of humans have one way or another played their roles in the imminent death of the planet. Though there have been several attempts

to remedy the damage inflicted upon nature, much time is still needed to have a global eco-consciousness for the sake of planet Earth, i.e., humanity.

In those cultures of man, there is without doubt a niche where human memory and imagination find their outlet: Literature. Since the beginning of its emerging, literature has played a vital role affecting, changing, and bending human mind, either for good or for bad. Storytelling is as old as man himself. We have been creating fictional stories, narrating those stories from one person to other and from one generation to the next. And within those fictions lay collective human mind. Those stories contain within themselves all the creative human activities, cultures, sciences, humanities, philosophies, religious doctrines, ethics and so forth. There is always an agent that no one can miss in such stories as old as Gilgamesh and as modern as Frankenstein: humans. However, there is also another character that has always either explicitly or implicitly been present in those stories, and that is of nature itself. Praxis of nature and its connotations like ‘wilderness’, ‘environment’, ‘ecology’, and ‘place’ have often been in use in our everyday life. Human mind and his life have been shaped and reshaped and re-reshaped by nature. Nature is everywhere, and traces of nature can be seen through the alleys of New York City if one has grasped true reality of what nature means and has had ecological awareness. Nature is not something romantic that comes to mind as ‘beauty’, ‘forests’, ‘seas and oceans’, ‘unknown’; rather, nature is all-encompassing and ubiquitous. It is a hypernym, i.e., umbrella term for everything that existed, have existed, or will exist on the planet. In other words, discourse of nature manifests itself in everyday human activities from the simplest conversations to the most sophisticated human action such as making philosophy. Thus, it is not surprising to see that humans create texts based on a glimpse of nature, be it consciously or unconsciously.

Until the second half of the 20th century, literature, and its theory as well as practice had been written mostly by such human-centered lenses as gender, race, economics, culture, and so on. For instance, many well-known theoretical niches such as feminism, Marxism, colonialism, postcolonialism, gender studies, critical-race theory, and many others are clear examples that prove anthropocentric practice on literature in general. That is, before the advent of ecocriticism, all the other theories were one way or another either linguistically or culturally constructed; that is, they

were man-centered theories. Furthermore, according to Ursula K. Heise, prior to ecocriticism, “...the notion of nature tended to be approached as a sociocultural construct that had historically often served to legitimatize the ideological claims of specific social groups” (Heise, 2006, p. 505). The plights that planet Earth had been undergoing until that moment were not much emphasized by literary scholars as well as writers. Nuclear arms race, atomic age, wars, famine, overfishing, diseases, and many other elements included had paved the way for a voice for the Earth. Righteous political as well as discreet cultural steps had to be taken to save the only planet that provides life. Consequently, nature activism and many other cultural movements advocating nature had emerged. Some scholars prepared ground for nature writing or ecological writing. Those pioneers established some theoretical groundwork for an imminent literary criticism, which came to be known as ‘ecocriticism’. Although those valuable attempts by a few critics cannot be overlooked, it was not until the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century that ecocriticism had officially been acknowledged and practiced by literary scholars across the globe.

## 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 1.1. The Emergence of Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism largely emerged as a literary field in the 1990s. In 1962, Rachel Carson's non-fiction book *Silent Spring* had repercussions in the time when environmental movements were publicly advocated and voices in favour of nature were initiated by some proactivists. Moreover, there were also some attempts made to write through ecocritical discourse in the 1970s when two influential works were published by two substantial figures. Raymond William's *The Country and The City* was published in 1973. He was a British Marxist critic. In this seminal work, Williams starts scrutinizing old English books from the 1500s onwards and studies them through ecological lens. Sceneries of the country and the city are shown in this literary piece of work. He explains how these pictures represent things that are happening both in society and the economy (Habeeb, 2012, p. 505). Another figure who tried to mention ecocritical elements through his product was Joseph Meeker. He published his ecocritical work *The Comedy of Survival: Literary Ecology and Play Ethics*. In this work, Meeker emphasises the fact that environmental destructions that the planet undergoing was mainly triggered by western cultural tradition. And he proposes that the only remedy for the environmental crisis goes through the utilization of mode of comedy.

The term ecology comes from Greek word 'oikos', which stands for 'eco' and means house, and 'logos' which stands for 'logy' and means 'judge.' That is, ecology is the judging of house, namely criticizing the planet Earth. Ecocritics are just like judges, criticizing a literary work from an earth-centred perspective. So, what exactly does an ecocritic do then? They scrutinize poems, novels, and any other literary text to bring to light. They look for some clues as to whether nature or a specific environment in that literary text is presented bad or good. Also, they criticize any character from an ecocritical perspective: how does environment shape that character's identity, or vice versa, how does a character's identity shape the environment he inhabits? These questions and alike lead an ecocritic in his journey of scrutinizing a text through ecocritic lens.

The coinage of the word ‘ecocriticism’ is still being disputed; however, almost every literary critic in the field is on the same mind that William Rueckert was the first one to come up with the term. Rueckert published an essay titled *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*. In this essay he emphasized the praxis of ecology through literature. He further defines ecocriticism as, “the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature, because ecology has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world” (Rueckert, 1996, p. 107). According to Gulfishaan Habeeb, “The originality of Rueckert’s ecocriticism lies in locating the practices surrounding literature to the ecological web” (Habeeb, 2012). Thus, it is righteous to claim that Rueckert himself attempted to amalgamate two distinct fields into one, which came to be known as ecocriticism. Although ecocriticism is the officially acknowledged name for the field of study, there are several other nomenclatures such as green cultural studies, ecopoetics, ecological studies, green studies, environmental studies, environmental literary criticism, and so on. Perhaps this emphasizes the fact that ecocriticism is a quite new theory because it does not have a fixed specific name, however, most of the scholars in this field agree on ‘ecocriticism’ by Rueckert to define the literary theory. Rueckert thought that science and poetry now can go hand in hand to emphasize the stewardship of nature. Serpil Opperman aptly epitomizes this fact, “Ecocriticism, then, attempts to find a common ground between the human and nonhuman to show how they can coexist in various ways, because the environmental issues have become an integral part of our existence” (Oppermann, 1999, p. 31).

In the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ecocriticism had gained appropriate recognition in literary world as some organizations such as ‘The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE)’ in the U.S.A. ASLE also founded its own journal called ‘Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment (ISLE)’ that has published numerous articles from various critics across the planet regarding the ecocriticism since its first emergence in 1993. Cheryll Glotfelty could be considered as the modern founder of ecocriticism. She was a professor at Nevada University where ecocriticism started burgeoning as a literary criticism in academia. Later in 1996 Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm together published a seminal work called *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. This book is a rather

compelling anthology and collection of numerous articles regarding literary ecology, i.e., ecocriticism, by some of the most influential authors in the field. In the introduction part to this seminal anthology, Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as follows:

*Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies.* (Glotfelty, 1996, p. xviii)

Glotfelty emphasises the fact that when scrutinizing a literary text through the lens of ecocriticism, rather than anthropocentric mindset one must possess an eco-centric or earth-centred approach to literary texts. Since ecocriticism takes an interdisciplinary approach to literary studies, one must also be familiar with adequate knowledge from other disciplines such as sciences, ecology, biology, zoology, botany, animal studies, and so forth. Therefore, ecocriticism is constantly making itself, given that it is still burgeoning and quite prolific field. The field of ecocriticism is currently undergoing a process of self-invention and formation, drawing heavily from diverse academic disciplines and the natural sciences (Oppermann, 1999). Another definition of ecocriticism that resonates those of Glotfelty and Opperman comes from Lawrence Buell who is another pioneer of ecocriticism, in his book *The Environmental Imagination* states that, “Ecocriticism might succinctly be defined as study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmental praxis” (Buell, 1996, p. 430). Although definition of ecocriticism is semantically quite comprehensible, there is not a fixed or standard mode of analysing literary text through an ecocritical lens. In his *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, chapter titled “Ecocriticism”, Peter Barry draws the attention to the previously mentioned question:

*But there is, as we have said, no universally accepted model that we have merely to learn and apply. Often, it is just a matter of approaching perhaps very familiar texts with a new alertness to this dimension, a dimension which has perhaps always hoovered about the text, but without ever receiving our full attention before.* (Barry, 2009, p. 248)

In other words, one must be ecologically aware of the text to fully analyse it within ecocritical boundaries. In fact, one even can read a literary work under such ecocritical names as ecofeminism and colonial ecocriticism. Hence, it all depends on the critic reading a text from a different perspective but always keeping one eye on ecocritical elements in the work of art.

## 1.2. Ecocritical Waves

Throughout its developmental progress, ecocriticism has undergone several shifts. Although ecocriticism largely has two distinct waves, it is possible to mention a third one, as well. The initial waves had been divided by Laurence Buell and Cheryll Glotfelty. The first wave ecocriticism took place in the 1980s and 1990s. It emphasised a radical earth-centred approach. It is possible that first wave ecocriticism took its foundations in American Transcendentalists and British Romantics. In the American counterpart, it mostly focused on the works of three most famous American Transcendentalists such as Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*; Margaret Fuller, *Summer on the Lakes*; and Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*. Thoreau in his *Walden* took nature as his foremost theme. It emphasises man's returning to nature, his origins. First wave ecocritics primarily focused on these writers' works so that they could scrutinize them by means of ecocriticism lens. According to those scholars, nature was the divine, prime entity that must be distinguished from any other human associated object. As such, just like radical feminism, this wave of ecocritics aggrandized nature while putting any human related entity on the back burner, that of culture. First wave ecocritics also accentuated 'bioregionalism' or 'national environmentalism'. In fact, according to Lawrence Buell, bioregionalism is the most important factor of the first wave ecocriticism, and he puts:

*The most lastingly influential first-wave attempt to fuse scientific and humanistic thinking has so far probably been ecocritical work in the area of bioregionalism—an eclectic body of thinking that interweaves findings from ecology, geography, anthropology, history, phenomenology, and aesthetics in the service of the normative claim that a person's primary loyalty as citizen should be to the bioregion—or ecological region—rather than to nation or some other jurisdictional unit.* (Buell, 2011, p. 91)

It focused on the natural citizenship or stewardship of nature. In other words, the first wave ecocriticism mostly underscored the doctrine of 'nature is for nature's sake'. Thus, it is righteous to state that first wave ecocriticism took an earth-centered approach rather than anthropocentric one and upheld natural environment rather than man-made 'environments', namely urbanization. Besides, William Howarth epitomizes the first wave ecocriticism by stating that an ecocritic is "a person who judges the merits and faults of writings that depict the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action" (Howarth, 1996, p. 69). The last part is especially important to

highlight the foregrounding of nature and pushing other human related matters into the background.

As for second wave ecocriticism, there is a fundamental shift from all-focused on nature to embracing both nature and urbanization at the same time, namely culture. Similarly, in the beginning of the new millennium the progression of ecocriticism expanded its focus to incorporate various concerns, such as the shift from a localized perspective to a transnational and global outlook on the attachment to place, as well as the convergence of literature-environment studies with postcolonial literary studies and ethnic minority literatures (Nuri, 2020, pp. 253-268). That is, whereas the first wave accentuated bioregionalism, localism, and decentralization, the second wave ecocriticism broadened these aspects to include globalism, international environment, urbanization, and centralization, as well. It is, therefore, appropriate to state that while the former was the first half of the whole, the latter is the complement of that whole. Additionally, Lawrence Buell, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thornber opine in this matter:

*...second-wave scholarship of the past decade has shown greater interest in literature pertaining to the metropolis and industrialization; has tended to reject the validity of nature-culture distinction...and has favored a sociocentric rather than bio-centric and/or individual-experience-oriented ethics and aesthetics, placing particular emphasis on environmental justice concerns.* (Buell, Heise, & Karen, 2011, p. 419)

In particular, the final statement of these scholars is of great importance in order to comprehend what second wave ecocriticism aims and emphasises. Revisionist ecocriticism is another term for this wave of ecocriticism. The ecocritic study aims to identify the remnants of natural elements within urban areas and shed light on the injustices committed against the environment and society's marginalized communities (Mishra, 2016, pp. 68-70). While the first wave ecocriticism advocated non-human environs, the second wave ecocriticism embraced human environs, leading to amalgamation of these two into a whole. In other words, ecocriticism has evolved from focusing solely on nature writing to also examining the constructed environments found in urban landscapes – i.e., non-human. The change has prompted ecocritics to delve into a range of interconnected issues, including racism, underdevelopment, poverty, gender inequality, prejudice against the LGBTQ+ community, and xenophobia (Mukhtar, 2017, p. 321).

Engaging with certain postmodern principles, it is feasible to acknowledge the emergence of a third wave of ecocriticism. The subject matter remains current and continues to be the subject of ongoing debate among prominent academics, including but not limited to Serpil Opperman, Serenella Iovino, Greg Garrard, Timothy Morton, and Dana Philips. The emergent trend within ecocriticism is commonly referred to as material ecocriticism – also referred to as ‘new materialism’. The ecocritics mentioned above have been engaged in diligent study aimed at defining the fundamental principles and theoretical assumptions of the field. According to these scholars, everything in the material world is connected to one another in way or another. For instance, even a desk in a shopping mall is a part of a bigger system. Therefore, nature and culture have been coalesced into one entirety. Similarly, all forms of matter, including those that are imperceptible or unnoticed, exhibit continual interactions with other forms of matter, whether in human or non-human manifestations (Iovino & Oppermann, 2014, p. 7). As for a definition of what material ecocriticism is, in their seminal work *Material Ecocriticism* Opperman and Iovino provides insights as to field:

*Material ecocriticism, in this broad framework, is the study of the way material forms—bodies, things, elements, toxic substances, chemicals, organic and inorganic matter, landscapes, and biological entities—interact with each other and with the human dimension, producing configurations of meanings and discourses that we can interpret as stories... Seen in this light, every living creature, from humans to fungi, tells evolutionary stories of coexistence, interdependence, adaptation and hybridization, extinctions and survivals. (Iovino & Oppermann, 2014)*

In essence, every organism or object inhabiting the Earth, whether they are a component of the natural environment or human society, possesses its own unique narrative that can be subject to interpretation. The responsibility of the ecocritic is to explore narratives from a materialistic perspective, thus illuminating interpretations that have been overlooked by anthropocentric viewpoints. Besides, the proponents of material ecocriticism demonstrate their novel approach by acknowledging the significant role of nonhuman agency in human activities. They emphasize the limitations of traditional distinctions between the natural and cultural realms, as well as the interconnectedness of ecological and political concerns, thereby indicating the inseparability of these domains (Clark, 2019, p. 112).

Concisely, ecocriticism, while a relatively recent addition to literary theory and criticism, has been widely acknowledged and accepted within academic circles since

its inception in the early 1960s and 1970s. From the 1980s onwards, it has been divided into three previously mentioned developmental phases. The initial wave of ecocriticism emphasized nature as the primary subject of analysis for the purpose of its redemption, while the subsequent wave of ecocriticism expanded its focus to encompass the cultural sphere, with an emphasis on identifying specific parallels between nature and marginalized groups within society. The most recent iteration of ecocriticism, known as material ecocriticism or new materialism, has ultimately embraced a novel perspective within the discipline. The focus has been on the interconnectedness of the human and non-human world, with the intention of highlighting often neglected materialistic aspects of both culture and nature.

### **1.3. An Emerging Subfield of Ecocriticism: Climate Fiction (Cli-Fi)**

Despite its relatively recent inception, ecocriticism has proven to be a fertile ground for scholarly inquiry and critical discourse. Accordingly, the emergent field of ecocriticism has yielded significant contributions to literary theory and criticism, giving rise to several subfields such as animal studies, ecofeminism, postcolonial ecocriticism, eco-poetics, ecocritical pedagogy, and climate fiction. Particularly the last one, climate fiction – widely known with its abbreviated form as “cli-fi” – has emerged as a novel facet of ecocriticism, specifically focused on highlighting the current reality of climate change affecting the planet. Since its coinage as “cli-fi” in 2007 by a journalist as well as once an English teacher Dan Bloom, this phenomenon has garnered significant interest from both scholarly and general audiences alike. As for definition of what exactly cli-fi stands for, Adeline Johns-Putra simply provides her way of understanding of climate fiction when she puts, “I would prefer to define climate change fiction as fiction concerned with anthropogenic climate change or global warming as we now understand it (Johns-Putra, 2016, p. 267).” Despite the limitations of this definition in clearly delineating cli-fi as a unique literary genre and area of literary critique, the scholar, in collaboration with Alex Goodbody, provides a succinct definition for cli-fi in their seminal work, *Cli-Fi: A Companion*, specifically in the “Introduction” section:

*Given the absence of a precise definition, cli-fi may be best thought of as a distinctive body of cultural work which engages with anthropogenic climate change, exploring the phenomenon not just in terms of setting, but with regard to psychological and social issues, combining*

*fictional plots with meteorological facts, speculation on the future and reflection on the human-nature relationship, with an open border to the wider archive of related work on whose models it sometimes draws for the depiction of climatic crisis.* (Goodbody & Johns-Putra, 2019, p. 2)

This definition seems, for the present, appropriate enough at least to cover what cli-fi stands for by providing its philosophical, cultural, and theoretical foundations. Regarding whom might be a cli-fi writer, some of the most renowned contemporary writers, including Margaret Atwood, Barbara Kingsolver, Richard Powers, and Kim Stanley Robinson, are among the practitioners of this literary tradition. In fact, the proliferation of climate change literature has resulted in an increased scholarly interest in climate change within the field of literary studies, particularly within the environmentally focused subfield known as ecocriticism (Johns-Putra, 2016, p. 266). With the current climate crisis posing a significant threat to human pursuits, there is a noticeable surge in the growth of this literary genre. Even so, the motif of climate change has persisted throughout literary history, whether intentionally or unintentionally, for millennia, and has played a significant role in some of the most renowned narratives in human culture, spanning from the well-known story of Noah and the flood to contemporary science fiction works by authors such as Jules Verne and others.

The emerging field of literary criticism, often referred to as cli-fi criticism, climate change criticism, or critical climate change, seeks to analyse and critique literature that addresses or focuses on the impacts, causes, and implications of climate change. The emergence of this ecocriticism initially received limited attention, but subsequently evolved into an established subgenre within the field and garnered widespread acceptance among literary scholars. Adeline Johns-Putra touches succinctly on the subject at hand:

*...it is clear 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, p. 266)

Despite the assertion that cli-fi falls within the broader genre of science fiction (sci-fi), it is arguable that it should be considered as a subgenre of ecocriticism due to its distinctive emphasis on environmental and earth-centred themes. Correspondingly, there has been a conspicuous rise in the production of climate fiction (cli-fi) novels,

alongside their subsequent adaptations for the stage and screen. Movies such as *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), *Waterworld* (1995), *Snowpiercer* (2013), *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015), *The Colony* (2013) have served to reinvigorate the collective imagination regarding the potential consequences for humanity in the near future if proactive measures are not implemented to mitigate and address the climate change dilemma. As such, many cli-fi writers have garnered public and political attention to the degradation of the planet's climate, leading to the creation of numerous texts that have the potential to induce political change or promote environmental awareness among the global population.

Just like ecocriticism being an interdisciplinary field of literature, climate fiction (cli-fi) novels can be considered an ‘inter-genre’ due to their incorporation of elements from a wide array of genres, including dystopian, apocalyptic, post-apocalyptic, cyberpunk, solar punk, and various others. Johns-Putra accentuates this fact by stating, “there is overlap between science fiction, dystopia and the postapocalyptic, with the emphasis in science fiction being on an imaginary but internally consistent world characterized by its scientific and technological processes” (Johns-Putra, 2016). As a result, it is quite possible to claim that cli-fi overlaps with other sci-fi genres to stand out as a whole genre of its own.

## 2. INTERGENERATIONAL ETHICS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

### 2.1 Intergenerational Ethics: Key Concepts

To begin with, ethics or moral philosophy fundamentally is a branch of philosophy that encompasses human doings, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours related to something specific such as climate change. It deals with how human beings live according to some rationale which determines what is wrong or right in a specific context, be it humane or non-humane. In the same vein, according to Peter Singer, ethics' subject "consists of the fundamental issues of practical decision making, and its major concerns include the nature of ultimate value and the standards by which human actions can be judged right or wrong" (Singer, 2025). In this regard, the subject of ethics has always been present since the dawn of civilization when human beings started living together under a group of norms and rules that govern a society. Hence ethics is a set of norms and rules that demand humans in a specific society to live accordingly as well as harmonically. In other words, ethics assumes that humans ought to live according to some impeccable solid reason that can administrate their deeds and overall thinking. Today ethics deals with various questions from the very idea of creating human clones to whether to sacrifice some animal species for the sake of advancement of human civilization. It also takes on such issues as whether humans are required to leave a better and preserved planet for future progeny. For instance, when it comes to global climate change fact, what humans inadvertently do today affect future generations inevitably. Therefore, ethics is closely associated with other subjects and disciplines, by creating distinct ethical domains such as environmental ethics, and climate change ethics. What's more, associated with climate change, individual and collective ethical responsibility in *Greenwood* is one of the dominant motifs, both of which conceptually deserve some sort of definition.

As for ethical responsibility, this thesis generally aims to revolve around the following: individual and collective ethical responsibility. Matthew Talbert outlines basic principles of moral responsibility, "Making judgments about whether a person is morally responsible for their behavior, and holding others and ourselves responsible for actions and the consequences of actions, is a fundamental and familiar part of our moral practices and our interpersonal relationships" (Talbert, 2024). In the same vein,

as stated in the words of Wisneski, Morgan, and Bauman, moral responsibility could be identified as follows:

*Moral responsibility concerns the extent to which a person believes that another individual or group is blameworthy and ought to be accountable for violating standards of conduct by either behaving in an unacceptable manner or failing to behave in an acceptable manner.* (Wisneski, Morgan, & Bauman, 2016)

As the name of the individual ethical responsibility suggests, personal or individual moral obligations lie in the heart of each individual belonging to a specific society. One person's ethical demeanour might be quite different than the other person when it comes to a particular subject matter. An individual can easily – sometimes trickily – choose between what is wrong or right in the face of a situation at hand. That is, a person consciously attempts to choose what will turn out as 'good' or 'bad' based on his/her reasoning upon facing a situation. Individual ethical responsibility varies even among members of the same family. For example, a father could make ethically bad decisions while his daughter might do the quite opposite. Even if this family has a solid educational background that goes beyond generations, there are different ethical approaches that those family members take on. Therefore, regardless of time, place, and family roots, an individual has got a free will that can lead their decent ethical demeanour throughout their lifetime. With respect to collective ethical responsibility, there are many things that worth mentioning even if some of the claims made by collective ethical responsibility entail individual one as well. Simply by reasoning, one can effortlessly claim that individuals themselves one by one constitute a meaningful whole like a collective ethical stance. In this case, groups such as a family, corporation, club, union, company, society, nation, and so on could be regarded as collective wholes. Ethical responsibility at the collective level requires that collective structures rather than individuals be held responsible for their actions that cause harm. In this context, the subject considered as the moral agent is not the group members but the group itself. Therefore, collective moral responsibility cannot be reduced to individual moral responsibility and cannot be attributed to individuals within the group separately (Smiley, 2010, p. 172). However, according to Allyson Rudolph, "many theories disclaim the existence or the possibility of collective moral responsibility – a group is just not the sort of thing that can ever be considered a morally responsible agent" (Rudolph, 2007, p. 1). Nevertheless, collective moral responsibility is an approach

used to analyse widespread harms and ethical violations resulting from group-based actions and to develop appropriate intervention strategies. The basic elements of moral responsibility are deeply embedded in the socio-cultural fabric of every society and play a decisive role in the construction of social integrity and ethical norms (T. Risser, n.d.). All in all, ethical responsibility, be it individually or collectively, is at the centre of human life. Moral responsibility among all parties is decisive when it comes to deal with outcomes of something like climate change. Consequently, one individual cannot have a profound impact on preventing happenings of climate change, without ever collaborating with collective entities like society, corporations, companies, nations, and even globally associated parties. Although individuals have various responsibilities, preventing the damages caused by climate change cannot be directly assessed at the individual level among these responsibilities. The main reason for this is that no individual can cause or prevent the occurrence of these damages on their own. Combating the effects of climate change and preventing these effects can only be possible through actions to be taken at a joint or collective level (Placani, 2024, p. 79). In the similar vein, since individuals cannot directly observe their individual contributions to climate change, they tend to believe that their actions will not make a significant difference in the overall impact. This perception raises ethical concerns and common-sense arguments about the necessity of individual responsibility. Because it is not only states, international organizations, companies, or institutional structures that need to take effective moral responsibility in reducing the devastating effects of the climate crisis, but also individuals (Küçükkaya, 2022).

Intergenerational ethics – also called as obligation to future generations – is a phenomenon that studies ethical stances of different generations sharing the same familial or kinship bonds by comparing within different periods in history. As the name suggests, it is a branch of applied ethics that juxtaposes various successive generations in the context of how individuals as well as collectives behave in specific periods facing some global phenomena like climate change. It deals whether present-day generations are obligated to leave a better-preserved planet for future generations in every respect. Moreover, intergenerational ethics examines whether the obligations of individuals living today to ensure environmental sustainability can be assessed in the context of moral responsibilities towards future generations that are not yet born or

exist. This ethical approach is structurally distinct from contemporary interpersonal ethical relations, particularly because of the direct and one-way (asymmetric) influence of the current generation on future generations (Roser, 2023). Yet there are some scholars who argue that there is no such thing as intergenerational ethics because they think that there is no tangible generation at hand to discourse in the first place. Traditional ethics only assumes present-day generations rather than involving future generations when it comes to a specific subject matter at hand like global climate change. Because effects of climate change more likely will have come out sometime in future, present-day generations tend to ignore the fact that their own descendants will face the consequences of what they do today. However, today, it is now clear that many activities carried out by individuals throughout their lives will have permanent and profound effects on the welfare level and social structure of future generations. This situation necessitates the evaluation of current life practices and forms of action from the perspective of intergenerational justice. Because the framework in question comprehensively addresses not only intergenerational rights and obligations, but also the forms of justice and injustice that emerge between the past, present and future (Ohlsson & Skillington, 2023, p. 223). Moreover, thousands of years ago some scholars gave voice to the fact that present-day generations are obliged to generations to follow in terms of protecting and providing a far better planet as well as civilization in every respect possible. Global climate change, overpopulation, overuse of earth's resources, bustling modern life and so on undeniably bring the matter of intergenerational ethics or justice into light. According to Ohlsson and Skillington, the current growing interest in intergenerational justice and related concepts is largely due to the fact that the scientific expert view that humanity is facing a serious threat of ecological collapse, and that urgent action is needed to prevent this crisis and achieve sustainable development goals is now so strong that it can no longer be ignored. Considering current scientific data, it is clear that there is no longer any rational basis for rejecting these warnings (2023, p. 224). Furthermore, discussions of intergenerational justice focus primarily on three critical questions. First, it is questioned whether individuals living today have an obligation to generations that lived in the past or will live in the future that stems from the principle of justice. Second, it is questioned whether contemporary individuals should act out of moral

responsibilities or ethical concerns beyond justice in their relations with both previous and future generations. Third, the moral significance of historical injustices is evaluated in terms of the kind of responsibility that contemporary societies have towards individuals who were not directly victims of these injustices but are their descendants (Meyer, 2021). On the other hand, normally altruistic behaviour at the individual level might be hoped for; but unless an individual has a reasonable expectation that others will similarly constrain themselves, the impact of such altruism will be quite limited and will entail serious costs for the individual. In this context, such altruism seems far from rational. Thus, when individuals choose actions that seem rational on their own, at the collective level, everyone is likely to suffer a worse outcome. This situation can be considered a classic collective action problem in the absence of cooperative constraints. All in all, intergenerational ethics is a significant subject matter that is highly debated among philosophers and scholars all around the world today in that planetary survival comes into question considering climate change and other human-induced calamities that end up earth's overall wellbeing and sustainability for future generations. Intergenerational ethics, hence, justice among successive generations, demands every individual as well as collective entity to inwardly act for the sake of all, human or non-human. Therefore, individual as well as collective moral responsibility come into play, and comparison of several generations by keeping in mind these two concepts can provide insights about overall ethical nature of human beings. Although this sort of examination has not been much implemented in literature world, this thesis by and large and humbly attempts to do so.

## **2.2 Climate Change and Environmental Ethics**

Another concept that is highly associated with climate change as well as intergenerational ethics is anthropocentrism. Before delving into what anthropocentrism stands for in line with ethics, it is perhaps better to define what the Anthropocene means at first. Although the term itself is linked to an unofficial geological time scale corresponding to the last section which is highly affected by human activities, it describes human beings' relentless and exhausting activities that affect the wellbeing of planet earth's ecological system. In their article titled "Defining the Anthropocene", Lewis and Maslin attempts to define the word Anthropocene as the following:

*Human activity has been a geologically recent, yet profound, influence on the global environment. The magnitude, variety and longevity of human-induced changes, including land surface transformation and changing the composition of the atmosphere, has led to the suggestion that we should refer to the present, not as within the Holocene Epoch (as it is currently formally referred to), but instead as within the Anthropocene Epoch. (2015, p. 171)*

Moreover, as the name suggests, the Anthropocene, etymologically means ‘new human’, for Greek origin word ‘anthropo’ stands for humans while ‘cene’ stands for ‘new’, hence the word Anthropocene which today is used to depict recent planetary human activities. This new geological era emphasizes the decisive impact of human activities on the Earth's biotic and geophysical systems. This epoch marks a period in which humans have become the dominant force in planetary processes. The main indicators of the Anthropocene are varied, including climate change and the resulting rise in sea levels, the destruction of terrestrial and marine ecosystems by plastic pollution, unprecedented levels of biodiversity loss and increased species extinction rates, and radical changes in the chemical composition of the soil, oceans, and atmosphere (Chua & Fair, 2019). Consequently, not surprisingly, human-induced global climate change is one of the clearest outcomes of the Anthropocene. Another term that is highly related to the Anthropocene is Anthropocentrism that questions whether all entities – be it humane or non-humane – have intrinsic moral values or not. It is a philosophical perspective which suggests that human beings are the only entities who have moral values and thus make judgements about other entities. So, it is a human-centered philosophical view; human existence is emphasized over other beings such as animals, trees, and so on. According to Helen Kopnina, “the term anthropocentrism is a worldview that privileges the aim of improving human welfare over other aspirations” (Kopnina, 2019). Another definition comes from the Cambridge Dictionary; anthropocentrism is “a belief in humans and their existence as the most important and central fact in the universe (Cambridge Dictionary).” In the similar vein, perhaps one of the best definitions on what anthropocentrism stands for comes from Goralnik and Nelson. In their article titled “Anthropocentrism”, they attempt to come up with a description about this philosophical concept:

*Anthropocentrism literally means human-centered, but in its most relevant philosophical form it is the ethical belief that humans alone possess intrinsic value. In contradistinction, all other beings hold value only in their ability to serve humans, or in their instrumental value. From an anthropocentric position, humans possess direct moral standing because they are ends in and of themselves; other things (individual living beings, systems) are means to human ends. (Goralnik & Nelson, 2012, p. 145)*

And in discussions of environmental ethics, ethical anthropocentrism often emerges as a central axis of discussion. In this framework, the values human beings attribute to the natural world are questioned and normative assessments are made on the ethical principles by which humans should pursue the human-nature relationship (2012). Consequently, non-anthropocentric ethical theories argue that value cannot be reduced to human interests alone and that non-human entities can also have an independent moral status. According to these approaches, non-human elements of nature may have an intrinsic value of their own – not just on the basis of the benefits they provide to humans – which makes it possible to ground moral responsibilities towards them (Kawall, 2015, p. 4). Furthermore, the term ‘anthropocentrism’ is both conceptually ambiguous and, in some contexts, prone to misuse. While the technical meaning of the word is simply “human centeredness,” in common usage it generally refers to an anthropocentric understanding of values – that is, to the disregard of the intrinsic values that nonhuman beings may have. In this context, many phenomena or ways of thinking can be anthropocentric in different ways. In disciplines such as environmental ethics, bio protection studies, and environmental social sciences, the different meanings of this concept are often confused, leading to terminological and conceptual confusion (Kopnina, Washington, Taylor, & Piccolo, 2018, p. 113). Therefore, it is high time for environmental ethics got involved in this theoretical framework.

Environmental ethics is a branch of philosophy which studies ethical concerns related to environment. It deals with how human beings view non-human environmental interests through their ethical lens. According to Brennan and Lo, environmental ethics “is the discipline in philosophy that studies the moral relationship of human beings to, and also the value and moral status of, the environment and its non-human contents” (Brennan & Y. S. Lo). Environmental ethics is interested in mostly with the following questions: Does environmental entities other than humans have intrinsic value in them? How can humans establish a moral judgement or reasoning based on environmental issues at hand? Is it okay for human beings to cut down trees for the sake of some economical values? One can easily multiply these questions even further as long as they pose a relationship between humans and nature. Since the 1970s interest in environmental ethics has been bourgeoning, and many scholars have published plenty of articles and books to raise awareness for the sake of

planet's ecological systems. In compliance with ecocriticism, environmental ethics since then has established its standing in humanities and natural science. Furthermore, the emergence of environmental ethics is directly related to the ethical problems created by modern technological developments. The origin of this ethical field is essentially based on an intellectual paradigm shift shaped by the increasing awareness of the long-term and unpredictable consequences of human actions, together with the significant increase in the capacity of new technologies to intervene in nature (Valera, Vidal, & Leal, 2020, pp. 442-443). As a result of this technological and mental change of directions, many literary critics have been using the lens of environmental ethics to analyze various literary texts such as poems, novels, and plays so that they could find traces of ethical relationships between humans and nature. In this context, the basis of environmental ethics is the investigation of the questions of which non-human entities in nature have value, on what grounds and in what kind of value form these values gain meaning; and also the evaluations of how these values should be reflected in ethical principles, practical applications, legal regulations and decision-making processes. Moreover, at the core of environmental ethics are questions about which elements in the environment have moral value and the nature of these values. In particular, the claim that the environment or certain components of it have intrinsic, not merely instrumental, value is central to environmental ethical debates. (Palmer, McShane, & Ronald, 2014, pp. 421-422). Thus, in environmental ethics intrinsic value is of vital importance rather than extrinsic value or instrumental value because the last two to some extent serve human interests and thus anthropocentric in its essence. In the similar vein, the main reason why traditional ethical theories are inadequate to address environmental issues is that they were initially based mostly on the anthropocentric approach. This approach accepts only humans and/or their interests as beings with direct moral value, while it tends to evaluate the value of non-human entities only in terms of their effects on humans. Such ethical understandings, which define morality only in terms of interpersonal obligations, fail to conceptualize the idea that humans may have direct moral responsibilities towards the natural environment, as stated by the pioneer thinkers of environmental ethics. Therefore, these approaches are inadequate in explaining the moral dimension of human-nature relations comprehensively (McShane, 2009, p. 407). No wonder that many theorists claim that

environmental ethics' focal point should be based on intrinsic values rather than instrumental or extrinsic values, both of which serve only human interests in mind and remain quite fundamentally anthropocentric.

Global climate crisis brings forth the question of ethics that goes beyond contemporary concerns. Moreover, as mentioned in previous sections, global climate change essentially poses an intergenerational ethical problem. The climatic conditions observed today are the result of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions that have been ongoing for over a century. Therefore, generations living in the coming centuries will be exposed to a climate system shaped by the combined effects of past, present and future emissions. Just as decisions made in the past determined the environmental realities humans live in today, decisions made today and in the near future will determine the living conditions of generations yet to be born. In this context, climate change raises not only environmental but also profound intergenerational ethical questions. (Hourdequin, 2025) This is when intergenerational ethics of climate change comes into play. It is also obvious that intergenerational ethics has two realities which are came to be know as spatial as well as temporal dimensions. Spatial dimension refers to a specific place that plays a key role in forming climate change. It is also associated with climate change justice because some of the parts of the planet has been badly affected by global climate change events even though these places are remote and have hardly ever been involved in climate crisis. Therefore, spatial dimension of this phenomenon suggests that some places on the planet are major players that largely constitute what came to be known as global climate change. That is, developed countries such as the U.S.A and China are, for example, are one among those countries that mainly cause climatic change in the atmosphere of the planet earth. As a result, the impacts of climate change are being felt directly by millions of people around the world, with particularly devastating consequences for the poor and vulnerable. Unless governments in countries with high greenhouse gas emissions implement radical and comprehensive emission mitigation policies, the current situation is expected to deteriorate significantly. In this context, the environmental conditions that future generations will face point to an increasingly deteriorated and dangerous climate system (Caney, 2022, p. 137). As for temporal dimension, one needs to travel in time to explore what systems had been implemented previously in order to mitigate the

effects of climate change. Intergenerational ethics of climate change suggests that outcomes of climate change cannot only be attributed to a specific period of time and a particular generation. Instead, it temporally analyses by comparing decades or even centuries of policies, common sense, and ethics aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change. Additionally, decisions and policies made in a specific historical context not only determine the climatic conditions that future organisms and ecosystems will face; they also directly shape how future generations will respond to climate change. Each generation leaves its successors a multilayered legacy of institutional structures, legal arrangements, economic systems, technological infrastructures, conceptual perspectives, and cultural practices that expand or narrow not only the physical environment but also their possibilities for action (Hourdequin, 2025). Additionally, Intergenerational ethics is the philosophical study of the moral obligations we have toward individuals—human and nonhuman—who have not yet existed but will exist in the future. The concept of “future” here refers not to a type of being but to a temporal location. In this sense, future individuals are neither ontologically different from us nor do they differ in moral status. Our ethical responsibilities toward them must be informed not only by our own perspective but also by their possible viewpoints (Nolt, 2016). That is why, on the whole it puts forward the idea that each generation has their own responsibilities and ethical obligations to generations to follow. However, people might easily be inclined to reason that they ethically owe nothing for people yet to be born. Therefore, when one considers outcomes of human-induced climate change, he or she must not get into the pitfall of logical fallacy about short-termism and contemporary point of view. In other words, while individual and collective actions have a limited impact on those who have passed away, they have direct and significant consequences on current generations and have far-reaching and long-term effects on future generations. The decisions taken today have the power to affect not only who will exist in the future, but also the continuity of human life. In this context, the environmental crisis we are facing provides a striking example that allows humans to grasp the magnitude of their potential impact on future generations (Mulgan, 2020). This is a challenging dilemma in which humans are still not certain whether to follow traditional Western thought which is based on principle of reciprocity or to change their mindset and overall ethical

scope for the sake of embracing that of past, present, and future, as well. Furthermore, many scholars today consider about this dilemma, and they attempt to figure out the right way to meet in the middle for the sake of all. Among them is renowned scholar Stephen M. Gardiner, whose works on environmental studies shed light on many shades of literature in humanities. According to Gardiner, the structural and ethical specificities of climate change severely constrain our capacity to make the compelling decisions needed to effectively address this global challenge. In this context, climate change is often described as a “perfect moral storm,” as it simultaneously raises a series of complex, long-term, and highly uncertain ethical issues. This makes it difficult to transform some ethical questions into practical actions, even if they can be answered theoretically. This storm makes individuals and societies extremely vulnerable to moral indifference, distraction, or evasion of responsibility (Gardiner, 2006, p. 398). Hence individual and collective ethical responsibilities mentioned in previous sections must go collaterally when it comes to mitigate effects of climate change today and leave a better-preserved planet for generations to come. Lastly, altruistic behavior at the individual level might be hoped for; but unless an individual has a reasonable expectation that others will similarly constrain themselves, the impact of such altruism will be quite limited and will entail serious costs for the individual. In this context, such altruism seems far from rational. Thus, when individuals choose actions that seem rational on their own, at the collective level, everyone is likely to suffer a worse outcome. This situation can be considered a classic collective action problem in the absence of cooperative constraints (Kawall, 2015, p. 2).

### 3. MICHAEL CHRISTIE'S *GREENWOOD*: A GENERATIONAL NARRATIVE

Originally from Ontario, Michael Christie is a Canadian writer, whose most recent novel *Greenwood* has been muchly appraised. He used to be a carpenter and a homeless shelter worker. A colourful personality himself, Christie used to be a professional skateboarder, as well. He has spent most of his life among trees on woodworking. Today he lives between Victoria and Galiano Island in British Columbia, where he lives with his family in a wooden structure he built with his own hands. There, he continues producing his works. Other notable works of Christie are short story collection *The Beggar's Garden* (2011) and his debut novel *If I Fall, If I Die* (2015) and both of which have promoted his creative writing skills and have paved the way for him to gain much deserved literary reputation not only in Canada but also all around the world. However, it is all thanks to his most recent novel *Greenwood* (2019) – thesis is based on the 2021 version by Scribe Publications – that Michael Christie has come into prominence in literature world.

Although it is frequently labelled as a ‘multi-generational family saga’, *Greenwood* in fact is much more than that. When asked what this novel is about during an interview, Christie answers:

*It's a multi-generational family saga that tells the story of 125 years in the lives of the various generations of the Greenwood family and their ongoing relationship with trees and forests. It's a very difficult book to categorize, and it's been called everything from eco-fiction to cli-fi to historical fiction to dystopian fiction. So I suppose it's all those things? (Alum interview with Michael Christie, MFA '08, 2021)*

In fact, while making literature review about ecocriticism for this thesis, Michael Christie's novel has been selected purposefully, upon the emergence of new literary genre called ‘cli-fi’. And upon contacting writer via e-mail for his permission to use his novel as the primary source for this thesis, Christie writes the following:

*Hello Kadir! It's nice to hear from you, and thank you for your interest in my novel. Yes, you have my permission to use *Greenwood* as a primary source for your thesis. There is so much great eco-fiction being written right now, I'm honoured that you've selected my work to study. Oh, and it's certainly applicable to an eco-critical analysis. It was written with climate change, and ecology, very much in mind.*

One thing that is certain is that, just like Christie puts, *Greenwood* is a novel that can be analysed through the lens of ecocriticism. Living among the one of the oldest tree species on the planet, Michael Christie has been deeply inspired by nature. Upon this

inspiration, his latest novel emerged. In another interview about his novel *Greenwood*, the interviewer (Gordon, A.) is curious about why Christie has chosen trees for his source of inspiration, and he answers why:

*I often take walks in some protected old-growth Douglas fir and cedar near my house, and there is something so peaceful and creatively invigorating about them. I've always found trees incredibly fascinating, not only because they sustain life on this planet and render it habitable for us, but also because they communicate and record time within their very structure. We humans must behave more like trees if we are ever going to survive on Earth for the long term. (Christie, 2019a)*

Moreover, after cutting a dead tree's, Christie realized that cross-sectional trunk of that tree was beckoning him from a distant but familiar past. Relevant to this matter, in an interview Christie says the following, "I looked at the growth rings of the stump and I realized that it looked like the pages of a book...I had a sense of looking back into time" (Alex, 2019). What makes *Greenwood* unique and interesting is its unconventional narrative structure, which was also inspired by that very stump of tree that Michael mentioned earlier. Its non-linear narrative nested structure, resembling a cross-section of a tree trunk, takes reader to a journey of 130 years of lifespan. Michael Christie designed the narrative structure of his novel *Greenwood* to resemble the interlocking growth rings of a tree. In fact, in yet another interview with Frank Wolf (2019), he tells the story of this unique narrative style was inspired by a stump of a tree that he cut:

*Initially, I had some notes for characters involved with climate destruction, and environmentalism, carpentry and the timber industry, but the idea to lay the sections of Greenwood out like the concentric growth rings of a tree was what really kicked the project off. My wife and I own some property on Galiano Island, and we were in the process of clearing the land of some of its red cedars and Douglas firs so that we could build a little cabin, and after I cut down a fairly small tree I looked down at the stump and had a kind of revelation. It looked like a book: the yearly growth rings like pages, each building outward from the tree's narrative beginning. And so I got the idea of giving my book this structure, one that mimicked a cross-sectioned tree, and the writing really flowed from there. (Christie, 2019b)*

Following visual in the next page about this exceptional "nested ring" narrative structure is taken from the novel's first pages just before the first part of the novel starts, and it helps the readers while time-travelling between several generations of the Greenwood family:



Visual 1

As the above visual illustrates, in a reverse chronological order, readers first meet the latest member of the Greenwoods living in the eco-apocalyptic 2038, and then they travel all the way back to the origins of this family through some generations until they arrive at ‘heartwood’ of the novel which corresponds to the year 1908. And from that point, this time in conventional chronological order, or better known as linear timeline, readers travel towards the year of 2038 at the end of the novel. Paradoxically enough, when one begins reading the novel, they also arrive at the end of the novel’s last part. This conventional narrative structure is undeniably a unique one. Moreover, embracing a “biomimicry” approach, *Greenwood* constructs the narrative structure in a way that resembles the interlocking rings of a tree (Manwaring, 2021). This narrative style plays a significant role in the novel’s theme of intergenerational ethics and climate change, for the reader can trace different periods, transformations, and ethical understandings

of ecology through the eyes of some characters. When he was asked about this “nested ring” narrative structure in an interview, Michael Christie answers the following:

*The story opens with a section set in 2038, then traces the Greenwood family back a generation to 2008, and then back another to 1974, then 1934, and then finally to the family's beginnings in 1908. After this centre point, the story moves forward in time again, back through each period until we reach 2038 to conclude the book. I imagined the narrative structure as the nested growth rings of a tree, in that the most recent ring is on the outer edge, and as you move to the centre of the wood, you travel back in time to the tree's beginnings. Luckily, it turned out to be a pretty fun way to tell a story, because a good deal of suspense is built into the structure. (In Conversation: Michael Christie, 2019a)*

It is not surprising then this intriguing narrative structure is one of the reasons readers are attracted to the novel itself. Still, this unique structure is deeply intertwined with stories of different generations scattered throughout 130 years of timespan. Thus, thanks to this structure, readers can follow traces of intergenerational ethics along with climate change based on individual and collective agents throughout the novel.

Following sections of this thesis follows the aforementioned order of the novel's narrative structure. This thesis, therefore, aims to evaluate intergenerational ethics of climate change by juxtaposing some engaging characters, on the basis of individual and collective levels of moral responsibility.

## 4. INTERGENERATIONAL ETHICS IN *GREENWOOD*

### 4.1 Part I: “2038”

*Greenwood* starts in the eco-apocalyptic future 2038, and Jake Greenwood, the latest of her family generation, seems like she ignores the fact the planet Earth has undergone some severe ecological calamities. She remains silent and, on purpose, leave out scientific facts aside. Therefore, individual, public, and private companies are all blindfolded and they all close their eyes to the sheer plight of the planetary destruction unfolding before their eyes. For the sake of earning money, for individual survival instinct may be, Jake Greenwood, although she could tell the truths about climate change outfalls, she cannot speak facts, statistics, or science to make sure those tourists visiting the island as a resort enjoy their vacation without any distress being inflicted upon them. Hence, all the agencies – individuals and collectives in that Greenwood Arboreal Resort Island act passively and ignorantly to what has been known as “Great Withering” (Christie, 2021, p. 5). This island is like a paradise per se, secluded from the rest of the planet which has been inflicted by hellish-like events following climate change. On the other hand, on the mainland people, predominantly those of the rich, live in towers in which climate is under control with some of the cutting-edge technologies given the fact that outside of these special buildings people choke to death due to heavy pollution of dust-laden air. Thus, their lives are stuck to those cutting-high tech buildings, thus deprived of trees and clean air to breath and to reconnect the last remaining natural wonders of the planet. Jake Greenwood, who is working as a tourist guide as well as a botanist on that special remote island, despises her present state due to some social and economic reasons. She laments that she would rather be in the shoes of those rich people instead of doing “...such a pitifully unmarketable career as botany” (Christie, 2021, p. 6). So, without any surprise, she would like to exchange her existing occupational position on the island with that of any one on the mainland. For the fear of losing her current job, she refuses to be actively part of acting as heroic agents of the planet that has been undergoing some apocalyptic plights like that of “Great Withering”. She does not, thus, comply with the ethical or moral responsibility of preserving what has remained on the planet and of transferring what has been left behind in a better condition to future generations. All in all, it can be argued that in the beginning of the novel Jake is in passive-ignorant

state, and therefore her petty economic status puts her innate ethical stance regarding stewardship of the planet into the shade.

While giving some facts about old-growth trees – the Douglas fir species to be exact – in the Greenwood Arboreal Island, Jake mentions the fact that many trees of the “Cathedral”, namely the whole forested island itself, are more lasting and deeply rooted generationally than those lives of human beings. Also, attribution of “Cathedral” in this case is an intriguing one since those rich tourists coming to the island are also called “pilgrims”, so in a sense those rich who can afford visiting the island actually consider their stay as ‘pilgrimage’. In of these tours of the island, Jake juxtaposes life of a tree with that of a human being. In of these tours of the island, Jake juxtaposes life of a tree with that of a human being. There she adds her speech some eye-opening details of one of the oldest tree’s cross-section trunk on the island and how this tree successfully survived until present time thanks to the great endeavours of its previous ring layers; each new ring circling the old and thus creating a strong and everlasting entity that has the potential to live forever. Humans’ accumulative failure and vanity to preserve all the planet for subsequent generations are accentuated by Jake’s words: “Many of the Cathedral’s trees are over twelve hundred years old. That’s older than our families, older than most of our names. Older than the current forms of our governments, even older than some of our myths and ideologies” (Christie, 2021, p. 7). From Jake’s words, one can argue that each human generation, up until that moment, has failed to fulfil their individual, societal and thus collective responsibilities for the sake of stewardship of the planet Earth. Jake speaks of the fragility of human civilization by emphasizing how man-made civilization is prone to self-annihilation when it is compared to nature itself.

In *Greenwood* due to the anthropocentric global warming, climate changes have occurred in different parts of the planet, each shifting ecological balance within their spheres of influence. It has been accompanied with phenomena called “Great Withering” – a wave of fungal blights and insect infestations – that has brought the planet’s flora, especially forests, crashing down. As the name suggests, “Great Withering” is just one of the reasons for mass destruction of plant and tree species that die out slowly but certainly. Anthropocentric climate-change induced Withering is attributable to consequences of humans’ not only individual but also collective

responsibilities that have not been undertaken appropriately. As a result, humans are to blame for why the planet earth is undergoing drastic changes in natural landscapes. They are, also, indirectly but effectively only organism responsible for the blights inflicted upon trees and forests of the planet. In the novel, human induced climate change has bred previously mentioned natural phenomena called “Great Withering” that has wiped out almost all the forest populations on the planet in the first half of the 21st century. Because of changing climate regions trees are no longer able to adapt these sudden and dramatic changes, hence they die out. In this gruesome future, scientists all around the world are supposed to share their findings for the sake of science and most importantly for human survival along with overall nature’s preservation. In this apocalyptic world, every government is isolated within their geographic boundaries to understand these ecological “mysteries”, hoping to find a solution to curb it down with their own efforts and scientific means together. This eco-localism, however, does not seem to work out as they expected because of ‘eco-nationalism’ or environmental nationalism in that it lacks one of the most important means of human survival: Collectivism. According to Ayesha, the term eco-nationalism “is relatively new it blends nationalist feelings with environmental concerns and advances the notion that a country’s landscapes and natural resources are essential to its identity and history and these should therefore be protected” (Arshad, 2024). Because of this isolated policy every country on the planet must deal with the blight on their own, with their own resources at hand. Supposedly, they are not to share any valuable scientific knowledge with the rest of the world, even if that practicable knowledge will work towards a solution for the benefit of all. Owing to some ethical challenges among human beings, the planet is inexorably doomed to a brink of collapse, for the world does not collaborate to tackle climate change issues and its profound impacts on ecological balance. Hereupon, “Though formal research has surely been done somewhere, scientists are no longer freely sharing their findings” (Christie, 2021, p. 10). This is because so-called environmental nationalism that cocoons each nation within their specific boundaries. However, people from all walks of life, be it highbrow like scientists or layman, fail to notice a fact that they all are in the same boat in that, on ecological scale, one part of planet will surely affect the others one way or another.

As an expert guide in Greenwood Cathedral, Knut who is an “eco-warrior” as well as a friend of Jake Greenwood, criticizes the rich coming to one of the last remaining forests on the planet just for the sake of sheer entertainment motives. According to Knut, the rich are, by hook or by crook, is responsible for the plagues that have been inflicted upon the earth. As mentioned before, the onset of the novel takes place in the year of 2038, in which ecological collapse is explicit all around the planet. Additionally, in this bleak world, Anthropocene, late capitalism, income injustice, and above all whims of magnates have led to overall ecological destruction. Besides, the rich are richer; and as anticipated they are the most single handedly responsible agents for that ecological failure, yet they still hypocritically visit those alleged “sacred” natural landscapes to pay homage to one of the last remaining forests there. Consequently, Knut utters the following that resonates what mentioned previously:

*Do any of you appreciate the unspeakable irony of elite executives and celebrities travelling here to spiritually replenish themselves...only so that they can return rejuvenated to lives are either directly or indirectly parboiling our planet, thereby further dooming such natural wonders as these very sacred tress they claim to revere? (Christie, 2021, p. 13)*

Upon this statement by her friend, Jake considers Knut as someone who commits “blasphemous remarks.” However, in the beginning of the novel, Knut seems to be the only person working in that resort genuinely cares much about nature and ecology by making such ethical remarks about unspoken realities of the time. Also, as readers turn over pages in the novel, they get the feeling that this minor character seems to be one of the only agents who support stewardship of the planet earth. He criticizes the Cathedral for its wrongdoings and those wealthy visiting the island for pure entertainment of the trees. Nevertheless, other forest guides on the island are yet to denounce the Cathedral management for fear of being fired and sent to the mainland where they will face post-apocalyptic scenes and inhale dust and choke to their death. Faithful and ethical embodiment of guardian of the planet earth, Knut is not scared of revealing sheer realities of ecology (i.e. non-human) along with facts as to socio-economic conditions of humans. Therefore, Knut adds the following, “There’s something truly repellent about notion of reducing what is the very pinnacle of natural magnificence to merely a therapeutic backdrop for the wealthy” (Christie, 2021, p. 12). As an individual, Knut fulfils his ethical responsibilities regarding nature by assuming such attitudes. On the other hand, other employees of the island cannot fulfil their

moral responsibility because they fear getting sacked, hence there cannot emerge an ethical collective entity to intervene for the sake of nature. As for those visiting the island for touristic purposes, their moral character is flawed, and they act ignorantly and hence cannot assume normal moral actions that are supposed to be taken by every individual with average intelligence and reasoning.

When Jacinda (hereafter “Jake”) was a kid living with her grandparents in Delhi, India, she was fond of everything related to trees. As if something attributable to her childhood’s innocence, she sees trees as her kin and even as her friends. However, through adulthood, she gradually loses this interest because, as she puts, life has given her some burden of family concerns along with some economic hardships. Moreover, as she takes a step from childhood to adulthood, she somewhat forfeits her ideals about trees, forests, and relation to nature. Yet, when one day Jake goes to Canada for some educational purposes, there she discovers a potential resolution to all the problems as regards to climate change. During the visit, she has an epiphany relevant to this matter, “Even the impenetrable mysteries of time and family and death can be solved, if only they are viewed through green tinted lens of this one gloriously complex organism” (Christie, 2021, p. 20). With these words, Jake mentions timeless features of trees and how magnificent creatures they are. One might argue that the phrase “green tinted lens” can be attributed to ecological criticism - ecocriticism, a part of literary theory and criticism. From the given excerpt, trees resemble humans in terms of life, death, and genealogy, for they live long enough to witness concept of time while successfully paving a way for subsequent generations of trees and thus family of trees called forests, making them live longer and more durable like human civilization has been doing since the dawn of humanity. Jake’s thoughts about these magnificent trees imply the fact that humans can consult and take inspiration from nature in any subject possible. Moreover, Jake, as one of the first climate refugee, crosses Canadian border to reach his father’s farm, bequeathed to her upon his demise. While travelling North America, she witnesses climate-change’s brutal outfalls on people’s faces on the streets. People have been on the brink of starvation, and economy has collapsed top down. Not surprisingly, the poor are the ones who feel the most drastic consequences of climate change induced Great Withering. In this dreary world, short-sighted, whimsical, and materialistic mindset overruns biological and survivalist

intuitions, on the other hand. While wandering as a vagabond, Jake witnesses harsh realities from both ends of spectrum. Upon getting on a freight train, she spots some luxury automobiles are carried on it. Disillusioned, Jake is baffled about what she sees before her eyes: “Twelve new Mercedes, which somehow there’s still a market for, even when people starve and asphyxiate with pale blue faces by the side of the road” (Christie, 2021, p. 21). As the given extract suggests, some people none other than the rich live a life of vanity and play ostrich. They do not fulfil their individual moral responsibility to help and preserve the planet earth, which is like a vessel, passengers of which set ahead to the same destination, be it either salvation or destruction.

When Jake got engaged with Silas, an environmentalist and scientist, they used to have conversations regarding “...carbon credits and ecological devastation and Big Oil’s cancerous lobbying –”, and before Withering, it was a time when people including Jake herself “...still believed that well-intended, measured engagement could avert catastrophe” (Christie, 2021, pp. 31-32). People, at least, used to have some sort of belief that planet could be saved, but now it is hard to say the same because almost everyone has lost their hopes and most of the parts of the planet have already undergone some dramatic and irreversible changes, for climate-change induced the Withering – apocalyptic event that wiped out almost all of the forests on the planet, hence causing detrimental consequences for both ecology and human life. The beginning of the novel’s first section takes place sometime in 2038, and prior to that point humans’ ethical stance towards climate change had shifted into an undesirable state, through which none of individuals including scientists themselves feel necessity to fight and find solutions to climate change-based calamities. Instead, people have taken adverse demeanour towards environment and nature’s stewardship. With “Great Withering” and its brutal impacts on all walks of life, especially on those poor folks, people’s ethical choices have deteriorated. Ex-fiancé of Jake’s, Silas comments on the subject matter along with other issues such as climate refugeeism when he speaks of those people who have turned into savages: “And they were no doubt good people once. But after a few years in the dust, they’re desperate enough to butcher your family and loot your home without even doing you the courtesy of first asking for a handout” (Christie, 2021, p. 33). As can be observed from the given excerpt that humans’ morality has been downgraded to the those of “savages” because of doomsday.

Furthermore, after Jake's ex-fiancé Silas shows up on the Greenwood Island as one of those pilgrimages, he reveals a life-changing fact about Jake's family heritage. According to Silas, Jake is the true holder of entire Greenwood Island. Silas used to be a scientist just like Jake, however, he left that practice in favour of becoming a lawyer. Now he meets her on account of this sudden inheritance case. Upon leaving his scientific studies and venturing into law business, Silas sees this case as an opportunity for himself to take a share if Jake confirms and seeks her righteous rights on the court. However, no matter how much debt she is in now, she is not interested in possessing such a massive fortune of owning the most precious things on the planet, namely last remaining trees. While Silas talks about good prospects that lie in store for Jake, Jake mediates inwardly as if she would like reply to him the following, "*Then I'd tell you that if you don't leave me alone to figure out what's ailing those trees...by this time next year Greenwood Island might be a barren rock, and it won't matter who owns it*" (Christie, 2021, p. 36). She seems to genuinely cares about those ailed trees on the island as she badly wants to find an answer for some diseased trees that she spotted earlier. However, the flip side of the coin might tell the otherwise, for Jake is deep down curious about her family fortune and its possible opportunities it would yield for her future. Hence, her ethical stance towards ecological concerns might be interpreted as somehow impaired for the time being.

#### **4.2 Part II: “2008”**

The second section of the book is titled “2008” and it sets out circling around the Greenwood family members, ranging from future generations to past ones. Novel's narrative structure is quite interesting one; it does not follow a conventional and linear narrative. Rather, as understood from several examples from the first section titled “2038”, reader delves deeply into the roots of Greenwood family, starting with the latest family member Jake Greenwood and then goes back in time meeting her father Liam Greenwood and then goes even further back to her grandmother Willow Greenwood, and from there goes in a distant past where this family roots came into view with two central characters named Harris and Everett Greenwood. This circular narrative meets in the middle of the novel and reader finishes the book where they started at first place: “2038”. That is, both the first and last section names of the book are identical for this reason. As for the part called “2008”, readers meet another major

character named Liam Greenwood, who is apparently father of Jake Greenwood. Liam spent his entire childhood with her hippie mother Willow Greenwood. Willow is the central character to the novel because she alone can construct and embody what this thesis aims to seek for, namely intergenerational ethics of climate change observed through individual and collective minds. Willow used to be a real environmentalist and eco-warrior in a sense; however, throughout her life she had had resorted to some radical solutions such as undermining or sabotaging any timber-based company that hacks down countless of tress for making profit out of them. She might be the most reasonable member of the Greenwoods since she could foresee what would happen if conglomerates continued devastating ecology. As readers travel back to the times when Willow lived through Liam's memories, her ethical portrait regarding climate change emerges in time. No wonder her overall ethical choices always turn out to be in favour of nature. In addition to being a hippie, she is also a fervent environmentalist who could do anything to console herself with, e.g., together with her ten-year-old son, they sabotaged "...feller bunchers that are somehow powerful enough to devour whole forests" (Christie, 2021, p. 47). Her son Liam resembles those colossal machines to yellow dinosaurs. Mother and son, being heresy and lawless, are always on the road, living as fugitives. Willow is a such a wild-eyed environmentalist that she would swear off their products forever if "...a trusted brand commits some ecological sin" (2021, p. 47). Furthermore, Willow's "...true religion lies in Nature, trees especially. Her belief in green beings is as pure and fervent as any self-immolating Buddhist's" (2021, p. 48). Therefore, Willow, by all accounts, a true eco-warrior of her time. Although she comes from a wealthy family that amassed massive fortunes from timber business, Willow deviates from her family's traditional business affairs of cutting down trees and making a killing by selling those trees to various industries. Accordingly, she has become a heresy for her family heritage. Her ecological ideals and beliefs have far surpassed those of having a wealth and rich family lineage that could probably last for a long time. Upon his demise, Willow's tycoon father Harris Greenwood had bequeathed a great deal of wealth for his daughter, yet she makes a radical decision by donating all this fortune "...to an environmental group concerned with global forest protection" (2021, p. 49). With this act, Willow has altered the course of her family lineage, by abandoning all materialistic legacy and by embracing new façade of life,

which obviously is more nature oriented. Her individual ethical choices apt to those favoured by intergenerational ethics of climate change because Willow genuinely cares about the future of the planet and would like to leave a preserved nature for her descendants that are yet to be born like her son Liam and her granddaughter Jake. Nevertheless, ethical decisions of hers are far from being pure and candid overall because she seems like she would like to hide how rich her family is and often neglects her family history out of sheer embarrassment of being spotted. Likewise, her son Liam finds out that his mother has some drawbacks as to her ethical stance towards climate change once he discovers some of Willow's caches kept hidden in their van. Willow's discrepancies about her ecological idealism demonstrate a significant hole about her ethical demeanour. For she still uses a bag of English tea, or she uses a bottle of expensive Chanel No.5 perfume – an aerosol harmful for the ozone layer, no wonder both denoting colonialism and capitalism respectively. Although on the surface Willow fights against these products because they in some way attribute to climate change, she ambivalently keeps benefiting from these products secretly. Thus, such actions of Willow render her moral disposition somehow a little bit flawed. Contrary to all expectations, she could still be considered among those few who frankly care about ecology and take some genuine steps in their ethical standpoints regarding climate change. Willow's son Liam, on the other hand, does not want to live according to principles deeply held up by her mother. In fact, deep inside Liam despises his mother's radical transgressions like breaking down feller bunchers as a way of fighting against climate change. Instead, whom he admires most is none other than his grandfather Harris Greenwood. Also, Liam sometimes dreams of a life of wealth that he has never experienced. Therefore, insubordinate to her mother's hippie lifestyle and principles about ecology and its preservation, he becomes a deviant or degenerate, an antithesis of Willow. Whenever he thinks about his grandfather Harris, a timber business tycoon of his time, Liam idolizes him for some reasons: "At least he built real, tangible things, rather than Willow's goal of 'building awareness' – a phrase that Liam has never understood" (2021, pp. 48-49). As can be understood from the given extract that Liam does not endorse her mother's extremist actions in the name of environmental stewardship. Besides, upon his birth Willow named her son's full name as Liam "New Dawn" instead of attaching him 'filthy' Greenwood surname. She

thought that this new surname would bring a new hope for future generations. Yet ironically enough, Liam changes his surname back to “Greenwood” as soon as he turns eighteen years old, to her mother’s disappointment. To make his mother even more enraged, Liam even “decides to start dressing up as a lumberjack” (2021, p. 50), a figure against whom her mother had fought constantly in her lifetime. For, lumberjack costume that Liam would like to try is what Willow has always feared: a symbol of nightmare and embarrassment for her. Moreover, in his teenage years, Liam considers logging a profession of lifetime, whereas his mother wants him to choose a job related to ecology or nature. Thus, she sometimes muses about her son’s possible professions:

*His mother always hoped he'll be an artist, a nature poet, or a hippie mystic like the wide-eyed men she entangles herself with. Or better yet, a fire-breathing academic: a Marxist sociology professor or a bearded tree biologist, or, best of all; a mad-dog environmental lawyer, dedicating his life to pro bono skirmishes with lumber conglomerates and Big Oil. (2021, p. 56)*

Throughout her life, Willow had every so often sought to transfer her practices of ecological ethics to Liam’s life, and predictably she would love to see her son choose a job that is related to nature mentioned in the previous quotation. However, to inflame her mother’s rage one further, Liam decides to become a lumberjack. At odd times Willow questions her son’s choice of logging as a business, and the following words of hers are self-evident on this point, “There many kinds of work, you know...What I do is work. Important work. Maybe the most important work there is” (2021, p. 57). She does not regard logging as a proper work; rather, she claims that environmentalism, activism, or simply being a scientist, working ardently for the sake of planet’s future, could be viewed as actual work. Liam, in return, answers to his mom with some pungent words that refer to her vagabond lifestyle as well as her environmental fanaticism, “If you count ruining other people livelihoods as work...then sure, you work plenty” (2021, p. 57). With this statement Liam points out that Willow’s actions are in a contradiction with her ethical position since she turns a blind eye to those workers working on timber business by constantly fighting and undermining their heavy equipment. She is between the devil and the deep blue sea. Either Willow will destroy those timber companies along with their employees’ livelihoods by sabotaging their business so that she could, to some extent, contribute to saving planet’s apocalyptic trajectory; or else, she will just do nothing about it and watch as doomsday comes closer, while her epoch that roughly corresponds to second half of

the 20th century undergoes a boom time in terms of population and technology. Liam, on the other hand, goes his way of thinking even at old age. Although he does not want the same lifestyle of her mother's, he inherits several bad habits of Willow such as being alcoholic or taking drugs or living his life as a fugitive vagrant. To put it differently, with this Liam does not live up to the very ideals and principles held up by Willow in relation to environmental as well as ecological subjects. Interestingly enough, into the old-age Willow is milder in her practices of extremist environmental activism that Liam has reproached in his lifetime. In her early sixties, "...she settled into more benign forms of activism: printing pamphlets at Kinko's and leading email-writing campaigns" (2021, p. 58). Thus, she does not directly and physically act out her ideals of protesting by malfunctioning feller bunchers no more. Willow is wiser and acts more maturely than she used to be given that she has realized and acknowledged that she herself alone cannot change course of events regarding climate-change. She is now ready to take the advantage of media power to demonstrate and support her claims as to ecology, and with that she might even lead to a substantial awareness among public spheres by using mainstreams. Namely, along with her individual moral responsibility, Willow attempts to harness the power of collective entities through which a change could be possible.

As mentioned previously, throughout his life Liam has always wanted to be occupied in a job regarding wood craft. As such, while working as a carpenter in a private corporation, Liam has made a lot of woodwork for numerous famous and rich companies to renovate their office tables and so forth. Those companies – among them are Holtcorp, Shell, and Weyerhaeuser – are the ones with whom her environmentalist mother had constantly been in a beef throughout her life. Nevertheless, Liam works as a carpenter to make ends meet, and he must work in such hard times when people barely find food. As such, ironically enough, at one of luxurious restaurants he witnesses some employees complaining their destitute life circumstances in New York, where Liam renovates a popular café's wood-based furniture. Those employees feel desperate and impoverished due to living in a metropolis like New York City. Life is rather arduous there, and during difficult times people fancy other tougher times out of sheer consolation, whether those related to past or to an imaginary devasted future, so that they can alleviate pains of their dismal present time. In Liam's present world,

life is therefore hard “...even in a wealthy place like NY. And during hard times, people crave the consolations of other hard times, whether those of the past or of an imagined ruined future, to ease the pains of the present they’re stuck with” (Christie, 2021, p. 60). These words reflect the fact that each generation selfishly expects to see their subsequent successors will have even more terrible life conditions than those of theirs for living creatures including both human and non-human alike. Before Withering – that has already happened in Jake’s time, several decades later, climate change is at tipping point in Liam’s time, corresponding to year 2008. Her daughter Jake Greenwood, in fact, lives in even harder and harsher circumstances than her father used to do in his life. In the widest sense, human civilization has, for better or worse, progressed through layers upon layers by successive generations since the dawn of Homo Sapiens. Thus, each generation is supposed to add a protective layer of growth for the next. Liam’s grandfather Harris Greenwood’s generation fell through to do so, neither did Willow’s regardless of the boiling mid-20th century environmental activism, and unfortunately Liam’s generation, as well, got nowhere in that regard to leave a better planet for their offspring, including Jake Greenwood. And although Willow had tried all her best to pass her ecological knowledge to her son, Liam did not follow his mother’s pathway due to some temporal whims that he held during his lifetime. Upon encountering those employees at that restaurant, Liam is content that he is not one of them, for according to him:

*...these young people have been left to pick over the table scraps of Willow’s generation, and if Liam didn’t have a trade and hadn’t been born a Greenwood with tree sap running in his veins, he’d be just as lost as them. (2021, p. 60)*

With this Michael Christie subtly appeals to a literary device named metaphor when he emphasizes the fact that subsequent generations will have to clean of the waste left by their former ancestors. Concisely, when one generation fails to carry out their moral responsibilities regarding stewardship of earth, their misdeeds will have some dire consequences for the following generation; either these future descendants will adequately work on problems and find solutions, or they will have the same and even more drastic conditions that their grandparents used to have.

*Greenwood* takes a trip down memory lane, and characters’ minds go back in time. In fact, this novel is, to some extent, made from some series of flashbacks and flashforwards fluctuating between past, present, and future. This literary technique

highly likely an efficient way for writers to accentuate some characters' relationship with their past so that readers can get a glimpse of what is happening in the novel's present time. *Greenwood* spans more than a centennial lifetime. As such, readers travel back and forth throughout the novel. This narrative structure is engaging and unconventional one because, for instance, the novel starts in the year of 2038 and the last part of the novel ends in the year 2038 as well. To put it simply, novel's narrative scheme is structured in reverse chronological order: 2038, 2008, 1974, 1934, 1908, 1934, 1974, 2008, 2038. Apart from the year or section titled "1908", which is the innermost section of the story in which readers dig into the roots of the Greenwood family, previously listed specific years, each is made of two sections; one comes before and the other comes after the section titled "1908". Thus, interestingly enough, reader continues reading the first section of the novel at the last section of the novel titled the same as "2038". These dendrochronological rings of narrative are central to the novel because it is based on fragmented sections, each being completed as the novel carries on. As a result of this reverse chronological order, reader is engaged within different stories unfolded in different periods. Furthermore, a carpenter himself writer Michael Christie might probably have been inspired by the cross-section of a tree trunk, in which layers upon layers of rings circle from the innermost one to the outmost one. In retrospect, Liam, whose time corresponds the year of 2008 – second part of the novel, reminisces about his 10th birthday. Young Liam asks her mother quite simple yet striking question, "Do you love the forests more than you love me?" Willow, in return, dodges this question and does not reply to her son as immediately as he would expect. But after lingering for some time, she gives an answer that is on the side of nature, "You're a good person, Liam. One of the best. But you're just one person..." after a short pause she goes on with, possibly, one of the most striking lines in the whole novel to state that nature is beyond all notions, "Nature is greater than us all" (Christie, 2021, p. 64). Willow fervently loves nature for its own sake even if that costs her some sort of resentment by her son. An eco-warrior herself, Willow is in the front line when it comes to stand up for nature's rights. Previous excerpts from the book indicate that Willow holds Buddha-like personality that would abandon all worldly affairs for the sake of what they believe is true. In Willow's case, it is, certainly, nothing but nature itself. Her ethical stance as regards to ecology is unequivocal. Briefly, bearing an

image of eco-martyr, she throws herself to the wolves that are none other than timber tycoons and 20th century conformist mindset. On the other hand, in his thirties, Liam meets a woman named Meena and instantly falls in love with her. She is a musician, a violist to be more specific. After getting used to her for some time, Liam decides to make a violin like the one made by Stradivarius brand. He spends considerable time on making one. While dipping in making a violin for his beloved, he has a sort of revelation – an epiphany to be exact, “...he’s struck by the realization that perhaps his mother had been right: maybe trees do have souls. Which makes a wood a kind of flesh” (2021, p. 67) Personification of trees likened to humans is a significant motif throughout the novel. Christie appeals to this literary technique to invoke an empathy on behalf of trees and thus maybe he even subtly tries to raise awareness on readers whose moral responsibility could therefore be stimulated. Thus, just like Willow touched upon previously, trees and humans do share some common features; these two living beings are interconnected into one another through layers upon layers like a circular shape – just like structured like rings of a tree.

#### **4.3 Part III: “1974”**

As mentioned before, upon Liam’s birth, Willow wanted to endow her son a new surname called “New Dawn”, expecting to have an optimistic hope for future generations. She despises her surname “Greenwood” much more than anything else; she feels embarrassed due to having such a combination of two words which assemble beautifully but are recalled notoriously. Thus, because her non-biological father Harris founded Greenwood timber company which clears-out most of the forests in the North Canada, as a thoughtful environmentalist herself, Willow cannot stand catching sight of this surname. For that matter, for Willow, “The mere sight of it is enough to pollute her with shame. How could such a natural construction (what two words are there, really?) have become shorthand for rapacious greed, treasonous betrayal, and serial Earth rape?” (Christie, 2021, p. 77). In this context, Willow’s thoughts clearly demonstrate a fact that the Greenwoods, particularly that of Harris, have betrayed the whole planet Earth including human and nonhuman alike, for they have been hacking down what is perhaps the most substantial heritage (i.e. forests) for the surface of that green planet. According to Willow, such an act is a treasonous one for future generations, including the Greenwoods themselves. In that case, she is also the victim

of her own family's evil deeds, which have not been guided under individual ethical responsibilities. And unexpectedly she is among just a few in her family members – along with her granddaughter Jake, who tries to fix climate-change born outcomes on her own account. However, her actions alone can barely draw near to mending what has already happened or will happen for ecology. Willow, further, muses about how she is strangely connected to that unspeakable destruction of forests, "...And how could this colonial stain, this symbol of all that is clutching and parasitic and short-sighted about the human species, possibly have attached itself to her?" (2021, p. 77). Willow's reflection can be read as the following: One generation's motives to gain temporary wealth could be attributed to its short-sightedness since in the long term that generation's descendants or offsprings will lead lives of apocalyptic outfalls. Briefly, one generation's ethical verdicts can determine the fate of other generation.

Throughout her lifetime, Willow Greenwood had participated in countless protests regarding climate change and took in numerous activist organizations that stood up for the preservation of the planet. She strived to carry out her individual moral responsibilities by doing her best so that she could at least alleviate pains inflicted on Mother Nature. Although some of her early deeds took radical turns, she later turned into some sort of other mild protests such as civil disobedience. One of her grave and 'barbaric' actions led to the impairment of "...the million-dollar machines responsible for murdering thousands of acres of old-growth Douglas fir that had grown peacefully for millennia" (Christie, 2021, p. 78). This deed was one of her direct actions to send exemplary message to timber tycoons of her time, those hacking down millions of acres of old forests that had endeavoured to persevere till their final moments. Arguably her actions manifest that old saying attributed to Niccolò Machiavelli, which goes like 'the end justifies the means.' In the similar vein, she goes beyond limits of her individual responsibilities to take care and preserve the planet, and resorts to take some drastic actions because neither state policymakers nor big business companies make any tangible reforms or amendments towards stewardship of the planet collectively. She does all that all alone, trying to be a droplet in a desert of stagnancy. Upon joining a collective group focused on saving the planet's trees, Willow took a more moderate disposition in her deeds, such as putting pen to paper manifestos or resorting civil disobedience acts. Later she realizes that that pen is mightier than sword

in that saving a tree or crippling some timber holding's machines will be less effective solutions than reaching out whole public spheres through power of pen and paper. Accordingly, "Willow has written manifestos, done sit-ins, organized protests, and set blockades, all worthy of resistance, sure...Sometimes she thinks the Earth Now! members would rather be shouting a clever slogan on the news than actually saving a living tree" (2021, p. 79). It is, therefore, worth noting that, to Willow, power of mass-media surpasses that awareness of single individual action. She believes that collective awareness spreading among public bodies will bring about some sort of ethical shift for ecology's sake. This collective moral responsibility is an urgent need that must be implemented before doomsday arrives. Whereas Willow does her best to fulfil her individual ethical part in preserving the planet, her father Harris Greenwood, a timber tycoon, does the quite opposite. However, oddly enough, Harris displays some sort of hypocrisy, as well. Throughout his life millionaire Harris had lived a life of luxury and abundance. He makes money by cutting almost all the North American forests, yet upon his retirement Harris "began spending half his time in San Francisco, where each morning he would take a taxi into the redwoods along with a guide to listen for birdcalls that he'd note down in a little book" (2021, p. 80). It is quite an ironic sight for Harris Greenwood since he is a rapacious forest-killer, making money out of those birds' home – trees themselves. As his surname suggests, Harris fundamentally belongs to nature just like his daughter Willow does, yet in his ethical choices he turns himself into a short-sighted and into almost a blind, both literally and figuratively, vision in which making capital through forest clearing. Perhaps he would not have wanted all those trees being hacked down by his timber company's hungry machines out of sheer capitalist urges. Either this or that way, his unreasonable ethical demeanour has led to destruction of ecology which in turn led to acceleration and deterioration of climate change that eventually would result in severe life conditions for the subsequent generations to follow. From his actions, one can easily blame Harris Greenwood for not having acted according to his true moral responsibility. Lack of individual moral responsibility thus renders him as someone who is in the clutch of blameworthiness. In this context, according to Lloyd Fields, "A person is morally ignorant if he fails to know or truly believe that actions of a certain sort are wrong or that they ought not to be done" (1994, pp. 397-398). Therefore, one can argue that

Harris Greenwood has always been morally ignorant about his actions regarding climate change, which led to the destruction of nature and a dismal future.

While Harris is a ravenous bigwig who does not care much about that noisy confusion of preserving and saving the planet Earth, his brother Everett Greenwood is quite the opposite. When they were young kids, Harris, and Everett both ended up in the same train accident, losing their biological parents. They were together with their families in that train. They were the only survivors from the train collision when authorities rushed to help them. Not knowing much about their families, both ended up being non-biological brothers. In their childhood, they took care of and supported each other as one expects from normal brothers. Harris' brother Everett served decades of sentence in prison due to an “unspeakable” crime that he committed before. Because of that crime two brothers parted ways with each other, never seen together for decades. Then one day Willow is required to meet her uncle Everett, who has just been released from the prison, at the request of her father Harris. During his prison years, Willow had been the only correspondent to Everett. In that respect, they used to exchange letters for some time. So, this is an opportunity for Willow to finally meet her uncle Everett person to person. Everett, by and large, in his ethical crossroads chooses to be in Willow’s pathway, walking on her ecological footprints. One can effortlessly claim this is true when Everett’s moral standards are unambiguously portrayed throughout the novel. And one might righteously suggest that Everett would bring up petty subjects into conversation upon being liberated from the penitentiary; instead:

*...He discussed such riveting subjects as the proper method for tapping maple syrup, or old movies he'd watched, or his readings of Homer, Emily Dickinson, Henry David Thoreau, Marcus Aurelius, or the pulpy novels of the prison library, from which he gleaned overabundance of meaning. (2021, p. 81)*

As can be understood from this extract that, Everett is already on the righteous path regarding environmental stewardship of the planet Earth. Just like his niece, in his individual ethical responsibility, he chooses the one path in favour of saving the planet. Conceivably his prison years might have opened his eyes, and he finally had an epiphany to see what is right or wrong in individual ethical attitudes. Be it as it may, when compared to his half-brother Harris, one can claim that his moral responsibility is more solid.

There is a striking dialogue between Harris and his daughter Willow, which goes beyond just a typical father and daughter conversation. To Willow, her father Harris is the embodiment of what she has always fought against and will ever object to. Her father suggests that Willow get into some serious jobs instead of being a vagabond hippie traversing across the country, undermining all anti-ecological businesses on the way, through her ecological advocacy. Their talking echoes to the one that will transpire between Willow and Liam sometime in future, though it has already been mentioned previously. Harris thinks that his daughter should get into government for some substantial reasons: “Get into government. *Policy making*, Willow, I know that’s a dirty word to you, but it’s only if you get your hands on the real levers of power that you can create some actual change” (Christie, 2021, p. 82). With the last line, Harris refers to Willow’s inconclusive and futile actions fuelled by mere rage of environmental fever. Rather, he thinks that those radical and needed changes will show up naturally only if Willow harnesses the power of policymaking in favour of ecological purposes. Even so, it seems like Willow has lost all hope there it is as regards to authorities, governments, and most likely policymakers because she asserts that she does not believe that there would be any positive political change in favour of nature in an era like her own:

*...An era when the president of the United States is a lying ghoul, the rain melts your skin, the food is laced with poison, wars are eternal, and the world's oldest living beings are being felled to make Popsicle sticks...this whole sick system is in its death throes, Harris. And in my opinion those holding the levers of power ought to be the first to get dragged down with it.* (2021, p. 82)

Willow is clearly disillusioned since policymakers and governments are invalid and they can no longer employ the power of legislation to protect environment. Willow’s somehow Marxist discourse indicates a fact that collective ethical standpoint is a must; otherwise, individual ethics alone regarding care much about planetary protection might be regarded as less effective and inconclusive. In reply to his daughter’s profound statements, Harris Greenwood narrates the following, “Oh people said the same thing back in thirties...And they’ll be saying it forty years from now, mark my words. Time goes in cycles. Everything comes back again, eventually. You learn that at my age” (2021, p. 82). From Harris’ perspective, one can conclude that history just repeats itself and that man never learns from his past mistakes. With his expression, Harris most likely seeks to justify his misdemeanour – i.e. eradicating forests and

hence upsetting balance of nature. Even though Harris tries to put the blame on some external factors like ‘zeitgeist’, he is just one among those who are on the levers. Through the power of capital, he can easily destroy acres upon acres of trees in a very short time. Furthermore, he consciously chose to be a timber bigwig in the first place, thus giving rise to devastation of countless trees. Accordingly, in his ethical crossroads, he had the chance of not venturing into timber business. Either way, like any reasonable person he could easily foresee that planet’s future would be at stake. Yet his greed for capitalist gains cripples his individual ethical responsibility regarding stewardship of ecology. Thus, although he is blind to this fact, he is the one to blame, above all, for as a human being he could easily choose between good or evil when it especially comes to a subject like ecology. In terms of character and responsibility, Harris’ actions are questionable. That is, in this context, to say that a person is morally responsible for a morally wrong action is to say that the person is morally blameworthy for committing that action. To say that a person is blameworthy is to claim that the blame placed on him is true, appropriate, or justifiable (Fields, 1994, p. 407). On the other hand, Harris’ claim that everything goes in cycles and renews itself is challenged by Willow’s next words echoing ecological concerns: “What you’ve destroyed will never come back, Daddy” (2021, p. 83). This succinct and poignant declaration by Willow highlights the fact that although human world including policies, economies, cultures and so forth might go in cycles, natural world, conversely, cannot go in cycles due to human intervention in cutting the end of ecological balance. In other words, maybe policies can be made in any human related subject possible, and even maybe those policies will change the course of things in future, yet for what Willow laments and cries out is that those more than 2000 years old trees that Harris has been cutting down will never come back in cycles as he states; also, that there will be nothing to replace them with is even more dreadful for her.

Even if Willow is a daughter of a millionaire, she does not accept money any more from her father Harris upon reaching adulthood, for that blood money is against all what she upholds. Rather, she chooses another path in favour of nature so that she could at least atone herself from the shame and stain her father brought upon her family. Willow lives her life almost exact opposite of her father Harris. She becomes a self-sufficient individual who ventures to be an environmentalist by planting and

saving some trees. One day her uncle Everett asks Willow to take him to an airport after getting out of prison, and before they get into her van, third person narrator tells the story how Willow bought her own vehicle: "...she earned tree planting land that her father clear-cut in the twenties, and how she hasn't accepted a cent of his death-trip fortune since she dropped out of college" (Christie, 2021, p. 86). Since she is ashamed of her family fortunes, she does not even borrow a penny from her father. And she concludes that it is blood money from the massacres of trees. The reason why she behaves like this and acts in favour of environmental issues goes back to her college years. Willow has an early epiphany related to realizing some truth and facts about the essence of life as well as nature during her early university years. As soon as she opens her eyes to that enlightenment, she is overwhelmed with that reality. While sitting under a tree in the university campus, she was reading a book that opened new chasms in her mind:

*...she read a book called Our Plundered Planet and her entire world caved in. The exploitation, the waste, the destruction of the land and its indigenous peoples were all laid bare, and, worse, it was people like her who'd perpetrated these crimes.* (2021, p. 89)

After her veil of ignorance is removed, she comes to realize what is going on the planet and how she in some way contributes to the crimes inflicted on it. And at that moment does she make a snap radical decision by saying the following, "I dropped out at that week and went tree planting" (2021, p. 89). To atone herself from those crimes committed before by herself or others, she decides to be an environmentalist who does not want to be an eco-terrorist who has some tremendous impact on nature. With that ethical decision, perhaps, Willow deviates from her family lineage into what she considers as a better path. In fact, she would have followed example of her father Harris by becoming super rich tycoon, who has the levers of powers in her pocket. So, if it had not been her righteous ethical choice, she could have made matters worse to the detriment of ecology. Throughout the novel, especially after her college years, Willow tries to amend what her father has wounded. Thus, trying to redeem herself, she turns herself into a more environmentally oriented personality, which is mostly based on ethical moral responsibility. With that, she believes that she could, to some extent, restore the planet to its previous state by alleviating the damage done. Humans' ethical approach towards ecology, particularly climate-change, can determine course of planet Earth's overall destiny. Individual and collective ethical liabilities adjust how

humans being reflect on nature. In this case even an object as simple as a tree can be interpreted in numerous ways. Some can make up stories out of trees to scare others whereas others, e.g. indigenous peoples of Africa or America, can craft majestic tales about trees. However, most of the time either human beings enjoy trees with awe and amazement, or they just see them as meta to benefit from within high motives of capitalism. To accentuate this fact, Michael Christie juxtaposes various point of views that human beings possess for trees:

*...Every culture has its tree related myths: from the ubiquitous trees of life that quite literally hold up the sky, to the monstrous trees that eat toddlers or drink human blood, to the trees that play pranks or heal the sick, remember stories or curse enemies. (2021, p. 90)*

Watching her uncle's amazement about trees after having served in prison almost four decades, Willow thinks that maybe there is still some sort of hope left for natural world owing to such people like Everett Greenwood. Therefore, while "...watching her uncle, who has time-travelled here from a different age, she's reminded that trees are also capable of resurrection" (2021, p. 90). This reflection of Willow's emphasizes the fact that trees and human beings are interconnected in some way through a sort of rebirth. Yet, while humans make their resurrection possible by hook or by crook, trees do not have the same opportunity to do so due to human actions on the planet. Therefore, to reveal trees' true potential of resurgence humans must take on individual as well as collective moral responsibility of preserving them before it is too late to do so because there might be no single tree left on the planet earth. All in all, planet's overall ecological conservation depends on from one person to another and from one society to another, culminating in a collective ethical demeanour in favour of nature.

In the third part of *Greenwood* titled "1974", readers travel in Willow's young adulthood, a fervent environmentalist who could foresee apocalyptic outcomes of the Anthropocene. Human beings sometimes take short-sighted ethical decisions that might affect nature adversely, besides, their decisions may even end up being disastrous for generations to come. After the damage is done, mankind learns lessons in the hardest way possible. To stress this fact Willow, while conversing with her uncle, mentions what is ailing their era, which must be addressed and amended, and thus she touches upon the 1970s' urgent problems:

*...She lights another menthol and continues her lecture on the festering rot of human greed and consumerism, while also stressing how Mother Nature is pushing back with acid rain and resource depletion and desertification, and how a global environmental apocalypse will be the only way people finally learn their lesson.* (Christie, 2021, p. 91)

Although she mentions these problems in the second half of the 20th century, her predictions about future become a reality, particularly that global environmental apocalypse which will happen in Jake's time. In 2008 and 2038 respectively, Willow's descendants, first Liam and then her grand-daughter Jake, in fact, experience that apocalypse in firsthand. As stated several times before, *Greenwood*'s narrative structure has unconventional chronological order: with reverse chronological order, it goes in cycles like rings of a tree trunk, starting from the outermost layer mirroring the year of 2038 to the innermost layer of heartwood corresponding to 1908, when the Greenwood family legacy began. In other words, when reader comes in the middle of the book, they reach the heart of the novel by going backwards from 2038, and upon reaching the heart of the novel they travel back to future, chronologically this time, towards beginning time of the novel which corresponds the year 2038. Therefore, this narrative style is quite essential to the novel's central theme: intergenerational ethics of climate change, for a reader might be able to track down characters, therefore their period, shifts and paradigms of ethics regarding ecology. Willow's progenies live in harsh conditions in an apocalyptic future; in this bleak future late capitalism and greed has ended the way of living for both humans and non-humans alike. Simply put, climate-change is a sneaky disaster that goes slowly but steadily and eventually exponentially devours decades upon decades until there is no single living thing left on the planet. This is an ongoing apocalypse that humans pay less attention to and shutter their eyes for truths or facts published by the world of science. Like someone approaching event horizon of a black hole where there is no chance to return, imminent climate-change apocalypse will devour the entire ecological system of all living creatures; it will be a time for postapocalyptic life in which survival of one is at utmost priority. In the similar vein, while conversing with her uncle Evertt, Willow narrates the very reason why she lives her life like a hippie, choosing her van as way of accommodation. For her, forests are mecca, and she feels elevated and liberated among them: "But out here in the forests, I'm constantly reminded that I'm no more important than any other organism, and that nature is the greatest force of all" (2021, p. 93). Accordingly, here discourse about nature reflects the notion put forward by first wave

ecocriticism. In addition to realizing nature as prime priority, Willow also shoulders responsibility by vowing to save as many trees as possible out there, yet to be laid bare by timber conglomerates. To highlight this fact, she conveys the following:

*Do you know there were once six trillion trees on this planet...And now there are three trillion? How long do you think they'll last at the rate we're going? So I guess I'd rather be with them before they're gone. And maybe even save a few in the process. (2021, p. 93)*

One can easily claim that Willow, on her share, does her best to react what timber companies do. She is an environmentalist who can also predict future based on current data. As a great sacrifice from Willow herself, she abandons all the riches of the world put forward in front of her, she adopts a life of modesty as well as simplicity. She is, thus, one of the few last remaining eco-warriors of her time. Although as a character she has got some flaws, she is at least on good path in her ethical responsibility regarding climate change. Furthermore, Willow does not want to give birth in that wretched planet doomed towards its imminent apocalypse. As an example of dramatic irony, Willow obviously will give birth to a boy named Liam Greenwood in the time to come. However, in her time, she does not want to bring another human being into such a brutal as well as atrocious world: "Acid rain, rampant inflation, police firing students, mindless conformity, looming economic collapse, overpopulation, suburbanization, sneak extinction, wanton deforestation – the last thing this world needs in another resource-sucking human showing up to ruin further" (2021, p. 99). All these things juxtaposed by Willow belong to the spirit of the 1970s when there were numerous global problems in the world. She justifiably does not want to bring another human baby to this hungry world of man, where survival is outmost priority for all.

#### **4.4 Part IV: "1934"**

Fourth part of the novel takes the readers back to the 1930s when Willow was born. This is also the time Harris and Everett's early life unfolded. Along with themes regarding ethical responsibility to environment, throughout the novel, interconnectedness between humans and nature, especially with trees, is another prevalent theme that can easily be observed if closely scrutinized, too. As soon as Euphemia, who yet to be mother of Willow, gives birth to a child, she escapes from the mansion she was held hostage into forest where she bleeds to death, hanging her daughter onto trunk of a tree all alone in the middle of nowhere. Before she dies

Euphemia crawls to a massive tree, and then leant on its trunk in her final breaths. It is an image of her reincarnating through the tree. When Lomax, a bodyguard of bigwig Holt, sees her death corpse upon searching her in the forest, he muses about the scenery before his eyes:

*All that vivacity and intelligence – where has it gone? Into the tree? With a zap offright, Lomax suddenly perceives this maple as a living being. A reaching, petrified soul. A witness perhaps. More alive than Euphemia or her child every will be again. (Christie, 2021, p. 126)*

Lomax's words demonstrate that Euphemia and the tree are united; thus, she becomes 'one' or 'whole' with nature. In *Greenwood* some characters sometimes experience this kind of epiphany when they are alone somewhere with nature. Although Lomax is a wicked character whose ethical decisions can be debated, he nevertheless displays some sort of ethical epiphany regarding nature. Moreover, another example for theme of interconnectedness is demonstrated through the character Harris Greenwood, who in his young ages has a disposition to like nature. But his greed of profiting trees far exceeds his environmental concern. As a hypocrite himself, Harris deep down loves nature notably; he feels serenity and peace being in forest among trees. He feels like his muscles relaxed among them. Although he becomes a limber tycoon by cutting down millions of trees through the power of his company, it is till forests themselves where he feels elevated. Late capitalism surpasses his romantic idealism regarding ecological affairs. He does not belong to urbanization of the world; rather, where he belongs to is trees:

*...In the city, corners may strike like cobras and hard shoulder may thump him aside, but trees he can sense long before he reaches them, from aura of quite they emit and the way the ground rises up before them. (2021, pp. 137-138)*

His greed for money overshadows his passion for trees and thus nature by and large. This contradictory personality overwhelms Harris throughout the novel. Although he is a clever man, he consciously does not fulfil his moral responsibilities for supporting environmental cases of his time. Therefore, this renders him as someone who is morally ignorant in his actions. For example, to win entrusting of renting rights of a forest on an island which later comes to be known as "Greenwood Island", Harris Greenwood, resorts to one of the most hellish methods possible. Throughout his timber business carrier, Harris has seen clearances of countless trees that have taken ages to grow and nurture an ecosystem. Those majestic trees have been destroyed villainously

upon the cold-blooded orders by Harris. To take the rights of a forested island to rent it for his timber company, he decides to undermine the half of the island by setting trees up on fire. Before he sets fire, he suddenly realizes magnificence of trees and how it has taken myriad years for them to grow into these primeval beings that have witnessed firsthand every period of human history just like a time capsule beckoning from the deepest abyss of time. After lighting a match that he holds in his hand, Harris thus reflects on trees:

*...Harris inventories all that was required to birth such a forest: whole oceans of rain and centuries of sunlight. The same winds that carried the first explorers to this continent. Here are trees taller than twenty-storey buildings; trees that had already attained immensity when the first printing press rolled. Baudelaire called them 'living pillars of eternity' and Harris agrees.* (2021, p. 139)

Even if he adores nature, particularly those trees in it, he ruthlessly tosses the match to the forest ground and articulates the following, "They'll grow back" (2021, p. 139). He thinks what he sets fire will come back again, and hence erroneously he supposes that trees are infinite, abundant, and renewable in terms of resources. Out of sheer capitalistic motives, Harris wildly will do anything that he sets his mind on, to the extended to embody that Machiavellian notion that goes as 'the end justifies the means.' Consequently, it is evident that he becomes a villainous and wicked man because of his ethical choices regarding ecology. By clearing forests, he directly affects climate change, and he leaves a wretched planet for subsequent generations. His daughter Willow, on the other hand, becomes a fervent environmentalist and eco-warrior to make amends what her father Harris has damaged till that moment. As mentioned several times previously, Willow's son Liam becomes a vagabond and inspired by his grandfather Harris, he chooses to become a carpentry as a profession. Additionally, Liam's daughter Jake, the latest of the Greenwoods, becomes a scientist who ambivalently cares about nature that has been damaged adversely mostly by her ancestors like Harris. In sum, as for the Greenwood family, lineage intergenerational ethics regarding climate change has changed not only the course of the planet's overall ecological wellbeing but also drastically has drastically affected many lives of human beings. Individual or collective ethical responsibilities and thus choices have the potential to change everything related to both human and non-human alike, as can be discerned from within roots of this family lineage. On the other hand, as for the other brother Everett, things have a reverse situation in terms of having moral responsibility

for future generations. After the Great War, Everett Greenwood comes home shell-shocked. As can be seen in many of veterans returning home and having post-war syndrome, Everett lives a life of hobo and vagabond. After returning from the war, he maintains his life in an island which came to be known as Greenwood Island bought by Harris from Holt corporation. Although poor, Everett has become a self-sustained person, through living among trees; he taps trees' syrup and stores them to make a living. Before his conviction, Everett has lived his life that once was adopted by Henry David Thoreau in his *Walden*. In a stark contrast, whereas Harris clears all those trees away for mere capitalistic purposes, his brother Everett harnesses trees for nothing more than surviving. Everett, thus, chooses to be amongst trees – nature overall. Though they are children of the same generation and of the same family, Everett and Harris differentiate in their ethical disposition regarding climate change. Whereas the former adopts an ecological demeanour, the latter namely Harris chooses a wrong pathway in his ethical position as to nature. Besides, after Everett finds Willow as a foundling hanged on a tree in the forest that he lives in, he starts his long run away from Holt, who is the biological father of her. For this reason, he must give up his tapping maple syrup. He considers he will be back in his tapping business after everything settles down. However, whether there will be any more trees to sustain his life is a question for Everett because Harris might take down the remaining trees around the perimeter that he lives. In this respect, "If anything that the Dominion of Canada has, it's an endless supply of trees that nobody's using – that is, if his brother doesn't cut them all down first" (2021, p. 178). Harris' entire motivation is to gain profit, i.e. capital, out of those trees. He does not seem to grasp the fact that these trees are in fact just temporal meta to be profited from; thus, he does not pay much attention or heed about following generations in the matter of leaving a better preserved planet. Furthermore, after Harris has been offered a timber business from the Japanese, to make money he sets off to Japan with his assistant and mentor Feeney. Feeney's words are sufficient to prove that Harris is erroneous in his ethical approach towards trees, i.e. ecology. When Harris is asked about the course of this business affair by a Japanese authority, Feeney pretentiously intervenes to speak on behalf of his boss Harris by putting the following:

*...Frankly, sir, Mr. Greenwood doesn't have a view,...But what he does have is trees. Trees that he'd like to cut up into neat little stripes and sell to you at a fair market price, so you can go and build your Emperor's little toy railroad. (2021, p. 189)*

In the same vein, it can be concluded from this excerpt that as though Harris has a divine position on the planet, by possessing all the trees in his custody. Apparently, his only existential concern is to make fortune out of trees, so he does not care about future generations regarding human and nonhuman alike; thus, his individual moral responsibility is crippled, and this is neither in favour for ecology nor future descendants. Following traces of late capitalism will eventually have drastic consequences for future and for all, shortly. In the same business meeting, Harris feds up with the Japanese way of negotiating and all, and thus he loses his temper. At that point there does transpire an intriguing conversation among interlocutors when Harris puts the following, “And all you want to do is hide behind your translators and ring your bells. Why don’t you cut down your own trees and save us all this trouble? You have a garden outside that is full of them!” (2021, pp. 189-190). To respond Harris’ rageful outburst, the Japanese Chairman narrates the following thought-provoking statement, “Our trees are sacred to us Mr. Greenwood” (2021, p. 190). This statement alludes the concept of ‘bioregionalism’, which is described by Judith Plant as follow:

*Bioregionalism means learning to become native to place, fitting ourselves to a particular place, not fitting a place to our pre-determined tastes. It is living within the limits and the gifts provided by a place, creating a way of life that can be passed on to future generations. (Plant, 2018, pp. 673-674)*

In this regard, Harris, who is Canadian, becomes one that exploits what nature offers and provides. That is, he cuts down trees for his personal tastes of becoming richer and richer and of becoming a sheer slave of capitalist monster. Therefore, based upon Greenwood Island at that time of Harris, one can easily claim that Canadian government does not act properly to preserve or in that case save the rest of trees remaining from the claws of greedy tycoons of Harris-like. Therefore, it is not possible to mention collective moral responsibility. Unlike his rapacious brother Harris, Everett, on the other hand, learns to become a native to Canadian forests. In other words, he sustains himself through the forest, without ever doing any harm. In a similar vein, Harris’ daughter – though not biological – Willow, a fervent environmentalist herself, is a self-sufficient person who collects chanterelle mushrooms for a living. Both Everett and Willow, accordingly, know their limits and do not cross the line in

favour of nature. They know their specific and global natural boundaries, and thus live within nature harmonically. Though they individually fulfil their ethical obligations regarding planetary stewardship, their superordinate such as timber companies or policy makers and alike fail to do so. Consequently, it is not even a matter of discussion to claim that there is nation based collective ethical disposition with respect to climate change, at least within Canadian borders. On the other hand, as can be understood from the Japanese Chairman's manner that it is possible to act according to guidelines of bioregionalism. The Japanese people are the almost exact opposite of the Canadians in their demeanour towards preserving nature. However, as two sides of the same coin demonstrate, though the Japanese buy or import timber from various countries since theirs are supposedly "sacred" to them, they do not help to curb global climate change. Hence, it cannot be acknowledged that the Japanese are entirely innocent or harmless in their attitudes regarding environmental ethics. Instead, they should not have bought those timbers from Harris Greenwood so that they could preserve the planet not only for subsequent generations living in their country but also for those living in the rest of the world as well. Individual as well as collective ethical responsibilities must go hand in hand for the stewardship of the planet, all in all. In the same way, not just one country but collaboration of all countries on the planet must unite to tackle with the impacts inflicted by the Anthropocene. It may sound paradoxical, but it will be humans to save themselves from the apocalypse brought forth by the same species. In the Great Chain of Being, humans must get their hands on dealing with the Anthropocene induced climate-change; therefore, it is their utmost and primal responsibility to make it happen.

In the same vein, every generation has some protective obligations to fulfil for the sake of others to follow. When it comes to leave a better planet for subsequent generations, it is imperative that one must gird themselves with such titles as protector or better steward of the planet Earth. Everett Greenwood is just one befitting example that tries his best to bring up a child called Pod – who later came to be known as Willow. For her, Everett is a parental figure who guides Willow to the awareness of nature. He knows Willow is just a seed that needs proper caring in her journey of life. He, therefore, tries to inspire the newborn with ecological manners. Also, her nickname

“Pod” suggests a hopeful salvation for future generations. And it is Everett’s responsibility to pass on his environmentalist knowledge to her:

*...He knows that trees often use birds and squirrels to spread their seeds, along with various flying contraptions like whirlers or cottony fluff that can blow great distances. Much of creation works this way: living things send versions of themselves out into the great puzzle of the future. And like a seed this girl is in dire need of a hospitable place to land. And it's his job to find it.* (Christie, 2021, p. 204)

In this case, Everett embodies the old-growth tree, spreading all its seeds through many beneficial mechanisms out there. One can therefore claim that seed symbolizes Pod, namely Willow. The seed must find a good shelter to thrive on; otherwise, it would decay and end up in being pale and dead. Accordingly, Everett is the one who provides the shelter she needs, whereas her biological father Holt is the quite opposite, one who does not care about the child or nature or the planet’s trajectory towards hellish future. All he cares is just his reputation and money that he has exploited from all kinds of exploitation possible. What he fears the most is that once the journal written by Willow’s deceased mother Euphemia is caught, everything he has ever built will come to an end. So, what he tries to do is to recover that journal and maintain his selfish lush life that will accelerate and contribute further to global climate change. Humans like Holt and Harris, thus, have become an epitome of Satan-like greed that devours all resources of the planet in their whims that cost direly for future generations. Throughout the novel, belonging to the same generation, Everett comes forward as a stark contrast to these villainous characters. Although he has some defaults, he still tries to do his best when it comes to preserving and passing an intact nature for future generations.

#### 4.5 Part V: “1908” Roots of the Greenwoods

In the beginning section, ‘heartwood’ or core of the novel’s narrative structure, which is titled as “1908”, Michael Christie emphasizes the fact that family trees, when compared to real families of trees, cannot be as persistent and embracive as possible. Family trees can be likened to a tree’ trunk shaped in circles, layer upon layer, so each generation upon the next. Thus is the following: “ONE IS SUBJECT to much talk nowadays concerning family trees and roots and bloodlines and such, as if a family were an eternal fact, a continuous branching upwards through time immemorial” (Christie, 2021, p. 209). Christie resembles ecological trees to family trees, by focusing

upon the fact that both are fragile and transitory. It can be traced through these lines, like many others in the novel, that there is an interconnectedness between humans and trees. The former cannot survive without the sheer existence of the latter. Besides, humans are dependent on trees, and vice versa is out of question in that trees can maintain their lives through other creatures or animals for as long as possible. Throughout *Greenwood*, therefore, not only do readers read and see a family legacy but they can also see trees' ecological legacy through time travel. Hence, as readers travel through time, corresponding year of 1908, they are introduced to historical background related to the Greenwood brothers' childhood and family roots. After these two survive the train crash, local people take care of the two. They are given to the custody of a Scottish migrant widow named Fiona Craig. Just like all circles of a tree trunk are connected to one another layer upon layer, all characters in the novel revolve around a single-family called Greenwoods. Perhaps the writer implies that not only via major characters like Willow, Everett, and Harris but also via such minor characters as Fiona Craig, Mr. Holt, and Lomax are of vital importance in the grand scheme of things. Each character, hence, is connected to one another, be it directly or indirectly in a long span of time. For example, Fiona Craig moves to Canada with her husband from Scottish Highlands in a time even before the main characters are yet to be born. Upon arriving "Land of the Trees", the couple petitions for getting some woods from Canadian government to cultivate the land (2021, p. 213). However, to the surprise of the couple, this woodland has been inhabited by Native American tribe Mohawk. So, her husband tries all the best to drive off or displace the native from their lands, and the following are narrated by the third person narrator who is allegedly one of the locals:

*...Mohawk, who'd been displaced from their traditional trapping grounds by a local lumber concern. Despite his compassionate ways, James Craig bought a rifle and raised a local militia to drive the band from his property, a brutal yet necessary act that many of us had once performed ourselves. Some of the Mohawk refused to vacate and grew so uppity there wasn't much to be done except shoot them as examples and burn their women and children out.* (2021, p. 214)

In addition to admitting that his invasive ancestors drove off the natives from their lands by using a force of brute violence, from the given excerpt one can conveniently state that the Native Americans had been living with trees in harmony until the white man came to the continent. As their families thrived among trees, so did the trees. They

respect trees a lot, even considering them as sacred. However, upon arriving to the land of the Natives, white man like James Craig decide to clear away trees for gaining profit. This short-sightedness will result in an apocalypse their successors yet to confront. In this respect, not surprisingly those natives surpass invaders like James coming from the Old World in terms of ethical responsibility regarding ecology and nature. By the same token, the elderly from these local tribes teach their kids to maintain a sustainable life that is environmentally friendly. With the knowledge of a society, also, children learn their surroundings in microcosm on the condition that they are taught in proper and righteous ways by their elders. Towards adulthood these kids learn how to survive in nature by going hand in hand with it. This is a common rite of a passage towards adulthood in the cultures of many tribes on the planet. Therefore, responsibility of giving education falls on each individual living in that specific community. As children are nurtured as pupils of ecological entity, they become more aware about their surroundings, and they set themselves to preserve nature the best way possible. With macro-cosmic perspective, children can learn at a very young ages that their minor actions gradually might lead to some major consequences in future, like butterfly effect phenomena puts. In retrospect, those local people who failed to nurture young Harris and Everett feel regretful now upon walking down memory lane, for they knew that one of those boys, clearly ambitious Harris himself, would naturally become something big – a timber tycoon, thus they acknowledged his childhood savagery and greed for bigger whims. Therefore, the narrator, in this chapter a member of that community, laments this fact:

*Looking back, we ought to have forced the Greenwood boys to walk school on Whalen Road with the other children, rather than allowing them to trek through the forest. Because when they emerged from those trees into play yard, with their tattered clothes and pitch-stained hands, how could they not have enshrined themselves as outcasts? (2021, p. 224)*

Since Harris has grown up both as an orphan and a homosexual character, both of which presumably have contributed to his outcast character, he has deviated into adopting a more devilish disposition. Although he is the only educated one of the Greenwood brothers, it is also Harris himself who individually takes some decisions that would drag the planet and its inhabitants into an apocalyptic future. Also, so called educated man himself, Harris could be considered as a villainous character because his impaired ethical responsibility foreshadows some disasters that would fall upon the

planet earth in some distant future. As a result, every human being must act individually and collectively to reach an ethical decision about all living creatures including both human and nonhuman alike. Moreover, Harris matures or rather grows into a greedier personality as they days pass. In accordance with principles and guidelines of capitalism, Harris always desires more. After Mrs. Craig's woodlot was bequeathed to the brothers as her final will, Harris wants far bigger woodlots than they already had. When he discusses the matter with his brother Everett, who is obviously more content with what they have, they reach in a disagreement. Thus, Harris details his plan to Everett:

*Now that the woodlot's ours, Everett, we need to think bigger than thirty acres. Bigger than this township even...We're wasting good trees cutting them for firewood and you know it...So my plan is to bring in a crew from Kingston to cut down the entirety at once, then we'll have it milled for prime Lumber and make a killing. (2021, p. 231)*

The last part from this excerpt is, particularly, a quite striking statement. The choice of phrases like “make a killing” by Christie is a witty one, more precisely a pun, for in his hold age Harris will have killed more than 2/3 of North American trees alone. This is a foreshadowing from past to a distant future in which an apocalypse has already knocked the door. In contrast to Everett’s stoic and contented nature, Harris has a greedy nature for his benefits. To answer his brother, thus Everett expresses his feelings and thoughts on being contented with what he already has:

*Why can't we just keep things as they are?...We've got some good trees there. We could cut the pines, leave the maples, and make a good living selling syrup. We'll build a new house, a finer one, right on the ashes of Mrs. Craig's. We ought to be grateful for what she left us. (2021, pp. 231-232)*

Hearing these words, Harris is enraged and answers back, “Grateful?” Apparently, Everett wants a more sustainable and self-sufficient life while his brother wants the quite opposite. Two brothers contradict in their moral demeanour, as a result. Harris blindly ignores the fact that what he does from now on will have tremendous impacts on future generations. On the other hand, Everett is right-minded man who is aware of being self-contained character. Further, in his early life he chooses a decent demeanour regarding ethical challenges such as ecological protection. Michael Christie, consequently, juxtaposes these two opposite characters to highlight the notion that two distinct individuals, even from the same family origins, might have quite distinct ethical responsibilities with respect to nature.

#### 4.6 Part VI: “1934”

As mentioned previously, although in literature major characters are most influential in spreading some philosophical or ethical notions to the readers explicitly, there are also some minor characters who possess similar important roles in highlighting these ideas implicitly, which is about alterations in intergenerational ethics of climate change in *Greenwood*. For instance, the novel takes readers back to the 1930s, when there is a farmer lady named Temple Van Horne, who in the midst of the Dust Bowl phenomena tries successfully cultivating her land with proper methods that she has acquired from scientific studies. Temple consults to books, science, discretion and far sightedness when it comes to tackle with environmental and particularly climatic problems. For instance, locals from her town unwisely put the blame on people from the United States, rather than reasoning what actual causes of these dust storms inflicted on their farming lives are. Thus, these settlers forget the fact that it falls upon each individual share regarding this climatic calamity. In this part of the novel, third person narrator, who is none other than Michael Christie, aptly opines in this matter:

*The drought has worn on for three years now, and these dusters are becoming ever fiercer and more frequent. She's heard the local farmers grumble about the greedy Americans to the south who've ploughed over their grassland with mechanized tractors. In their view, it's a plague from elsewhere: Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Kansas. But the truth is that it's their dust, too. (Christie, 2021, p. 250)*

The last statement from this extract is of striking point since it is everyone's individual moral responsibility to preserve and maintain planet earth. Humans, as a logical fallacy, are prone to fall victims of their localized and regional thinking, but instead they surely must weigh their actions as well as mindset in grand scheme of things. In this respect, Temple stands as an antithesis to her local farmers in her doings. Those locals wear the cloak of dim sightedness and denial in their battle to tackle with climate change, only to fail in the end, whereas Temple does the quite opposite:

*...She learned to rotate crops and let the land lie fallow and regenerate, and at the agricultural hall in Estevan she warned the others to do the same. Yet their ways were set, and they weren't seeking advice from the local "Lady Farmer." (2021, p. 250)*

This Dust Bowl incident sets an example for people who do not take their irreversible actions into consideration. *Greenwood*'s futuristic setting, in which the novel starts and ends in the same section of the book titled “2038”, takes place in an apocalyptic

scenery. Subsequent generations after the year of 1934 – time of Temple – will have failed to preserve nature and thus paved the way for doomsday for their grandchildren. As a result, interim generations will have not worn the cloak of environmental stewardship, either. Therefore, it is not surprising for Willow, Liam, and Jake’s generations respectively that they feel gradual impacts of blind ethical choices taken by previous generations.

After Harris Greenwood goes to abroad for some business affairs with the Japanese, he comes back to his home country Canada to see and make sure everything runs smoothly throughout his company. In one of his excursions, a brutal work accident happens in work site, which claims a life of one of his employees. This incident alone reveals that Harris is as blind as bat with respect to what his company is truly doing, a massacre of trees along with casualties of many innocent lives. Upon this unfortunate incident, Harris has a late epiphany: “Yet to be so near this particular death disquiets him. With Feeney now at his side, Harris is newly alert to the brutality of logging and the general frailty of life” (2021, p. 268). Accordingly, Harris is aware that he blindly cuts down countless trees for gaining more profit upon which he will never set his eyes on. Ironically enough, not only his eyes but also his ethical responsibility are literally blind because he only thinks of getting richer and richer, and he is not able to see how his transient wealth leads to destruction of the planet’s ecological balance. Harris has, hence, a devil-may-care stance towards life, and in particular to nature, regardless of his interest in bird-collecting, and his educational background related to trees and nature. He is undeniably a selfish persona since what he all thinks about is nothing but gaining more fortunes that his company would bring, and as a timber tycoon, he does not take a risk to ruin his company and all the riches that he has gathered for years. That is, his thirst for wealth far surpasses and overshadows his ethical duties associated with climate change and so on. In Canada, a vast forested country, there are few trees left to be cut down by Harris’ men in his company’s territory. Consequently, after making a deal of seventy million feet of trees with the Japanese authorities, he realizes that his company will not be able to provide those trees, for the company has already cut down as many trees as possible; in other words, less is available for Harris to hack down for the Japanese government. Likelihood of his company’s failure in this business affair with Japan unsettles Harris,

and he fearfully remarks the following, “We’re finished if we can’t get our hand on more trees” (2021, p. 270). He obviously thinks nothing about ecology, nature, let alone climate change, but his words reflect his ethical standpoint which is of course not in favour of nature but his individual reputation and wealth. As such, he would protect all of his egocentric endeavours at all cost, in fact he would assume a sort of Machiavellian personality. If given any chance, he would surely cut down all of trees remaining in a single swing of his whim, and destroying all trees in his command will he do in the rest of his life. Briefly, Harris’ capitalistic and selfish personality has dulled his moral stance about stewardship of the planet Earth.

In the context of collective ethical responsibility towards caring of mother nature, *Greenwood* abounds in examples. Timber tycoon Harris throws a party, one that resembles that of Fitzgerald’s *Great Gatsby*. Millionaires of the time show up in the party one by one; each looking for opportunities to devour a part of the global organism what is called as Earth. When Harris asks his “describer” Liam Feeney to depict his party, the latter narrates hypocrite millionaires aptly:

*Diamond-drenched women in close-cut silk saunter past... Clasped to the arms of ugly old industrialists richer than Olympus. Already your guests seem to have aligned themselves according to what feature of Mother Earth they’ve committed themselves to destroying. Gold men in the corner. Oil near the exits. Railway executives and coal magnates colluding near the bar.* (Christie, 2021, p. 287)

One might righteously characterize these men as eco-killers, as the phrase is, for what all they converse about is business, how to preserve and advance it further; they talk about politics, economics, and so forth. However, none dares to speak individually the matter of planet’s ecological issues at hand, such as climate change. Their public image, thus, constructs a big wall that blocks their ethical view.

To illustrate further, Michael Christie sprinkles some historical aura of the 1930s Jazz Age. In that period third person omniscient narrator, who might be the writer himself, extracts the following:

*...The current fashion is to create reserves, preserves, national parks, like Roosevelt had done in the U.S. It’s as if the man won’t rest until the world is one big sandbox for mankind to play. No, better cut them now, Harris thinks. Get some use out of them. Start the regrow sooner than later.* (Christie, 2021, pp. 289-290)

As can obviously understood from this excerpt that Harris Greenwood’s heart is dead against preserving ecology, saving what is left of trees on the planet. His sheer

ambition is to satisfy his tycoon egocentric pleasures, to the detriment of destroying nature; he would like to gain some fortune or profit by cutting trees if given any chance in that very moment at the expense of losing a whole interconnected ecological system, which will otherwise accelerate climate change. Therefore, this would inflict a deep wound for every living thing on the planet. This individual ethical preference or choices by Harris ‘throws the baby out with the bathwater’. In addition, he has a conflicting nature, for although he finished his degree at Yale University in the field of trees and ecology, he displays quite opposite direction of what he is supposed to do; he destroys nature rather than preserving and later passing successfully to subsequent generations. Also, he overlooks the fact that although trees he cuts are natural creatures, they are far from being renewable resource just like he claims them to be. Yet, to Harris, hacked down trees or destroyed ecology will regrow one way or another in the fullness of time, and he supposes that ‘nature always finds a way’ saying is always true. But this is not the case given that the novel weaves more than one hundred years of time span. That is, for example, in Jake’s time, corresponding 2038, planet’s forests have been destroyed and not regrown or replaced with some others. In the same party, Harris eavesdrops on a conversation regarding sanctity and grandeur of trees. Upon hearing these words, he answers the following:

*You think trees are sacred, that they love you. That they grow for your enjoyment. But those who really know trees know they’re also ruthless. They’ve been fighting a war for sunlight and sustenance since before we existed. And they’d gladly crush or poison every single one of us if it gave them any advantage. (2021, p. 290)*

Upon his view on trees, his addressee, who is unsurprisingly a woman, interrupts and remarks the following, “I daresay that’s rather bleak view of the world” (2021, p. 290). In related manner, throughout *Greenwood* women are usually considered ‘less’ than men because of the traditional thought that it is somehow always men who decide what present and future generations will have as heritage and fate. Since they are left in the shadows of men, women are hardly able to find a chance to speak for the sake of Mother Earth, as it has already been exemplified previously with the character of Temple who is called “Lady Farmer”. Throughout the novel, such women characters as Willow, Temple, Jake, and even Euphemia herself always feel more passionate and affectionate towards nature, compared to male characters. Furthermore, they are in the role of ‘preserving mother’, whereas men could be defined as the exact opposite since

they are mostly inclined to destroy every chance he gets. Mr. Holt, Harris, and many other tycoons go with this definition. As such, women have minor direct effects on the planet's ecology since it is mostly men themselves who have the whip hand. Therefore, Harris answers back with a statement that resonates that of business conversation that took place in Japan. He thus replies, "Madam, I have no view of the world" (2021, p. 290). This callous and brute answer reveals a lot of things about Harris' personality and his ethical responsibility. He does not care much about those grand and sacred trees, for he does not have any world view as he puts. Thus, it is not possible to state that Harris shares his individual responsibilities of leaving a better planet for future progeny. Instead, he contributes to accelerating of an imminent apocalyptic world view which is due to happen somewhere in the future. Moreover, by speaking ill of trees Harris attempts to justify wrongdoings of his timber company. He thinks trees must be hacked down because it is necessary to do so; otherwise, to his way of thinking, trees might destroy humans all once they get the chance and capability to do so. Once again Harris is blind and ignorant about scientific and natural facts surrounding him. In the same vein, during the party does transpire some intriguing conversations that might reveal characters' ethical standpoints about nature. For instance, Harris, who is watching for an opportunity to buy full title rights of some forested island to complete the Japanese business agreement, tries to convince Rockefeller to turn over full cutting rights of a region called Albertine. Rockefeller resents him because Harris unproperly "...cut a deal with those howler monkeys" (2021, p. 291). And he answers to Rockefeller by stating a striking statement that complies with his greedy disposition, "I sell wood to anyone, regardless of their zoological heritage" (2021, p. 291). The last part is especially important when evaluated in ecocritical discourse although he insults the Japanese people. Harris hypocritically disregards planet's heritage, both human and nonhuman. As he does not care much about any sort of heritage apart from monetary, he does not fulfil his share of leaving a preserved and even better planet for future generations. Besides, one may speculate that Harris' sexual orientation is towards homosexuality and that, because of this, he will not have a pedigree or genealogy of his own, and that is the reason why he acts so recklessly. But the truth is that leaving a preserved planet for future falls on everyone's responsibility, regardless of them having a family or not, or whether they are in rich or impoverished one, or in

this case whether their sexual orientation varies in a culturally biased society. That is, it must be a collective action that is imperative in every generation. In contrast to what Harris thinks about trees and animals, they do have magnificent evolutionary heritage of their own. Furthermore, once Harris knows for certain that he cannot reason with men like Rockefeller in the matter of Albertine's forests tenure, he thinks ill of Rockefeller:

*...To men like Rockefeller, this country – the greatest storehouse of natural materials the world has ever known, first stolen from the Natives, then sold off bit by bit to foreign interests like him – has always been just a place for them to tear things out of. And for a dizzy, drunken moment, Harris pities the trees. Especially for the trusting way they declared themselves to the world with their grand upward reach. At least gold and oil have the common sense to hide.* (2021, p. 293)

One can claim from this excerpt that Harris possesses a rather conflicting personality, yet under close scrutiny, the way he pities trees while he is drunk discloses his true nature regarding ecology. When he is drunk, his subconscious mind emerges from the depths of his personality to display the fact that deep down he cares about trees yet in reality he fails to do so. Instead, as an ethical challenge he chooses to be villainous man – a forest killer to be exact. When Harris meets his superior, e.g. Rockefeller, he is distracted and thus sees some facts related to his power status and more powerful tycoons than him. Only then does he genuinely pity nature and what ailment he has brought upon ecology. This disillusionment makes him question what is really going on the planet as well as human world. Nevertheless, although he hacks down acres upon acres and if given any chance, he could destroy all the forests, Harris cannot help but admiring these majestic trees' various survival strategies. Accordingly, to label him as a contradicting character of his own may be acknowledged due such reasons. In this context, throughout *Greenwood* each character brings different perspectives on not only each other, but also on living responsibly with the ecological and non-human world. The lack of communication between the characters deepens the complexity of their relationships. These multi-layered characters make sometimes disturbing choices, adding to the dynamic nature of the narrative (Sureshkumar, 2024). Throughout *Greenwood* there are some moments when some characters, among whom Harris is the most striking one, have conflicting challenges with ethical concerns about nature. For example, as mentioned previously Harris Greenwood is an example of rather contradictory personality. Although he is a timber tycoon that can command hacking

down countless tress by snapping his finger, there are also some moments in the novel when he feels affectionate about them. In one of such cases, he is about to pity a tree that is eight hundred years old, what is left of tree is just a stump:

*...It may be the tender-heartedness that often afflicts him in Feeney's company, but he almost finds himself pitying the tree, as one might a human being whose life was cut unnecessarily short. But he shakes his head and drives the silly notion from his mind.* (2021, p. 309)

Without late capitalistic motivation inflicted upon him, Harris could have grown a character that could go along with nature. Yet he chooses to be the otherwise villainous person. The line “life was cut unnecessarily short” might symbolize a generation’s inhibited efforts to preserve nature for future. Thus, Harris’ reflection on that single tree trunk highlights the importance of interconnectedness between humans and nature, as well. Moreover, as can be seen through bildungsroman characters, Harris, as he gets older, he progresses or evolves into a sort of good personality, or he pretends to be such one. In such rare occasions in the novel, he is shown to pity trees and sometimes develops a kind of empathy with them. His alter-ego, who loves nature and cares for it, somehow successfully indicates a fact that is embedded in every human being: environmental stewardship. For instance, when he was young and able, Harris made a cabin on the Greenwood Island, which he purchased before by cutting a deal, by hook or by crook, with Rockefeller. Although on the mainland he lives a lush life of tycoons who hold mansions, which are adorned with luxurious ornaments, he wants and therefore demands quite opposite of what he has already had up until that moment. For this reason, he has his cabin built only using natural material such as wood to make it conform to the standard and simple beauties of forest that surrounds the cabin: “He requested a modest yet elegant structure of an unadorned, rugged design – the diametrical opposite of his mansion – one intended to merge with the forest rather than to dominate it” (2021, p. 317) The last line from this extract is exceptionally crucial point in that it indicates Harris’ double-faced personality. In other words, he is a timber tycoon making fortunes and living a lush life through hacking down many acres of forests that are old growth; nevertheless, he seems to sympathize and shows affection about what he destroys. Ironically enough, he is the one who ‘dominates’ nature, instead of merging with it unlike someone who has gone hand in hand with it in a solar punk universe. His sheer capitalist greed puts his environmental visions into the shades. Briefly, Harris Greenwood is far from girding himself with that eco-warrior

cloak of environmental stewardship and making some constructive changes in the world with the immense power he has.

In the same vein, Harris narrates the fact that trees are like organisms that can function in similar ways, e.g. breathing, nourishing, living, and so on. He quotes the following, “Most people believe that wood dies when it’s cut, but it doesn’t. A wooden house is a living thing. Moving moisture through its capillaries. Breathing and twisting, expanding and contracting. Like a body” (2021, p. 318). By stating some facts about trees and his newly built wooden cabin, his discourse reflects the theme of interconnectedness between humans and trees. Maybe it also signifies the fact that all human beings must connect into one another to create a gigantic organism that is called collective mind, in their fight against the climate change. Both humans and trees are organisms living in communities that live on by generating healthful descendants for future generations. The line in the previous quote which reads as “wood dies when it’s cut” echoes those previous ones to highlight that trees resemble human generations, for when one generation fails, subsequent one can make amends for the wrongdoings of the failed one. In other words, with this Christie may suggest that even if a generation is cut or, rather, hindered from fulfilling their ecological responsibilities as to planet’s wellbeing, other generations that follow can always have a chance to fix what has been damaged by their ancestors. In a nutshell, ‘there is always a hope even if there seems to be none at all’ notion is embodied in this excerpt, which can indicate there is always a glimpse of light that can be carried from one generation to another. Furthermore, while Harris, who is blind, and his describer Feeney wonder around on the Greenwood Island, they come across some magnificent trees. Under such grand and marvellous trees, they stop and gaze up at their piercing tips. In awe and amazement, Harris tells a rather insightful understanding about nature: “It’s strange, isn’t it, Liam...how one only needs to purchase the land on which such a thing is rooted, before one is permitted to destroy it forever? And, strangest of all, there exists no power to stop you” (2021, p. 318). From his words, one can understand that humans have the capacity to control power, either to protect and nurture or destroy. Harris implies in the last line that there is no tangible and reliable policy or doctrine that can make someone stop harming the planet. Within climate ethic or environmental ethics, one is obliged to preserve nature and leave it intact for future generations.

Governments and individuals or individuals and public must jointly act together to do so under the guidance of climate ethics, therefore. As such, notion of “power” might be read as someone’s conscience or ethical standards, rather than actual power yielded by someone or an authority. But to have both is of vital importance to deal with environmental problems. Feeney replies with a subtle answer that can suggest that there is still a hope, and that is, that hope may symbolize a next dormant generation that will use their collective ethical power to curb such problems regarding ecology to support environmental stewardship. Feeney says the following, “Where I’m from, ancient trees are considered apartment buildings of spirits...So I expect there may indeed be a power to stop you, Harris. It just isn’t awake yet” (2021, p. 319). That ecological spirit will emerge in the next descendants, and they will create a single independent power to stop anyone attempting to do violence to nature. After what’s done is done, Harris realizes that he does not want to murder any more trees at all: “I’m weary of men dying my employ. And I’ve lost the stomach for cutting trees like this one” (2021, p. 319). Perhaps being in nature and confronted with trees that he has murdered all his life; Harris has an epiphany that will make him open his eyes. For trees and forests are the only remedy or haven and consolation for him. That is the reason why he continues his speech as, “...we could reside here full time. It would be our place to begin anew” (2021, p. 319). He rings the bell that he is once more connected to Mother Nature ultimately, and he would like to be back in origins, to his childhood particularly. Similarly, throughout *Greenwood* trees are resembled humans in many respects. Trees’ everlasting endurance and legacy reflect those of humans. Although mortal human beings are made of flesh and bones, they still have their culture and knowledge that can pierce through space and time and that can be passed into following generations. In the same vein, though there are some old-growth trees that fade and die, there are also those that are resistant to even death itself. That is, some individual trees may end up dying but there will always be other trees in the forest that will carry onto the future. While Feeney mentions J.R Holt’s man Lomax in a conversation with Harris, he likens Lomax to a tree that is quite resistant and resolute. He says the following:

*...But this Lomax reminds me of a tree that's been sawn right through and still won't fall. And while I'm more a sailor than a lumberman, I did my time in your camps, and one thing I learned*

*there is that a tree that's been cut through and still won't drop is one of the most dangerous things there is. (2021, p. 326)*

Even though there will be some obstacles that will try to deter those eco-warriors standing up for nature, there will still be those who will try their best against all odds. Willow is such an example in the novel, who challenges authorities and cultural norms that are variance with her environmentalist ideas. She is quite stubborn in her case; she always resists those who keep harming nature. And although there had been various incidents in which people tried to stop her many times, she demonstrated quite enduring character example. It is no wonder that she was named after willow tree, one of the most enduring trees out there in nature. As the name suggests, she has endured many obstacles throughout her life, for the sake of preservation of nature for future generations. In addition, Everett Greenwood, in fact, names Willow as though she is his own child. While finding a proper name for her non-biological daughter:

*...Everett planned, she needs her true name more than ever. Drawn from that strange, unkillable tree under which he and Temple first rested and drank water together; the tree that wouldn't die no matter how long the drought wore on. (2021, p. 361)*

Trees or Willow herself symbolize notion of resilience against all calamities befall. Just like willow tree itself, Willow, living up to the name, does all her best to resist all sorts of disasters throughout her life. Moreover, in the 1930s, in the North of America, Dust Bowl calamity wiped out most of the land including farm fields, trees, and settlements, and so on. It was a very dry period when dust storms prevailed across the U.S. as well as Canada. As stated several times before, trees, especially those species related to willow, stand the test of time. Throughout the history of planet Earth, trees have witnessed and endured various misfortunes. For example, one of the chapters of *Greenwood* takes place in the 1930s, and in this chapter a big storm havoc Saskatchewan, Estevan, especially household of Temple that was wiped out completely in every inch. After this climatic calamity settles or 'when the dust settles' literally, "...The only landmark that remains upright is the willow near the house. Although a large bough has cracked off and most of its leaves were stripped, the trunk appears intact" (2021, p. 341). The given excerpt reflects that human beings can stand time only if they successfully conduct and pass their ecological as well as ethical knowledge into subsequent generations. Like the symbolic willow tree as well as Willow herself, human beings must act hand in hand, cooperatively creating a

fundamental ethical demeanour regarding climate change and nature overall. Therefore, collective ethical responsibility is a must when it comes to battle with something like climate-change disasters.

As pointed out few times before, Harris and Everett differ in many aspects. The former is a greedy millionaire tycoon who cuts down acres upon acres with cold-blooded, whereas the latter depends on trees for mere survival, namely trying to meet the ends. They both harness trees for distinct purposes. Everett has tried to have a self-sufficient and sustainable livelihood from trees; on the other hand, his brother Harris hacks them down, for he complies with late capitalistic urges. It is, therefore, not surprising for Harris to state the following, while conversing with Everett: “Odd, isn’t it? How we both ended up relying on trees – in different capacities, mind you” (Christie, 2021, p. 337). Harris brags about his power of destruction and making fortunes with it. Throughout the novel, Harris regards trees as resources of exploitation, one that can be harnessed at one’s whim for specific purposes. His ethical demeanour regarding climate change and its possible outcomes are therefore handicapped and crippled. He lives for the saying that goes like ‘the end justifies the means.’ His end here means earning more and more, whereas the only way to get there is to use trees as a means for profit. No wonder later in the novel, he expresses his selfish emotions and character when he ‘romantically’ addresses his lover Feeney: “I’d turn every tree on this Earth into matchwood if it would keep you from harm, Liam” (2021, p. 364). This cruel somehow ‘romantic’ statement by Harris sheerly reveals his true intentions and his real ethical stance towards nature. His selfish and greedy personality casts a cloud on his true demeanour regarding environmental stewardship. That is, he only cares ‘worldly’ affairs rather than ‘earthly’ ones. His villainous personality is therefore diametrically opposite to that of Willow or his brother Everett. He lacks the personal or individual ethics related to preservation of the planet. All in all, his individual choices will eventually pile up into an apocalyptic doom, which will not only afflict his future descendants but also the very future of the planet Earth.

#### **4.7 Part VII: “1974”**

After an ecological epiphany happens to Willow in her university years, she abandons all the rich means provided by her tycoon father Harris Greenwood. After that decision, she decides to live her life as a fervent environmentalist hippie whose

only motivation is to follow that old tradition called sustainability. When Harris dies at the age of seventy-five, Willow goes back to her father's mansion – or what she considers as a “vile shrine”. She laments the fact that her father had amassed great fortunes by cutting down countless acres of trees on behalf of his timber business, yet vainly all that wealth has gone for his luxurious mansion's decoration. In her opinion, what Harris had done throughout his life has gone for nothing but destroying whole ecological system per se. She is truly ashamed of her family legacy that has brought upon ecological destruction. Therefore, she describes her father's mansion as follows:

*...On the few occasions she returned to this house after Our Plundered Planet kicked off her environmental awakening, she saw it for what it truly was: a vile shrine to the gruesome violence that her bloodline had inflicted upon the planet, which included slaughtering thousands of ancient and defenceless creatures for no purpose other than gaudy decoration.* (Christie, 2021, p. 389)

From this passage one can conclude that Willow detests her family bloodline, and thus she has on her conscience. She girds herself and her ethical stance with stewardship or guardian of the ecology. Simulacrum and vanity of Harris Greenwood have impacted the planet Earth's ecology and climate seriously, all because he had tried to fill the void in his life with that fraud gaudiness. Willow Greenwood is central to the novel, for she is the most explicit character who fervently speaks of her ethical stance or demeanour regarding ecological concerns. Her father Harris, on the other hand, is a foil character who contrasts with his daughter Willow – who could be read as major character in this respect – to display moral responsibility one can gird themselves with, be it destructive and vile, or preservative and decent. Throughout the novel, Michael Christie juxtaposes these two major characters with the lens of ecocriticism, by placing them into a family bloodline to underscore the fact that every generation is rather different from one another, and that even the same family members vary a lot in their ethical standings as to nature. The writer perhaps implies that preservation or stewardship of nature is the responsibility of all human beings, regardless of their family bloodline and that it is beyond space and time. To highlight these two otherwise characters, third person narrator – none other than Christie himself – relates the following:

*The old saying goes that the apple doesn't fall from the tree. But in Willow's experience, the opposite is more likely true. An apple is nothing but a seed's escape vehicle, just one of the ingenious ways they hitch rides – in the bellies of animals, or by taking to the wind – all to get as far away from their parents as they possibly can. So is it any wonder the daughters of dentists open candy stores, the sons of accountants become gambling addicts, the*

*children of couch potatoes run marathon? She's always believed that most people's lives are lives as one great refutation of the one that came before them. (2021, p. 395)*

Thus, Willow's eco-warrior character is the refutation of her father's eco-killer nature. She reflects what human beings might assume in their ethical choices. All in all, her ethical stand as regard with nature can be read as an antithesis to her father's destructive tendency towards nature. As mentioned previously, upon Harris' demise, Willow goes to her father's mansion to carry on funeral rituals. From all walks of life people visit her father's luxurious mansion to pay last homage to their old friend. In the house, Willow realizes a photograph of his father's young age, in which he stands proudly in front of a mountain of wood blocks piled together. The photograph reminds Willow that her father's destructive and greedy disposition had always been there ever since he was born. While examining the photograph, she almost exclaims the following:

*...Behold the conqueror of trees...Both visually and spiritually blind to the massacre in his wake! Again, she wonders how he could have encountered beings of such unimpeachable grace and beauty and felt the urge (not to mention right!) to destroy them. How brave, she murmurs into the tiny cockle of her son's ear. Your grandfather hired men to cut down defenceless giants and paid them like rats to do it. (2021, p. 395)*

Willow wonders how his father could destroy such majestic creatures so recklessly. And thus, she is unable to understand his father's true urge and judgement to kill countless of trees. She ironically tells her son about 'feats of bravery' that his grandfather had displayed in his lifetime. Willow is mad at his father since he left an irreparable planet behind not for her but also for her son's generation. She is mad again because his father only pursued richness and vanity at the cost of future generations. Ironically enough, Harris Greenwood is not only physically blind to his surroundings physical and tangible planet, but also mentally blind to his reasoning to rip down numerous trees. This demonstrates the fact that one's blindness can lead to some irreversible consequences for others. Furthermore, after killing dozens of trees, Harris Greenwood is buried in a treed place, which is another poignant irony. During his funeral, Willow thinks about her father Harris. She has many revelations about not only herself as an individual but also about her family and her nation as collective entities in relation to their approach towards ecology. She frequently muses about irreversibility of her father's cruel actions and the recklessness of her Canadian nation in the face of all. To her, though Harris had the power to destroy trees at his sweet will,

there should have been someone or something even more powerful than him to cease that massacre in favour of the planet's future. Her nation, as collective entity of ethical responsibility, 'saw no evil, heard no evil, spoke no evil,' as a response to men like Harris. For Harris is a good example of what could happen when there is no protective institution to cease such vicious humans like him. Willow implies, therefore, that although human beings have their individual view of ecological ethics, there must be some conservative or steward, in literal meaning, ethical guidelines taken by governments or nations as a collective resolution. While Willow watches her father's coffin is being buried into the grave by attendants, she contemplates on such matters that are previously mentioned:

*If it's true that the United States was born of slavery and revolutionary violence, she muses while watching her own country was them work, then surely her own country was born of a cruel, grasping indifference to its indigenous peoples and the natural world. We who rip out the Earth's most irreplaceable resources, sell them cheap to anyone with a nickel in their pocket, then wake up and do it all over again – that could well serve as the Greenwood motto, and perhaps even for her nation itself. (2021, p. 398)*

She highlights the vicious cycle of her own nation that destroys repeatedly all for nothing. This passage could well be read in ecocritical perspective, yet it is also possible to postcolonial scrutinizing. Thus, one can effortlessly claim that Harris Greenwood is not an ideal guardian neither for ecological responsibility nor for his family. And it is quite clear that he is not involved in the pungent words of his daughter when she converses briefly with her father's lover Feeney, and the followings are his words about her father: "He knew he couldn't be an ideal guardian for you. That it just wasn't him. But he did the best he could" (2021, p. 404). In response to this, Willow gives a quite striking answer, "Yeah, well, tell that to the trees he cut down" (2021, p. 405). She cares more about trees than her father's parentage skills. For, she knows that trees or broadly nature are everlasting legacy beyond family bloodlines. She is aware of this fact. In short, in contrast to his daughter, Harris cares only about his transient desires, which accounts for his wrongdoings and wickedness as to ecological destruction.

While reading *Greenwood* one can effortlessly come across theme of interconnectedness between humans and nature, which is another predominant matter after intergenerational ethics. The relationship and similarity between human beings and trees stand out across the novel. While pondering about family lines, Willow

considers her new-born son as an entity of own, supposedly independent from the rest of her family bloodline. Moreover, she regards him as child of the Earth, born with the same material as trees. Hence, Willow mediates upon this matter:

*...And what is her son really, but a bundle of flesh and cells and tissue animated by the same sacred energy that impels trees to stretch upward for the sun? No, her son is not hers alone. He descends from many bloodlines. Or, more precisely, he descends from the one great bloodline: born of the Earth and cosmos and all the wondrous green things that allow us life.* (Christie, 2021, p. 408)

It seems like Michaell Christie attempts to establish an interconnection between trees and humans. Just as trees have their own family bloodlines through each circle imbedded in their trunk, so do human beings. There is an interdependency between humans and nature, as well. Moreover, Willow considers that she and her son will live in the bequeathed Greenwood Island, where they will establish a new community that is self-sufficient and sustainable at the same time. There will she raise her son appropriately within ethical guidelines based on stewardship of nature. Although one could assert that Willow carries romantic ideals about living on the Greenwood Island; she would like to maintain a kind of life that happens in Thoreau's *Walden*. The following extract from the novel is akin to the previously mentioned thoughts:

*She and her son will have the means to live together on the island, free and untroubled among its tall trees, for the rest of their days, never needing to worry about money again. She'll beachcomb and garden while he climbs trees like a monkey and builds forts from windfall branches. And perhaps she'll even invite a few other likeminded people from the Earth Now! Collective to join them. They'll establish a self-sufficient community, far away from the world's soul-killing inhumanity, from its Nixons and Kissingers, from its cancer and robotized, brain-dead conformists.* (2021, pp. 408-409)

Though it may strike as Willow has Romantic ideals, upon close examination one can simply conclude that she tries to ease her conscience that has been molested by her father's devastating timber company. That is, countless tress cut down by Harris inflicted a deep wound in Willow's personality. To make amends what harm her father had done to the planet Earth, she attempts to raise a child that is supposed to be diametrical opposite to Harris. Therefore, her son could save the planet from the remains that his grandfather had led to. On the other hand, as can be implied from the previous extract that Willow does not share her generation's conformist view about the planet. She knows that should her son left alone in such a brutal world, he would easily be coaxed into being a rapacious and rampant eco-killer. In this respect, Willow takes some radical hippie-like decisions to raise a child according to some moral guidelines.

For example, as her new-born son signifies a hope for future of humanity, it is no surprising that she names him as “Liam Newdawn”. And supposedly, “The invented surname will free him from the freight of the tainted Greenwood legacy and provide him a fresh beginning – something she never had” (2021, p. 410). To atone herself from the evils of her family bloodline, she sets to work nurturing a child of future by injecting responsibility of intergenerational ethics about preserving and passing a better ecology for subsequent descendants. Furthermore, Willow exalts at the idea of that she and her son will live among trees, free from the rest of decaying society and claws of the capitalism. While she assumes that her offspring is the one who could save the planet tomorrow, it is also her liability at present to preserve what is left for her son. She wonders at the thought of expecting new generations to work up previous generation’s disastrous mistakes and decision. Following excerpt reflecting Willow’s thinking reveals one of the most malignant human traits ever, which is hypocrisy:

*She’s nearly giddy at the thought of what a wonderful, forest-defending, nature-attuned her son will become after he grows up on that island. Though why is it, she wonders casually as she stacks the boxes in her van, that we expect our children to be the ones to halt deforestation and species extinction and to rescue our planet tomorrow, when we are the ones overseeing its destruction today? (2021, p. 410)*

As the oldy saying goes, ‘never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.’ Otherwise, present-day problems might pile up into an enormous burden for tomorrow’s children. When one generation fails, the following one will always be the one that picks up after their predecessors. The same goes for present-day world; today’s problems or issues regarding climate change sometimes are put aside on the back burner, i.e. delayed for tomorrow’s children to deal with. In *Greenwood*, humans like Harris turns a blind eye to ecological collapse afflicted on the planet. Although, fundamentally, these characters are aware of ecological sensitivity, e.g. in Harris studied at Yale University – an educated self-made man – they face off making a choice to be steward for the planet or destroyer of it. Willow, however, tries to be the former, for her moral responsibility mature as she ages throughout her life. Though she does all her best to stop environmental destruction led by humans like her father, she knows that she alone cannot do so completely. In other words, due to the lack of collective ethical responsibility as to stewardship of ecology, Willow’s actions remain incapable. Therefore, she complains about why human beings are prone to leave their problems unsolved for future generations to come while there are available means for them to

figure this out. Predictably, Willow loves the old saying that goes, “The best time to plant a tree is always twenty years ago. And the second best time is always now” (2021, p. 411). Willow, clearly, has planted some trees for her own part; however, individual ethical responsibility is not sufficient to cope with grave environmental destruction. Thus, both individual and collective ethical responsibilities must be a matter of finding prudent remedies for ecological problems.

While reading this cli-fi novel, one can easily notice that there are a few incidents in which characters feel obliged to pose question of ‘what if?’ Willow, for instance, muses about her father Harris and about how he would have ended up upon choosing another path in his ethical choices in early years of his life. In one of their rare occasions, Harris saves Willow’s due prison sentencing because of her infringement against a mining company that has been poisoning watershed nearby the factories. Although he has a destructive ‘nature’ to destroy nature itself, Harris nearly succumbs to his deep-rooted ecological persona shared with his daughter Willow. After setting her free, Harris shares his intimate but somehow cynical thoughts about trees that he cuts down and watersheds her daughter tries to preserve. Supposedly, he would like to see trees and those water resources preserved and thus handed down for the following generations. However, he returns to self once he adds the following, “But we rarely get what we want in life...there isn’t enough room for it all to fit” (Christie, 2021, p. 410). He claims that no matter how hard people like Willow strive to stop environmental destruction, they will not manage to be successful to end it thoroughly. With this knowledge, Harris shapes his character otherwise, for he knows that even if he tries his best like Willow does to stop ecological devastation, it would be like chasing one’s own tail. However, the reason why he comes up with such a reasoning is that he only tries to justify and thus cover up his wrongdoings and misdeeds about hacking down the trees of the North America. In fact, Willow wonders about possibilities and opportunities upon her father’s demise:

*She could use her father’s money to start an environmental foundation, but she’s no paper-pusher, and if his tragic life has taught her anything, it’s that a person must live in accordance with their deepest held principles, or else suffer a kind of death of the soul. Who might Harris have become if he was able to be who he truly was? (2021, p. 411)*

She thinks that her father was at a crossroads of ethical responsibility for climate change, yet he chose the contrary. According to his daughter, Harris had not lived up

to his most genuine and deepest feelings that match up with Willow's. She, therefore, is anxious about her own outcome that could be like that of her father's, so she would like to abandon all the material riches bequeathed to her by her father Harris upon his demise. As for Willow's ethical stance, she muses about possibilities of her end if she ever chooses the way her father did:

*So who, will she become if she also fails to live according to her deepest self? And at this precise moment that she decides upon another path – a more difficult one, admittedly, yet also the path of the connectedness, of principle and authenticity. (2021, p. 411)*

Although that path will cost her profoundly – given that she must give all the fortunes that Harris had amassed in his day, it will also pave the way for environmental activism. Accordingly, later she even sacrifices the Greenwood Island to a “forest protection group.” For her it is the only way to fully fulfil and manifest one's own deepest self, and in her circumstance, it is her eco-warrior environmentalist self that she makes her election. As a result, she would like to be whole with nature; she does not want to live as a ‘hypocrite’ like her father. By choosing that ecological path, she, therefore, vows to be independent, free from man-made materialistic world: “If she was dedicated to the environment before, she'll be twice as dedicated now” (2021, p. 411). Briefly, it seems that Willow is ready to set about saving what is left of the planet Earth. Furthermore, the notion of intergenerational ethics of climate change is a dominant theme in *Greenwood*. Writer M. Christie highlights the fact that every generation is very much responsible for stewardship of the planet Earth. Nevertheless, as seen several times previously, throughout the novel some generations from different periods and mindsets fail to do so. That is, these generations fall into despair, and thus they act fatalistically. Their fatalistic mindset results in vanity and simulacrum, both of which have already been traced through such characters as Harris Greenwood. Willow, on the other hand, denies this view in favour of embracing a more endeavouring and self-denying stance. She would like to live according to her deeply rooted eco-warrior self. Therefore, following is just how she and her son would like to live the rest of their lives:

*She'll teach Liam to be strong, to live symbiotically with nature. He'll learn to be a warrior. A defender of the Earth. Together they'll consume as few resources as possible, and work toward repairing a tiny portion of the harm that Harris inflicted upon the forests of the Earth. And someday, her son will thank for it. (2021, p. 412)*

The last statement is particularly important for raising awareness and concern about leaving a preserved planet for generations to come. Willow meets her ethical demeanour towards nature with good grace, as opposed to her father. Though throughout the novel Harris has always intended to raise Willow like someone of his likeness, she has chosen another path in interest for nature. Moreover, her challenging and unselfish ethical stance has paved an ecological path for her future descendants. However, it is obvious that it is the individual who either chooses to be good or vice, regardless of their familial heritage. Fragmented history of the Greenwood family teems with examples of individual ethical challenge regarding climate change and nature jointly. In the closing paragraph of this chapter, Willow puts a fundamental question that resonates beyond space and time: “Why is it that people are engineered to live just long enough to pile up a lifetime of mistakes, but not long enough to fix them?” (2021, p. 412). This thought-provoking question draws attention to imperative duty or responsibility of a generation to act on immediately and effectively for the sake of the planet. According to Willow, it is everyone’s moral responsibility to preserve and leave a better planet for subsequent generations. Though it is all about individual ethical choices, cumulative as well as collective ones also seal the fate of the planet Earth and its habitants altogether.

#### **4.8 Part VIII: “2008”**

Relationship between human and nature relationship is a dominant theme in literature world, especially in that field named ecocriticism. In *Greenwood* does occur many occasions in which traces of nature advocacy can be followed. Everett Greenwood is one of the rarest characters who decides to live in nature with harmony. His grand-nephew Liam Greenwood looks upon him as an example. For Everett has always gone hand in hand with nature. He has learned how to sustain himself through some ecological systems. He respects trees very much. As mentioned several times previously, before he was prisoned, he used to live on trees by sapping their juice and harnessing dead trees’ trunks to transform them later in woodwork. Therefore, Liam is impressed by his great-uncle Everett because he “...isn’t destroying trees at all; he’s transforming them, into useful things that will endure” (2021, p. 424). Everett is a good example for Liam who later will mimic his granduncle in the similar vein. However, he is flawed personality in his ethical choices regarding nature, Liam cannot live his

life based on the ecological principles set by his mother Willow. Willow, on the other hand, is somewhere between her father Harris and her son Liam. She is a fervent environmentalist who always seeks opportunities to preserve nature by abandoning every potentially harmful action that inflicts ecology. She lives like her monk uncle Everett upon choosing a life of seclusion among trees and belonging nature. Her radical environmentalist activism reaches to a lethal point where she does not want to consume any food lest it harm the planet. To Liam, this torturesome practice is inconsequential. Consequently, Willow's son "worries that her environmental fervour has finally consumed her to the point that she's stopped eating altogether for fear of harming plant life." While Harris has blindly destroyed forest canopies of the planet, her daughter Willow, in the same vein, has taken some drastic and exorbitant actions to save it. Willow has already come to terms with sacrificing everything related to the material world, and she is even ready to sacrifice herself for the sake of planet Earth. King of Brobdingnag in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* narrates a quite striking and harsh reality of humans' hypocritic and destroying nature as odious species on the planet Earth, and he puts the following: "...I cannot but conclude the Bulk of your Natives to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth" (Swift, 2008, p. 121). Willow does not want to belong that vermin species named as humans, and thus she is prepared to abandon everything behind even if it will cost her life. Unsurprisingly, her son Liam thinks that "his mother has always tried to leave as light an imprint upon the ecosystem as she possibly could, and to his great annoyance, this has also included him" (2021, p. 433). Willow has done her best in her part to leave a lasting impact on the planet that she inhabits. Her devoted and foreseeing demeanour regarding climate ethics is more conspicuous in the novel when compared to other characters such as Harris and Liam. Her individual moral duty to preserve what's left on the planet is highlighted throughout the narrative. Willow has always wanted to pass her ecological awareness to her son, yet she has partly failed to do so. She has done all her best to raise a child with principles of stewardship of nature. Towards adulthood, however, Liam is not as fervent as his mother with respect to nature. Since every individual is free to choose having a particular stance regarding climate change, Liam draws a line, one distinct from his mother's. Therefore, ironically enough, he decides to be a carpenter, which

his mother reluctantly approves as a career. Throughout his lifetime, Liam has challenged Willow because he has always considered her as an entity of contradiction. Notwithstanding, she has lived according to her ecological principles that are deeply rooted in her personality. She has wanted to leave an offspring that holds the same tenets regarding preservation of nature. Moreover, she always thinks that she could change the course of her Greenwood family line by instilling such notions as preserving and passing a better planet for future generations, with a reverence to nature. During one of conversations that take place between Willow and her young son Liam, she touches upon her only concern while bringing him up. She says the following, “I was trying to teach you something...To look upon Nature with reverence” (2021, pp. 436-437). With this brief statement many questions arise in Liam’s mind as he muses over the subject, and then he would like to confront his mother with the following questions in mind:

*What is Nature, really, Willow? he wants to ask. Is one of my reclaimed wood tables Nature? How about me, am I Nature? How come you never looked upon me with any reverence? How come trees are the only part of Nature that you ever cared about? (2021, p. 437)*

Liam’s inner thoughts might be considered partly pantheistic, or his thinking might be associated with third the wave ecocriticism, or better material ecocriticism. Furthermore, upon close examination, and even with the lens of deconstruction, one could claim that by using the capital letter ‘n’, Michael Christie perhaps attributes a godly or divine-like characteristics to nature. In sum, Willow’s radical environmentalist principles are thus contrasted with those of Liam’s. Similarly, throughout her lifetime, “even in her diminished state”, Willow has tried to leave an ecological imprint and awareness on her son Liam, yet he does not live by according to the tenets his mother has been trying to instil on him. In his later life, Liam realizes how broken his family has been. He thinks that her mother inherited a life of destitution passed down her by previous generations of the Greenwoods. Therefore, in a state of drunkenness, Liam thinks that Willow passed him down the same failure of the earlier individuals in her family:

*The drunker he gets, the clearer it becomes to him that his mother has lived her life fleeing brokenness, one passed down to her by the broken people who came before her, and that she’s passed some of this same brokenness down to him, like coals pulled from one fire and used to start another. And that he would do the same to his own child, if he ever had one. (2021, p. 437)*

From the given excerpt, one can conclude that failure gives birth to other failures. That is, individuals do not take responsibility to learn from past mistakes of others; errors that would eventually afflict everyone in future. Liam's ecology driven principles, thus, cannot be transferred to his daughter, namely Jake, that will be born in future. Although Willow lived her life fleeing, she also lived a life of ecological awareness. She had always fought those who attempted to harm nature even a bit. Her radical and fervent principles regarding ecology, however, seem like might have backfired considering Liam's ethical stance with respect to nature. For this reason, Liam regrets the fact that he never planted the seeds of ecological awareness for his daughter Jake. Third person narrator conveys Liam's regretful thoughts through an tree species related to Japanese culture:

*Liam remembers George Nakashima once writing about how in a traditional Japanese family, a paulownia tree is planted immediately after the birth of a daughter. It's a species that grows rapidly, and by the time the girl has matured and is ready to leave home, the tree is likewise ready to be harvested for its wood. The handsome, fine-grained boards that it yields are shaped into an ornate chest, inside which the grown girl will store her kimono. For this reason the paulownia is known as the empress tree, and the most shameful mistake he's made in all his life, Liam now admits bitterly, is that he never planted one for Jacinda. (2021, p. 444)*

Michael Christie draws on this specific tree species as a symbol that denotes children of nature, who are ecologically well qualified on the condition that their parents or caregivers take care after them by instilling ethical moral responsibilities regarding nature.

Theme of interdependency between nature and humans is a ubiquitous one along with intergenerational ethics of climate change in the novel. Throughout the history of mankind, people have been highly interdepended on nature. However, with the Anthropocene humans have turns the tables on ecology. Mankind has shared a symbiotic relationship with trees, in particular. That relationship has always been witnessed by one genuine phenomenon called 'time'. In *Greenwood* Liam conjures a new point of view about the concept of time that interconnects other such distinct notions as trees and humans:

*Time, Liam has learned, is not an arrow. Neither is it a road. It goes in no particular direction. It simply accumulates – in the body, in the world – like wood does. Layer upon layer, light then dark. Each one depended on upon the last. Each year impossible without the one preceding it. Each triumph and each disaster written forever in its structure. (Christie, 2021, p. 445)*

This fragment also underscores the fact that intergenerational ethics plays a vital role for the sake of both nature and humanity. Moreover, every generation must properly take measures regarding ecology according to existing circumstances. Otherwise, one generation's failure in that case means setting off alarm bells for the subsequent one. Dark Ages are now long gone, yet it does not mean that everything in the garden is rosy for today's world. When people, particularly those some members of the Greenwoods, are not educated enough in terms of gaining ecological awareness or intergenerational moral responsibility and its implications, they play ostrich or act fool when it comes to preserving nature. Their short-sighted materialistic inclination most of the time costs their offspring to live a life of destitute. Therefore, it is no surprising that Michael Christie emphasizes this fact several times throughout the novel: each generation or age is the cumulation or remains of preceding ones for better or worse. All in all, apocalyptic world that takes in *Greenwood* around the year 2038 is a bleak one that has suffered from the wrongdoings of the earlier generations.

#### **4.9 Part IX: “2038”**

Individual versus collective ethical responsibility with respect to climate change can be easily observed throughout *Greenwood*. Christie promotes the latter by emphasizing collective ethics' necessity. He does this by drawing on some literary devices such as similes and metaphors. In the last part of the novel corresponding year “2038”, the scenery takes place in an apocalyptic world where there are almost no forests left on the planet except for some rare places like Greenwood Island. As mentioned before, the very last member of the Greenwoods, Jake works as an arboreal tour guide on that island. She guides group of tourists called “pilgrims” by giving them a tour around the island. During one of these tours, Jake depicts one of the most magnificent Douglas fir trees by juxtaposing individual and collective distinctness: “Over time...the lateral roots of these Douglas firs fuse together. And this is how these trees share resources and chemical weapons among their neighbours. There are no individuals in a forest. In fact, it behaves more like a family.” The last statement of Jake's accentuates the importance of collective ethical superiority over individual one. As mentioned several times before, Willow Greenwood is one of those lonely individuals who did their best to act against climate change. She was like an individual tree surrounded by no other trees in the least. Therefore, her actions alone were not

able to make any tremendous impact on the planet's doom-laden trajectory. Moreover, when individual ethics is not accompanied by other well-disposed individuals on the matter of climate change, it is hardly ever to mention a practical solution for ecological disasters. Accordingly, collective moral responsibility among a group is of vital importance when it comes to preserving and leaving a better planet for the following generations to come. The reason why Jake's world experiences an apocalypse is that previous generations had not acted collectively enough about having an ecological mindset in the fight against climate change. Certainly, preceding generations' failure can have devastating outcomes for those generations to come. As in Jake's case, she and the period that she lives in experience lethal and foregone conclusions led by her previous ancestors. It is no surprise that Jake has a new epiphany about her family heritage and their wrongdoings that have culminated in an apocalyptic planet:

*...And since the journal came to her, Jake has gained a new awareness of how her own life is being held up by unseen layers, girded by lives that came before her own. And by a series of crimes and miracles, accidents and choices, sacrifices and mistakes, all of which have landed her in this particular body and delivered her to this day.* (Christie, 2021, p. 474)

Just like her grand-mother Willow, Jake's ethical stance is on ecology's side. That is, upon this realization, Jake girds herself with the stewardship of one of the planet's last remaining forests. Her lawyer and friend Silas encourages her in this respect by saying the following, "We can't change the world any more, but if we're smart, maybe we can preserve the best of it. And who better than you to do the preserving?" (2021, p. 465). Silas tries to convince Jake to take the ownership of the Greenwood Island through some legal channels because a journal dating back to the times of her great-grandparents, such Harris Greenwood, produces evidence about rightful ownership over the Greenwood Island where she works as a tour guide. After taking the island on her behalf, Jake is ready to do anything with it. For example, she could either go her grandmother Willow's ecological path; or for worse she will use the same pathway that her great grandfather Harris took, which, not surprisingly, a destructive one for the planet's sake. But she chooses the former; a more temperate ethical stance regarding nature and climate change because Jake feels the responsibility to save the last remaining trees on that specific island that is now about to be transferred to her. As a scientist herself, she knows that she must shoulder responsibility when it comes to trees. Her selfless ethical demeanour with respect to nature is significant, which

resembles that of Willow's. She would like to stop all the ailments inflicted upon the lost forests of the planet by climate change events such as "Great Withering." After taking the reins of the Greenwood Island, the followings are on Jake's agenda:

*As Greenwood Island's steward, she'll renew her commitment to the study and protection of trees. No more mandatory selfless or inane Pilgrim questions. No more being grateful to Holtcorp for her job and dismal staff cabin. She'll be her own person again, with real, attainable hopes and dreams, just like a Pilgrim. And most important of all, she'll establish a lab in this very office and shire Knut back, along with the world's brightest minds in dendrology, and together they'll discover a cure for the Withering that will save the trees not only here, but everywhere. (2021, p. 467)*

Given excerpt proves Jake's selfless character and her ethical stance about climate change outcomes. By taking the ownership of this island, she would like to benefit from this opportunity as a way out to save the planet. Her altruistic personality points out the fact that Jake possesses Kohlberg's 'the universal ethical principle orientation' applied to ecology and nature. Thus, intergenerational ethics in individuals, in Jake's case, seems like a promising one. However, there will not be some individuals to save the planet but collective ethical groups; whose decisions will figure out the planet's doomed course. Collective ethical responsibility of a time is of vital importance when it comes to a global phenomenon like climate change, for it requires individuals acting and collaborating collectively to find some effective solutions in the end. Therefore, Jake Greenwood extends and adds some other metaphorically peculiar details while thinking about families likened to trees:

*What if a family isn't a tree at all? Jake thinks as they walk in silence. What if it's more like a forest? A collection of individuals pooling their resources through intertwined roots, sheltering one another from wind and weather and drought – just like Greenwood Island's trees have done for centuries...And no one knows better than a dendrologist that it's the forest that matter. (2021, p. 487)*

Family, as forest metaphor in this extract, reflects the previous argument about the importance of collective ethical stance regarding climate change. Briefly, since at the end of the day it is humans or a group of people who will save the planet rather than an individual, whose actions alone cannot change anything but only can help trigger a change.

Willow's mother Euphemia Baxter's journal comes past to her great grandchild Jake after many years have passed, a testament beckoning a century before. In the journal Euphemia laments the 20th century ethical viewpoints as to climate change. She is another woman character along with Willow and Jake who displays an ethical

stance towards ecology. Throughout the novel, these women characters are all aware of the calamities of climate change and they do their part to at least help alleviate the planet's burden. As an individual Euphemia feels pity for her baby Willow because she knows that she is born to a world of cruelty, brutality, and carelessness. She is hopeless of future due to her period's indifferent ethical concern about preserving and thus saving planet's future for subsequent generations to come. Therefore, as a dedication to her daughter Willow, she laments this fact on her journal which later comes to Jake's way:

*...Even when I was a girl, hope was something I've always been short on.*

*But somehow, you've afforded me some. Perhaps because a world with you in it feels fundamentally richer. Though it's you who will face the bleakness of the future, not me. A future that's no longer better than the past. So I suppose this is also an apology. (Christie, 2021, p. 489)*

Euphemia Baxter's words, in fact, were written for her yet unborn child who later comes to be known as Willow Greenwood. It is a testimony of her epoch's fundamental ethical view regarding planet's future for future generations. One generation's failure costs profoundly for the following one. That is, future, in way or another, is the accumulation of past errors, mistakes or ignorance. Euphemia had been an individual whose ideals laid in nature. Her selfless and altruistic morality were not enough to leave a better planet for Willow, nevertheless. This is because her period, which corresponds to the 20th century, lacked a collaborative, or better, a collective ethical mindset to preserve and leave a better planet for their descendants to come. Their short-sighted, materialistic, and ego-centric morality cost their children in a bleak future. Aware of this fact, Euphemia apologizes Willow for bringing her to such an impoverished and hopeless world. Briefly, she knows that her child will face the consequences of the wrongdoings and misdeeds that had been committed by humans such as Harris Greenwood and alike. Finally, Euphemia Baxter's words in the last chapter of the novel is a testimony of her time; and her words might also be understood as a lesson, through which all human beings today must follow ethical moral responsibilities both individually and collectively so that they could leave a better planet than they have for generations to come.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Today intergenerational ethics is certainly one of the most important subject matters for mankind in that it can render many thought-provoking perspectives not only for past and present but also future. Born out of environmental ethics, intergenerational ethics may allow humans to weigh their mistakes regarding climate change and more, by juxtaposing various generations and periods. Individual as well as collective moral responsibilities in this context are of vital importance when it comes to discuss how some specific groups' ethical perspectives change over time due to some particular circumstances of that time. Moreover, intergenerational ethical perspectives open the way for comparison of different generations' moral demeanour regarding climate change. This thesis has endeavoured to practice that approach in a novel titled *Greenwood* by Michael Christie. Belonging to a recently surfaced genre called 'cli-fi' (climate fiction), this novel revolves around 130 years of generational ethics of a one particular family, namely the Greenwoods. As demonstrated several times before, this novel strongly accentuates the fact that not only present generation, but also past and future generations are responsible for working towards a solution for the problems with respect to environment, particularly climate-change issues. Also, unique "nested" narrative structure of the novel, to a certain extent, contributes to analysing shifts, paradigms, and ethical alterations among different generations. Moreover, by juxtaposing several characters, from different but related background, in terms of their ethical demeanour regarding climate change, it is possible that one can efficiently analyse how individual and/or collective entities maintain a stance against climate change. Therefore, so far this thesis has attempted to find answers for the following ethical questions: Is it possible to handle climate change on the basis of individual actions? How do different generations with the same background act differently when faced with climate change? Are collective entities only the way to find cures for the environmental problems? Which one is more important: individual ethical obligations or collective moral responsibility? If both, what approaches should human beings implement in order to live sustainably on such a fragile planet? Obviously, this sort of questions can be multiplied with different perspectives on intergenerational ethics and climate change. In the same vein, the novel goes beyond

a philosophical questioning of the concept of “family” and raises the following fundamental moral question: Should the desire for individual protection take precedence over collective existence? (Sureshkumar, 2024). As for the challenges regarding communication among several generations, Michael Christie expresses what he thinks on the matter in an interview:

*Absolutely. This notion of intergenerational communication and inheritance is really baked into the book. So while I was writing, I thought a lot about what is passed down. Whether it is property. Whether it is money. Whether it is ideology. Whether it is trauma. Whether it is pain. I'm really, really interested in how these things are transmitted and received over these gaps between generations. Also, during the writing of this book, both of my parents died. Both of them had cancer. I also had two kids during the writing of this book. So I really became newly appreciative of the fact that I'm this link in this generational chain. I was thinking a lot about what my place is within that and the fact that I'm bringing, along with my partner, new people into the world and what I'll be passing to them. (Christie, 2020)*

Presumably, Christie aims to give the reader space to interpret dysfunctional life stories that have been going on for generations from their own perspective. The novel invites readers to witness the miracle of the forest of interconnected lives on this small and fragile planet that called ‘home.’ If the novel achieves a certain success, it is in the simple but effective awakening of attention and appreciation (Manwaring, 2021). Moreover, multi-layered narrative structure of *Greenwood* contributes raising awareness about environmental ethic, by presenting historical continuum of environmental disasters and symbiotic but fragile relationship between humans and natural world, via intergenerational perspective. In this context, it is extrapolated that fiction has a fruitful potential to contribute to arguments revolving around not only environmental ethics but also intergenerational ethics. At the center of this narrative are the identities of both reader and writer, and their fictional representations open the door to new forms of self-understanding in the Anthropocene. While cli-fi genre claims to have an aesthetic purpose, it also functions as a vehicle for embedding ethical concerns in the way humans observe and think about the natural world. However, while the authors’ concerns are legitimate, their emphasis on individual responsibility is not always effectively communicated in relation to climate change. Ignoring the complex reasons of readers who do not accept the reality of climate change – or that it is a result of human-induced carbon emissions – is a significant obstacle to the reshaping of tree aesthetics in narrative fiction. Yet narrative literature plays an important role in making climate-related issues, which often remain abstract in large-scale climate research, perceptible at the local level (Colăcel, 2024, p. 81). In

conclusion, when he was asked the following question as to whether his novel carries a warning for the future or a message of hope, Michael Christie utters the followings:

*The warnings are already constant and convincing, for those who are heeding them, at least, so I don't really see it as my job to provide more.*

*But I do have some hope, founded mostly upon the incredible resourcefulness and resilience of average human beings when an undeniable crisis is at hand. Look at WWII or our response to the Great Depression for inspiring examples of this resilience. Because if the oceans continue to acidify, and global temperatures continue to rise, and the aquifers dry up and large swaths of arable land turn to desert, then many, many human beings are going to die. All we can do now is try to minimize that number. But if we're going to turn this ship around we'll need to surrender our addiction to absurd levels of consumption and our extreme selfishness and our belief that something other than ourselves will come and save us. Will we do it? I'm not sure. But I'm ready to get to work. (Christie, 2019b)*

As an epilogue, while traveling on the Ertuğrul Yacht in Yalova on August 21, 1929, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was very impressed by a large Oriental Plane Tree on the Millet Farm and requested a mansion to be built next to the tree. The mansion was completed in 22 days. When he returned to the mansion in 1930, the workers said that the plane tree branch was damaging the structure and asked for permission to cut it. However, Atatürk did not have the branch cut and instead ordered the mansion to be moved approximately five meters on the tram rails. In this way, he protected both the tree and the mansion, and the “Walking Mansion” became a symbol of respect for nature. May this little anecdote enhance environmentally aware individuals in the following generations to come.

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## ÖZGEÇMİŞ

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### Eğitim

Derece	Eğitim Birimi	Mezuniyet Tarihi
Doktora	.....	.....
Yüksek Lisans	Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı.	2025
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### İş Deneyimi

Yıl	Yer	Görev
2022 - devam ediyor	Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı	İngilizce Öğretmeni

### Yabancı Dil

İngilizce C1



Lisansüstü Tez Orijinallik Raporu

Öğrenci Bilgileri	
<b>Adı-Soyadı</b>	Kadir Ögen
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<b>Anabilim Dalı</b>	İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı
<b>Programı</b>	İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı
<b>Statüsü</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yüksek Lisans <input type="checkbox"/> Doktora

Tez Bilgileri	
<b>Başlığı/Konusu</b>	"An Ecocritical Approach To Michael Christie's <i>Greenwood</i> (Michael Christie'nin <i>Greenwood</i> Adlı Eserine Ekoleştirel Bir Yaklaşım)

Tez Orijinallik Raporu Bilgileri*	
<b>Sayfa Sayısı</b> (Kapak sayfası, Giriş, Ana bölümler ve Sonuç bölümleri)	
<b>İntihal Tespit Programı</b>	Turnitin
<b>Benzerlik Oranı (%)</b>	%6 (Yüzde altı)
<b>Tarih</b>	28 Nisan 2025

**\* Orijinallik raporu, aşağıdaki filtreler kullanılarak oluşturulmuştur:**

- Kabul ve onay sayfası hariç,
- Teşekkür hariç,
- İçindekiler hariç,
- Simge ve kısaltmalar hariç,
- Gereç ve yöntemler hariç,
- Kaynakça hariç,
- Alıntılar hariç,
- Tezden çıkan yayınlar hariç,
- 7 kelimededen daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç (Limit match size to 7 words)

Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Tez Orijinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılmasına İlişkin Yönergeyi İnceledim ve bu yönergede belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içemediğini; aksının tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimizi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğumuz bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederiz.

Gereğini bilgilerinize arz ederim.

	Danışman	Öğrenci
<b>Adı Soyadı</b>	Doç. Dr. Memet Metin BARLIK	Kadir ÖGEN
<b>İmza</b>		
		<b>Tarih</b> 23.05.2025